

# Pacific News <sup>#36</sup>

News | Notes | Insights from the Asia-Pacific Region

**The Conflict for Boeng Kak Lake in Phnom Penh:**  
Development at the Expense of the Environment & the Poor

• **Green Governance in the Asia-Pacific**  
On the Way to Sustainability?

**Tourism in New Zealand**  
A Critical Perspective





From Chanting to Chán: About the Generational Gap among Vietnamese Buddhists in Switzerland – 20



Tourism in New Zealand: A Critical View – 11



How to Reach Green Governance in Asia-Pacific? – 29

**4**      **Development at the expense of the environment and the poor: The conflict for Boeng Kak lake in Phnom Penh, Cambodia**  
Helmut Schneider

**11**     **Tourism in New Zealand: A Critical Perspective on Current and Future Issues**  
Julia N. Albrecht

**17**     **PN Photo Pages: First Light – a reinterpretation of the New Zealand “bach”**  
Tobias Danielmeier & Julia N. Albrecht

**20**     **From Chanting to Chán: About the Generational Gap among Vietnamese Buddhists in Switzerland**  
Frank André Weigelt

**25**     **Tourism and the (Un)Expected: A Research Note**  
Anna Huebner

**29**     **Green Governance: The Role of Governments on the Way to Sustainability in Asia-Pacific**  
Susanne M. Müller

**34**     **Report: Study Project “Climate Change and Sustainable Urban Development in Vietnam”**  
Vanessa Densow

**36**     **PN Picture: Detail of the Marina Bay Sands Building in Singapore**  
Ceyhan Cüce



# EDITORIAL

Dear readers,

Since publication of our last insights into current developments and research in the Asia-Pacific region, the earthquakes in Japan and New Zealand have been a reminder of the vulnerability of large areas in the Pacific Rim as well as of global impacts arising from their disturbance. The discussion of current and future issues in tourism in New Zealand in this issue takes into account the domestic implications of the Christchurch earthquake on February 22 as well as its impact on the development of inbound tourism to New Zealand.

Wider-ranging consequences of the Japan earthquake are visible in the efforts of some governments, including Germany's, that have taken a critical view of the generation and use of nuclear energy and plan to abolish its use in the foreseeable future. The necessary long-term consequence of turning to alternative energies is foreshadowed in, for example, the Solar Decathlon, a US-based competition that challenges student teams to design and operate solar houses. One of the competition entries is featured on the Photo Pages of this issue.

Consequences of disasters and change more generally and climate change specifically have recently given rise to what Anna Huebner describes as "Last chance tourism", the notion that certain destinations receive increased visitation as they are expected to vanish (e.g. low-lying Pacific Islands) or risk losing their unique characteristics (e.g. historic urban structures of rapidly growing cities).

On a personal note, we are delighted that the transformation of the Pacific News to a peer-reviewed academic journal has generated such a positive response. We appreciate your feedback and wish you, as always, an informative and enjoyable read.

Dr. Michael Waibel and Dr Julia N. Albrecht

## Pacific News

The Pacific News (PN), ISSN 1435-8360, is a peer-reviewed semi-annual publication published by the Association for Pacific Studies (Arbeitsgemeinschaft fuer Pazifische Studien e.V., APSA) in co-operation with the Department of Human Geography of Hamburg University, Germany. The PN 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 PN 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.

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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 semi-annual journal Pacific News. 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

##### Skaters posing before the Lenin Statue in Hanoi


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Public spaces in Vietnam have always been used for a great variety of leisure activities. The triangular square of the Lenin Statue opposite the flag tower of Hanoi citadel has recently become popular among teenagers for break dancing or skating. This picture was taken by a student of Geography of Hamburg University on Sunday, the 27th February 2011.



# Development at the expense of the environment and the poor: The conflict for Boeng Kak lake in Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Helmut Schneider



*Abstract: Although still among the poorest countries in Southeast Asia, Cambodia has experienced remarkable economic growth during the last decade. But the present conflict for the lake of Boeng Kak in Phnom Penh shows – like looking through a magnifying lens - how accelerated development has, up to now, mainly benefited the country's narrow elite and foreign investors at the expense of the natural environment and the poor. Urban land previously considered useless or not usable, often occupied by the urban poor, is now in the focus of attention of potential investors. This is the case with the inner city lake of Boeng Kak and its surroundings, home to app. 30.000 people living and working there. The lake is presently filled with sand in order to convert it into a high-yield office, shopping and dwelling complex. The paper is not based on primary data but recapitulates the available information on the conflict for Boeng Kak lake, combines it with own observations during a field trip in 2009 and tries to link the socio-political conflict consequently with the already precarious situation of the hydraulic landscape of the wider Phnom Penh area, a situation, which will get even worse with the expected effects of climate change. Thus the conflict for Boeng Kak lake is shown as an exemplary environmental conflict (not only) for Cambodia.*

**Key Words:** Phnom Penh; Boeng Kak conflict; land law; urban poor; flooding

*[Submitted as Scientific Paper: 19 April 2011,  
revised paper received and accepted: 25 May 2011]*

During the last decade Cambodia has experienced remarkable rates of economic growth, based mainly on textile exports and tourism. Since the end of civil war in the 1990s it was possible to reduce poverty considerably, although there was a remarkable downturn in 2009 caused by the world financial and economic crisis. Cambodia is still among the poorest countries in Southeast Asia, together with Laos and Myanmar/Burma. The main beneficiaries of economic growth are the members of a politically well-connected small urban elite, while for the majority of the population, that is for those living in rural areas, but also for the urban poor, little has changed. For 21% of the population the food situation in 2010 was still considered "very serious" (Welthungerhilfe, 2010). Economic development has also stimulated the urban real estate market, especially in Phnom Penh, causing not only social, but also environmental conflict.

Source: Jan Peter Mund 2008

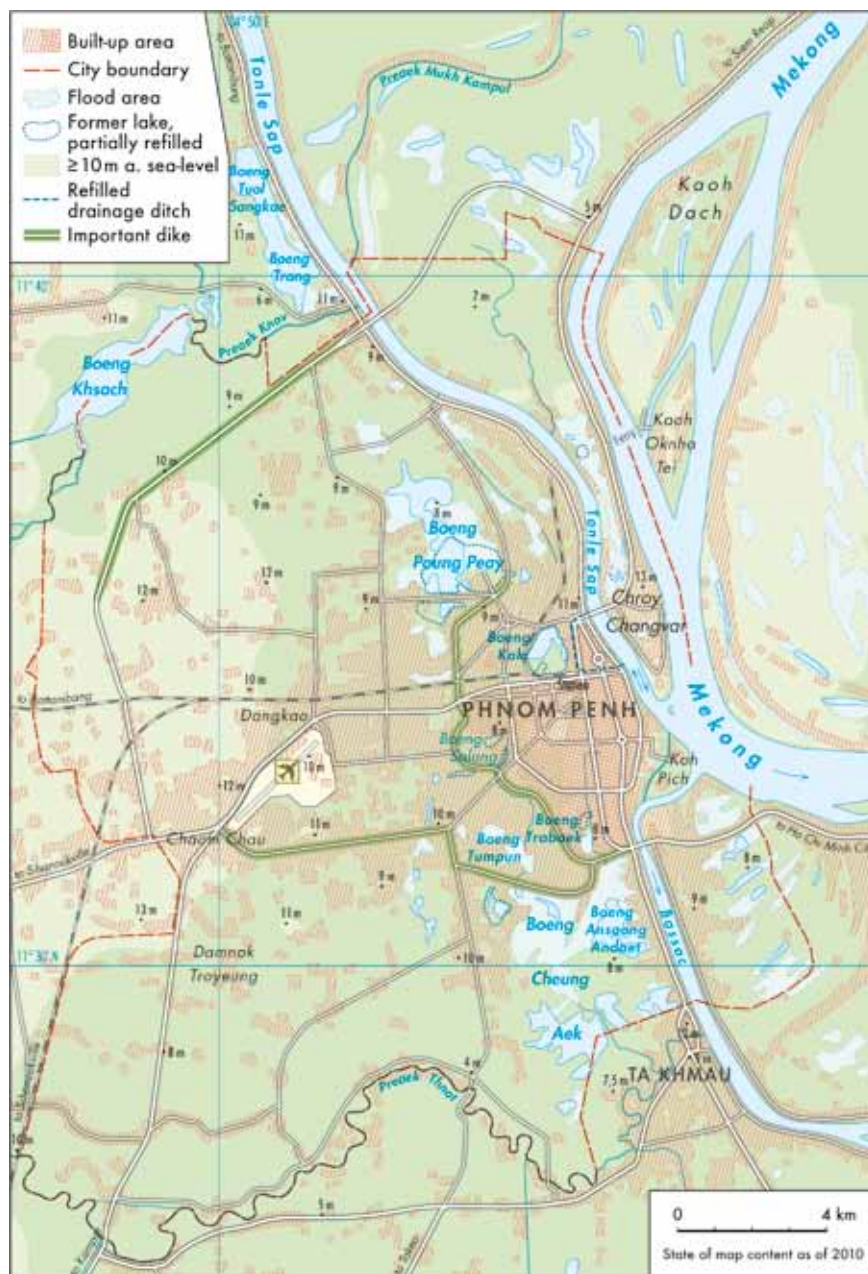


In developing the urban real estate market local actors belonging to the country's elite are increasingly cooperating with foreign investors mainly coming from China, South Korea, Malaysia and the USA (Hirschle & Kahler, 2010). The change came after the withdrawal of the Vietnamese forces in 1989, the switch to market economy and the end of civil war in the 1990s. A cornerstone of market liberalization was the reintroduction of private land ownership. In the larger cities, namely Phnom Penh, urban land not used or considered to be underused came into the focus of the attention of potential investors intending to develop it into profitable real estate projects. Thus also the urban poor came under growing pressure, because they often occupied these open spaces or urban niches along trenches, ditches and lakes, which are part of the flood protection system of Phnom Penh. Transforming these urban niches into high-yield real estate projects does not only cause social conflict, with view to the urban poor losing their homes and often also their means of livelihood and being evicted by force in many cases. But this development is also a danger to the already tenuous flood protection and water regulation system. The filling of ditches, trenches and lakes, like it is currently done with Boeng Kak lake, one of the few remaining retention reservoirs, will also put the inner city area at a higher risk for flooding. Anticipated effects of climate change will put the flood regulation system further under stress.

This paper is not based on primary data but recapitulates the available information on the conflict for Boeng Kak lake, combines it with own observations during a field trip in 2009 and tries to link the socio-political conflict consequently with the already precarious situation of the hydraulic landscape of the wider Phnom Penh area, a situation, which will get even worse with the expected effects of climate change. Thus the conflict for Boeng Kak lake is shown as an exemplary environmental conflict not only for Cambodia.

### Climate and the hydraulic landscape of Phnom Penh

Cambodia's development in general and especially the urban development of Phnom Penh are strongly influenced by climate and the hydraulic



Natural settings of Phnom Penh

landscape. Cambodia has a tropical, summer-humid climate and it is part of the monsoon wind system. Rainfall normally starts in May/June and it ends in October/November. During the rainy season most rivers are flooding the surrounding flat land and the waters will deposit fertile sediments, which are highly welcome for agriculture. Traditionally settlements and the way of life in Cambodia were adapted to this natural situation. Settlements developed on top of the levees, where they were less exposed to flooding, although not without risk. But the risk of flooding is not only caused by high water levels of the rivers, during the rainy season flooding is also an effect of heavy rainfall and rising groundwater levels.

Phnom Penh developed on the banks of Tonle Sap River, just adjacent to its confluence with the Mekong. Since the 15th century the city has expanded spatially by building succeeding concentric dikes, which were connected with the levee, and filling in the enclosed space. This is why Blancot (1994, 72) called Phnom Penh "a large 'polder'". Since the 1960s spatial expansion has accelerated, only to be brutally disrupted during the regime of the Khmer Rouge, when Cambodia's cities were evacuated almost totally (e.g. Kiernan, 2002). After the downfall of the Khmer Rouge and after ending the civil war, the growth of Phnom Penh in terms of population and space took momentum again in the second half of the 1990s.

Pacific News Cartography: © Harald Krähe 2011





Dubai Mosque: still at the lake's shore

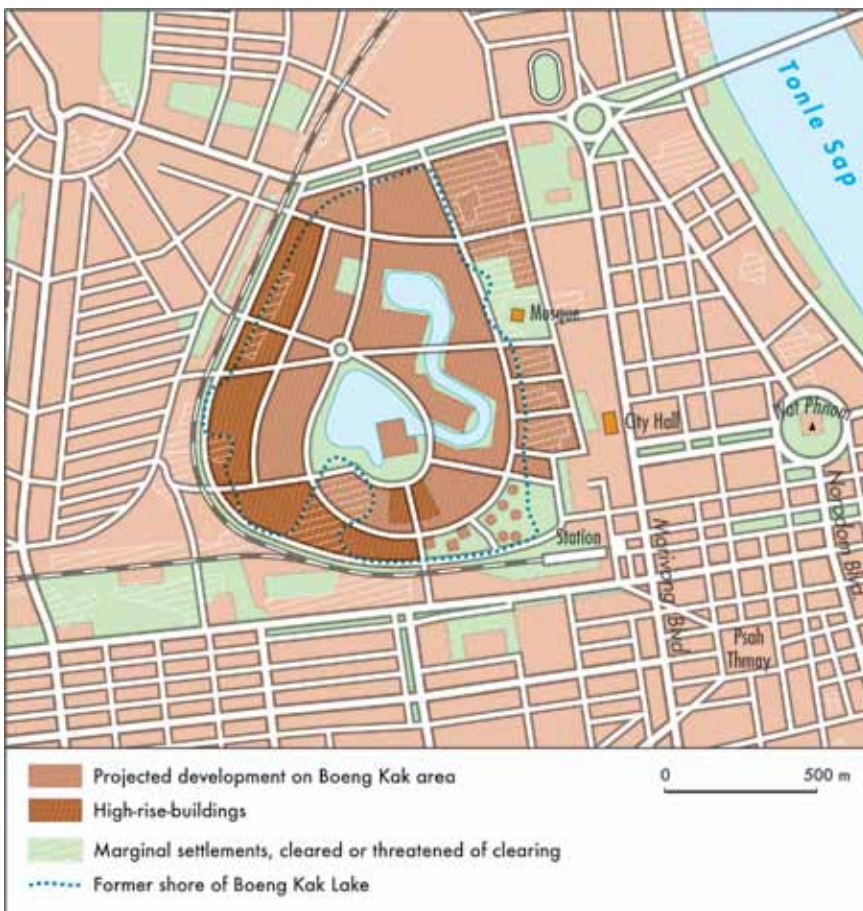
From the beginning urban expansion influenced the natural and man-made system of flood regulation, the system of rivers, ponds (*boeng*), trenches and ditches (*prek*). Several inner city ditches and ponds were filled and converted into roads and lots for buildings. Natural drainage of the inner city area became impossible. To protect the urban area enclosed by dikes from flooding during the rainy season,

it was necessary to install a system of pumping stations. And with every expansion of the city's space, more water had to be pumped to the surrounding swamplands. But obviously there is a limit for this kind of urbanization: "It is not possible to continue expanding the city through the building of ever larger concentric dikes, filling the interceding space to provide new areas for urbanisation." (Vann Molyvann

2003, 115). More and more pumps, money and manpower are necessary to expand and sustain this artificial drainage system. Presently during the rainy season already one third of Phnom Penh's urban area is at high risk of flooding (Vann Molyvann 2003, 127).

Top and bottom water levels of the Mekong normally differ by up to eight meters. With nearly 12m a.s.l. the highest top water level ever of the Mekong near Phnom Penh was measured in 2000; only in 1894 a top water level nearly as high was measured (11.78 m). But with 7.5 m a.s.l. 1998 also a historical low top water level was measured. The growing difference between top water levels in a short period of time may be interpreted as a first sign of the effects of climate change for the Mekong river system. Presently the dikes of Phnom Penh protect the city from floodwaters of the Tonle Sap, Mekong and Bassac, a distributary of the Mekong, branching off just south of the inner city, up to a top water level of 12 m a.s.l. If floodwaters will rise above this limit, large urban areas will be at risk of flooding.

The Mekong is transporting and depositing a huge amount of sandy sediments. Sand deposits made the Chroy Changvar peninsula, lying between Mekong and Tonle Sap, grow by ca. 100m to the south during the last 50 years. Temporary sand banks and islands caused by sedimentation do not only hamper ship traffic on the river, they also increase the water pressure of the Mekong and thus the risk of flooding of urban areas. Just were the Bassac branches off, a new island buildt up by sediments surfaced a few years ago (Koh Pich or Diamond Island). Damming up the Mekong outflow adds to the rising risk of flooding caused by high top water levels of the Mekong. A proposal, put forward by the Mekong River Commission, to remove this island altogether, had no chance to be accepted against mighty interests (Wehrmann 2005, 238). After the removal of informal settlements on Koh Pich, now an ambitious urban development with Canadia Bank as its main investor, is going on ("Island City"). For this development the island's level will be raised to nearly 12m a.s.l. and it will be protected by dikes. This will further hamper the Mekong outflow and increase the flood risk for Phnom Penh.



Boeng Kak Urban Development Project

The situation of the hydraulic landscape of Phnom Penh and its surroundings would necessitate a comprehensive urban development planning including a well-designed water management system. But up to now this is not the case. Since the 1990s the urban area rapidly expanded spatially, but in a very unplanned manner and also well beyond the area protected by dikes. Meanwhile more than 40 % of Phnom Penh's urban area are lying outside the dikes and are exposed to flooding (Vann Molyvann 2003, 118). But also in the protected inner city area the risk of flooding during the rainy season is increasing, because the well planned original water management and drainage system, comprising canals, ditches and ponds functioning as retention reservoirs, is only poorly maintained or no longer existing at all. For new buildings in the inner city area the owners mostly look for individual solutions without considering the effects for the water management of the whole city.

Presently, only three larger retention basins remain in the inner city area: Boeng Salang, Boeng Trabaek and Boeng Kak. The area covered by lake water is variable and depends on seasonal rainfall. But it is conceivable that these retention reservoirs will vanish in a short time. The areas of Boeng Salang and Boeng Trabaek are already partially occupied by buildings and the water is heavily littered. The lake of Boeng Kak is presently filled with sand to develop it into a new, high-prize urban area. In a few months the lake will have vanished totally. Not only does this development spark social conflict because the marginal population living and working around Boeng Kak lake will have to move, but also because the loss of one of the last larger inner city retention basins will increase the risk of flooding of large parts of the urban area during the rainy season.

In the coming years the effects of climate change will put the already tenuous flood regulation and protection system of Phnom Penh further under stress. In all of monsoon Southeast Asia not only an increase of the average rainfall per year is expected, but also the more frequent occurrence of extreme events, e.g. very heavy rainfalls concentrated in only a few days or weeks (WBGU 2008, 59 ff.). This is also true for the whole Mekong region. If there is a very intense rainy



Source: Helmut Schneider 2009

The old Hotel International - with marginal dwellers on the roof top

season, combined with above average smelting of snow and glaciers in the Himalaya region and heavy rainfall in Sechuan and the Annamite mountains, this may lead to disastrous floodings along the whole Mekong valley. And it is more likely that such a situation will occur when the climate situation in the Western Pacific area is following the La Niña pattern, leading to above average rainfall in East and Southeast Asia. When due to those combined effects the top water level of the Mekong in the Phnom Penh region exceeds 12 m a.s.l., extended urban areas are not only in danger to be flooded by rain water, but also by flood waters from the rivers, because then the dikes can not hold it back any longer (Vann Molyvann 2003, 125).

### Conflict for lake Boeng Kak

After the downfall of the Khmer Rouge in 1979 re-urbanization of the almost empty cities, strictly regulated by the Vietnamese forces and the new government, only started slowly. A complete new situation emerged after the withdrawal of the Vietnamese Army in 1989, the following switch from planned to market economy, the first elections made possible by the United Nations Transitional Authority (UNTAC) in 1993 and the end of civil war in the second half of the 1990s. Growing numbers of rural-urban migrants now moved to the towns and cities looking for work and a place to live. The population of Phnom Penh grew from only 100,000 in 1979 to 615,000 in 1990 (Shatkin, 1998). It reached one million at the end of the

decade and for 2010 the population of Cambodia's capital was estimated to be around 1.5 million.

The government and the Municipality of Phnom Penh tolerated the new urban inhabitants to move into empty buildings and to occupy open spaces to build their homes. But the switch to market economy also brought the reintroduction of private land ownership. The real estate market began to flourish. The marginal population, the urban poor, were more and more pressed to leave those lots considered by investors to be promising sites for profitable real estate developments. Those who would not leave voluntarily were evicted by force. Because land was state owned and the people living there did not had the chance to secure regular land titles, the land law didn't work in their favour, but the rich and mighty were able to turn it against them. High-ranking public servants and members of the ruling Cambodian Peoples Party (CPP) sold state land to private investors on their own account.

This was possible, because the CPP, to stay in power after the transformation of the country to market economy and (formal) democracy, had successfully developed an extended system of patronage. The marginal population was more and more displaced to urban niches: railway tracks, unused buildings like former cinemas, even the roof tops of multi-storey buildings were used for dwellings, and last but not least sites along inner city ditches, trenches and depressions prone to flooding, among them reten-



tion reservoirs like Boeng Kak.

But with the booming real estate market these urban niches also came under pressure. Land previously considered useless or not usable is now in the focus of investors. And one of these inner city areas in Phnom Penh, which is going to be transformed into a high-prize office, shopping and dwelling complex is Boeng Kak lake (90 ha) and its surroundings (approx. 43 ha). The area is home to approx. 30,000 people living and working there. In 2007 the Boeng Kak area was leased by the Municipality of Phnom Penh to Shukaku Inc. for 99 years. Little is known about this enterprise, but a leading figure is senator Lau Meng Kinh, who is a close ally of president Hun Sen. According to the Cambodian Land Law passed in 2001 the Boeng Kak area is considered “state public property”, because it is a lake of natural origin and its existence is of public interest. “State public property” should be used for public purpose only, it can’t be sold and leasehold is limited to a maximum of 15 years (East-West Management Institute 2003, 53 f.; Grimdsitch & Henderson 2009, 60). Being one of the remaining larger retention reservoirs in the inner city area, Boeng Kak is part of the existing, although tenuous water and flood regulation system. To reject the claim of public interest for Boeng Kak lake, Mao Hak, director in the Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology,

simply challenged the fact: “Boeng Kak is not a flood protection area. It is just a dead lake.” (Phnom Penh Post, 27.8. 2008).

For leasing the lake area Shukaku Inc. had to pay 79 Mio. US\$. But the market value of the area is estimated to be 25-times more than that! (Sokuntheoun SO 2010, 2; Gluckman, 2008). Due to the good relations between the developer and politics the Boeng Kak area was leased to a private enterprise against existing law, and for a prize far below market value. Six months after the leasing agreement was signed, the Municipality of Phnom Penh changed the legal status of the whole area to “state private land”. Land of this category now may be used like any other private property. But even now the population living around the lake was denied the right to claim regular land titles for lots where some already were living since 20 years. First the city’s officials had argued that the whole area was state land and nobody could claim private property rights. After the deal with Shukaku Inc. was made, the argument changed: Now the lake and its surroundings were declared a “development zone”, within which no other competing private property could be claimed.

Apart from being part of the flood protection system of the city, for many families Boeng Kak and its surroundings are also the place to earn their living by growing, harvesting and sel-

ling water vegetables (morning glory) and by working in the backpacker tourism sector with small pension houses, restaurants and tour operators along the lake shore. If they have to move, they will not only lose their homes but many will also lose their income. In 2009 the first eviction orders were passed. It was offered either to accept a compensation payment of 8,500 US\$ per family or to move to an alternate site 15 km to the southwest of inner city. If none of these offers would be accepted, the affected families are threatened with eviction by force.

Whether the whole sum of the promised compensation money is paid, paid instantly or not paid at all, is by no way certain. And going to the courts to claim their right is no option for the urban poor. The resettling of evicted families at the city’s outskirts in the past has already shown that the chosen alternate sites did not have even basic infrastructure facilities like houses, electricity or clean water. And the distance to the inner city area, where one could look for jobs, is too far and expensive for commuting (Dombrowski, 2006). Grimdsitch & Henderson (2009, 61) conclude: “None of these compensation options fulfil international law obligations regarding evictions and have been deemed inadequate by affected persons.”

Since 2008 the lake of Boeng Kak is being filled with sand, which is dredged in the Mekong and pumped







Source: Google Earth 2011

Satellite Picture of Boeng Kak Lake from 2010

through large iron pipes into the lake. Already a large and growing sand bank has emerged in the lake. Thereby the retention capacity of the lake is reduced. Thus during the rainy season in 2010 above average flooding of the lake's shore area occurred and the homes of around 1,000 families were severely damaged so they had to be given up. The NGO Housing Rights Task Force assumes that the developer was well aware of this effect and welcomed it, because it makes the people around the lake leave more quickly. Up

to now neither the Municipality of Phnom Penh nor Shukaku Inc. have, parallel to the filling of the lake, installed an effective drainage system.

**Conclusion**

Apart from the social conflict caused by the Boeng Kak development, filling of the lake, one of the few remaining larger retention reservoirs left in Phnom Penh, will put the inner city area at a higher risk for flooding. This risk is not only a consequence of heavy rainfall during the rainy season,

but also of high top water levels of the Mekong and Tonle Sap, which are to be expected in the future due to the effects of climate change. These effects will put the already tenuous flood regulation system of Phnom Penh and its surroundings under severe stress. The Boeng Kak case also shows an extraordinary degree of recklessness of the country's elite looking for quick profits and personal enrichment, often jointly with foreign investors and at the expense of the environment and the poor. An explanation for the elite's



Source: Helmut Schneider 2009



behaviour can be found in the political development since the downfall of the Khmer Rouge in 1979, which has led to a nationwide system of patronage coordinated by the ruling party, in fact the base of the elite's political power in present day Cambodia (Gottesman, 2004; Hughes, 2003).

The conflict for Boeng Kak lake is shown here as an exemplary environmental conflict (not only) for Cambodia. Conflict is not caused by environment per se, but by social actors with conflicting interests and different means of political power, which in effect may increase environmental risks. Cambodia's mighty elite, following its interests at the expense of the environment and the urban poor, is increasing the environmental risk for Phnom Penh. And, at least in this case, the urban poor, by defending their homes and their sources of income, also defend the hydraulic stability of the city.

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# Tourism in New Zealand: A Critical Perspective on Current & Future Issues

*Julia N. Albrecht*

**Abstract:** *Tourism in New Zealand is often described as a successful partnership of a number of industries including hospitality, transport, retail and core tourism products such as attractions. Whilst the impression given by current statistics is positive, this article seeks to draw attention to some of the threats faced by New Zealand's inbound and domestic tourism and related industries in the future. Some hindrances to further development arise from global issues; others result from local issues such as current political decisions and occurrences within the country. The industries are facing change and an uncertain future; government and regulatory bodies are identified to have the most potential to mitigate, delay or avoid the issues identified in order to achieve a development that is sustainable in social, economic and environmental terms. First, the recent situation of tourism-related industries is presented. The subsequent discussion of possible future challenges may be of value to readers with interests in management of tourism and tourism development.*

**Key Words:** *New Zealand; international tourism; domestic tourism; tourism development; tourism planning and management*

*[Submitted as Scientific Paper: 11 January 2011, revised paper received and accepted 16 March 2011]*

Milford track between Mintaro hut and Dumpling hut

Source: J. Albrecht





Source: Gabriel, Flickr: Cathedral Square 24/02

International tourism contributed NZ\$ 9.5 billion in export earnings to New Zealand's economy in the year ending March 2010 (Tourism Strategy Group 2010). Thus accounting for 18.2% of NZ's total export earnings, tourism is the country's largest export earner after the dairy industry (Schilling, Zuccollo & Nixon, 2010). Often underestimated in its relevance for NZ's economy, domestic tourism contributed another NZ\$ 12.9 billion. Excluding Good and Services Tax (GST) and import duties, the tourism industries combined provide 8.7% of the GDP; almost 10% of the workforce (182,400 individuals) is employed in tourism (Tourism Strategy Group 2010). Whilst these numbers emphasise the current significance of tourism to the NZ economy, further long-term growth cannot be taken for granted. This article assesses challenges in the future development of tourism in New Zealand. Whilst current forecasts predict further growth (Ministry of Tourism, 2010), a number of factors that potentially hinder an increase in visitor numbers are identified. First, an overview of international and domestic tourism is provided; this is followed by a consideration of fuel costs, environmental concerns and possible impacts of travel taxes. In order to reflect factors within New Zealand, recent government and policy decisions, the fragmented education system as well as possible impacts of natural disasters are discussed.

### International markets

The top five international markets are Australia, the UK, the USA, China and Japan; combined these markets account for 70% of international visitors (see Table 1). The average intended length of stay is over 20 days; it varies greatly depending on the visitor market in question. Business visitors as well as Australian and Asian visitors tend to stay for a shorter time whereas, for example, free independent travellers from European countries stay significantly longer. As a result of spatial proximity as well as personal and business links, Australia is the top market both in terms of holiday and business travel. The same holds true, even though to a lesser extent, for the UK

markets. Interestingly, China and Japan are the only markets that show a significant growth; whereas Japanese are mainly holiday visitors; some of the growth in the Chinese market can be attributed to increased economic relationships between NZ and China (thus contributing to the, also significant, increase in business travel as listed in Table 1).

These markets differ in the type of travel visitors engage in. Travel modes include backpacking, package tours that are often associated with Asian visitor markets and free independent and semi-independent travelling. The latter travel modes are generally associated with Western markets but these trends are currently about to change. Another

important distinction is in lengths of stay. Australian visitors, for example, have the shortest lengths of stay (Ministry of Tourism, 2009a); Germans stay the longest (Ministry of Tourism, 2009b). Whilst this can be clearly be attributed to the distance travelled to the destinations, it also reflects travel modes (for example, Australians are more likely to visit friends and relatives whereas many German visitors fall in the category of free independent travellers) as well as annual leave allocations.

### Domestic tourism

Domestic tourism is often underestimated as an economic force. Whilst despite high earnings not as valued as foreign exchange earning international



tourism, Table 2 illustrates that domestic tourism generates almost 50 million guest nights. Taking into account that the average spend per night per domestic traveller is NZ\$ 118 (compared to only NZ\$ 113 for international visitors; Tourism Strategy Group, 2010), domestic tourism is indeed relevant. This is particularly pertinent as the industries' reliance on domestic tourism is likely to increase in case international tourism declines.

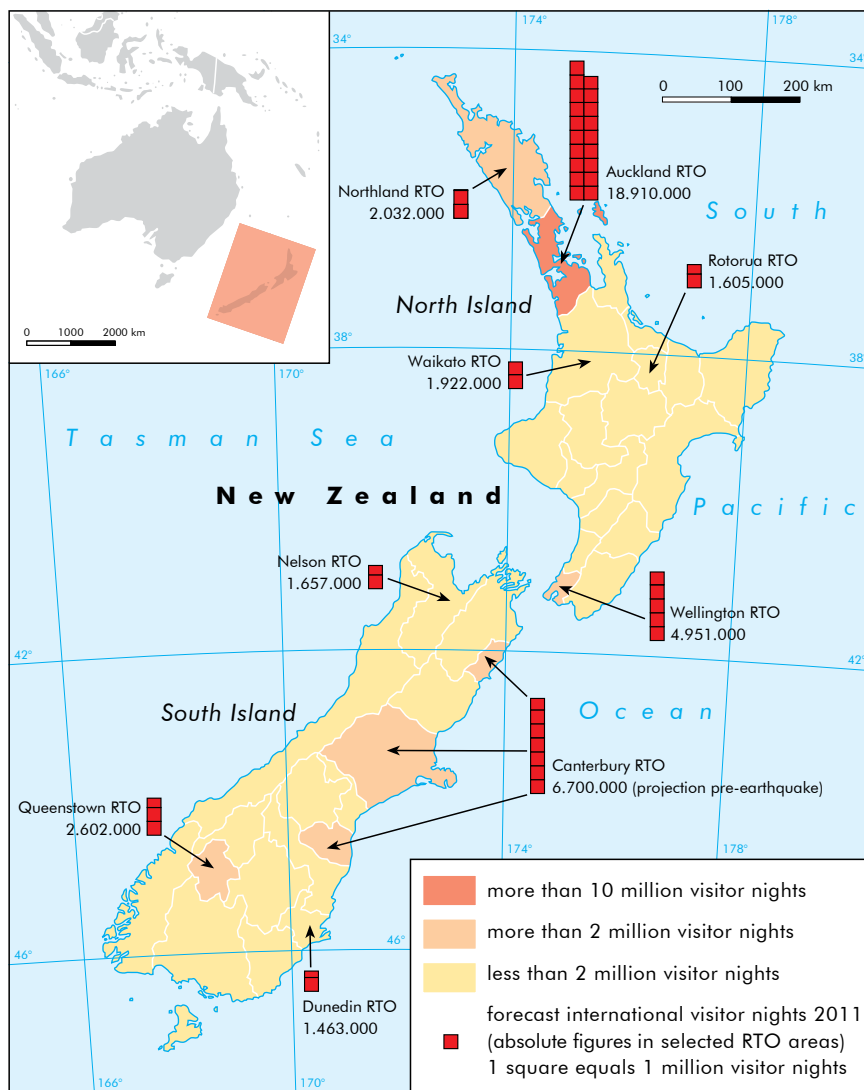
As the following discussion will show, domestic tourism is also less likely to suffer from a number of current issues that are likely to impact on international tourism such as rising fuel costs or increased environmental concern of travellers. While comparatively short travel distances clearly have a role in this consideration, the very high importance of VFR trips that are typically prioritised highly in travel decision-making is unlikely to decrease.

The following will identify and discuss issues that are likely to impact on the development of tourism in NZ in the future. These are rising fuel costs and a growing environmental concern of consumers, a growing uncertainty as more countries implement travel taxes, deficiencies in holistic governance and planning for tourism and a fragmented tourism education system.

### Fuel costs & environmental concerns

Increasing costs in fuel are widely discussed as a challenge to agriculture, industry and service in general; the issue shall therefore not be discussed in great depth here. Diminishing resources are well recognised as having impacts on both travel behaviour (for example, in terms of travel decision making; Kelly, Haider & Williams, 2007; Xia, 2010).

Over the last 15 years, however, an additional factor has grown in importance. Consumer awareness of environmental issues has grown considerably, having additional impact on travel decision-making and wiping long-haul destinations from the maps (and travel intentions) of a growing number of travellers. Goodwin (1996) was one of the first researchers to emphasise this but the phenomenon has since been confirmed by a number of researchers (Miller, 2001; Williams & Ponsford 2009). This development puts NZ and its destination marketing



Forecast international visitor nights per Regional Tourism Organisation (RTO) areas

in an awkward situation: the country is sold as a “clean and green” destination (see images on page 11 & 14), a label that is impossible to uphold in the face of growing concern about the impacts of long-haul travel.

### Impact of travel taxes

Supposedly so as to address environmental issues as well as consumer concern, travel taxes have been introduced in the UK, one of NZ's top markets. These have been met with considerable criticism. Despite being hailed as a “green” tax, there has not been significant spending on green issues from the funds raised through that tax (Starmer-Smith, 2009). Also, the tax can be seen to deter environmental benefits by creating the impression that air passengers “offset” their environmental impact by paying the tax.

As the tax to pay by the traveller increases with distance travelled, a return trip from London to Auckland now costs an additional NZ\$ 648,

roughly the equivalent of five days worth of average spending at the destination (see above; Coventry, 2010). This move is heavily criticised by NZ tourism industry representatives who state in a letter to British economy secretary Justine Greening:

“It is our understanding that the UK government intends to generate £ 520 million from the APD [Air Passenger Duty] without any specific environmental initiatives in mind. As well as deterring travellers, the APD is having a huge impact on airlines that are already making a contribution of £ 2,000 millions to the UK government's consolidated accounts.” (Coventry 2010, 1)

This undoubtedly creates a provoking situation for players in the transport industries and adds uncertainty to already volatile markets. Taking a holistic macro-economic viewpoint, consulting agency McKinsey & Company (2011) suggests that in addition to the dubiousness of claims of environmental benefits, expected econo-

Pacific News Cartography: © Claus Cartens 2011, Source: Ministry of Tourism 2010



Ferry at Glade Wharf – Lake Te Anau

mic benefits of such taxes are lacking. The above issues are relevant for destinations that are primarily long-haul and, indeed, as tourism is the most important export earner in New Zealand, reliance on the industry is more intensive than in some other long-haul destinations. In 2009/10, tourism was only the third most valuable export industry in Australia after mining and manufacturing (Australian Government, 2010; Anthill, 25 January 2010). Consequently, Australia is much less vulnerable to developments hindering its tourism industries. The issues discussed in the following sections are specific to NZ as they derive from developments within the country.

### Governance and planning

When the New Zealand Tourism Strategy 2015 (NZTS 2015) was released in 2007; its declared aim was that "in 2015, tourism is valued as the leading contributor to a sustainable New Zealand economy" (Ministry of

Tourism, Tourism New Zealand, Tourism Industry Association 2007, 5). The document resulted from a comprehensive consultation process that involved most relevant industry and government representatives and organisations. Prepared under a Labour government, the strategy has not received the same attention and implementation support under the National government since 2008. New strategic directions have not been communicated since then and, as a result, the industries lack government support both in terms of resources and advice. This impression is endorsed by the fact that on 16 August 2010, the Ministry of Tourism was incorporated into the Ministry of Economic Development and ceased to exist as a separate entity. Resourcing for the newly established Tourism Strategy Group may not allow, for example, for the same level of industry-relevant research which was previously seen as one of the strengths of tourism governance

in NZ. Furthermore, a new CEO of Tourism New Zealand is currently implementing changes to the international marketing campaigns that aim to attract new target markets; for example, there is now a larger focus on marketing to the US than previously.

These efforts largely take place simultane-

ously and do not seem to be coordinated by any single agency. As a result, providers and managers of attractions, accommodation and transport are not closely involved. The experiences they offer and manage may therefore not be in line with what is communicated through marketing, a situation that can potentially lead to a gap between visitor expectations and tourism products.

### Fragmented education

The quality, education and motivation of staff are clearly a significant feature of all products of service industries and tourism is no exception. Education providers respond to this challenge by offering a multitude of qualifications and degrees to prepare students for careers in tourism and hospitality. It is estimated that education institutions in NZ offer more than 600 related qualifications (personal communication Albrecht 2010). While this seems to respond to the shortage of staff in these industries, the real issues lie elsewhere.

Tourism and hospitality are not seen as sectors that potentially provide desirable career options. Indeed, tourism is perceived as a temporary career option for younger people. Reasons for this include seasonality and low pay rates but in order for tourism providers to be able to provide and manage their products professionally, experience and education are necessary. This situation is aggravated by another current development: In late 2010, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) has proposed changes to university entrance requirements. So far, credits earned in tourism courses at secondary school counted towards students' university entrance requirements. As many first-year students in tourism and tourism management have indeed completed such courses, they seemed to provide an avenue into a career in tourism and tourism management. Under the new proposal, only core courses such as mathematics, languages, science and humanities would count towards university entrance. Whilst the value of a humanistic and scientific (read non-vocational) education will be obvious to most readers, it is also understandable that the Aviation, Tourism and Travel Training Organisation (ATTTO) objects strongly to these plans (Valentine 2010).

The difficulty in addressing these challenges arises from the fact that

Key markets	Visitors (until Nov. 2010)	Annual growth
Australia	1,115,408	4.4%
UK	237,909	-7.8%
USA	191,902	-1.6%
China	120,222	15.0%
Japan	88,324	12.0%
Purpose of visit		
Holiday	1,210,449	2.9%
Visiting friends and relatives	781,219	0.4%
Business	249,179	8.4%

Table 1: International tourism markets and purpose of visit



none of these issues can be resolved by one actor or organisation only. Both require the collaboration (or at least agreement) of a number of players and, consequently, the responsibility lies with institutions in governance and planning at the national and regional levels as well as industry organisations.

### Natural disasters

Situated on the boundary of the Australian Plate and Pacific Plate, New Zealand is well known for its particular proneness to earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and geothermal activity. The need for the tourism industries to be prepared for related disasters has been comprehensively discussed in a previous issue of Pacific News (Orchiston 2009) and shall not be explored in more detail here. The earthquake on 22 February 2011 in Christchurch hit the South Island's major gateway for international travellers. Whilst Christchurch's inner city was still off limits at the time of writing this article (see image on page 12), the international airport was operational within hours of the tremor. Airlines as well as ferry companies were able to evacuate travellers to other centres within a short timeframe. Whilst, given the circumstances, visitors to the region were dealt with exemplarily and the majority of tourism operators in the Christchurch region are up and running, there are reasonable fears among tourism operators that the earthquake may put off international visitors, in particular those from Asian markets that are known to be risk-averse.

### Outlook

The discussion of the current state of affairs and future challenges above has emphasised a number of problems in the future of NZ's tourism-related industries. To date, the country successfully draws from its relatively unspoilt natural environment (a result of low population density, not environmental considerations), its successful international marketing campaigns and the fact that NZ is comparatively easy to travel as the infrastructure is well developed and the first language is English. However, drawbacks that result from current global developments as well as distance to visitor markets may have a considerable impact. In addition, countries like Norway and Chile aspire to offer very similar pro-



Te Puia, New Zealand Maori Arts & Crafts Institute, in Rotorua.

Source: J. Albrecht

ducts and both competitors are in closer proximity to some of NZ's core markets (Norway to Europe, Chile to the US and Canada). Cultural tourism drawing from NZ's indigenous Māori culture provides an opportunity to diversify but whether this opportunity can be seized successfully is still unclear (see image above). Film-induced tourism, first a result of the filming of Lord of the Rings from the late 1990s, now also including Bollywood and other international productions such as America's Next Topmodel, has become a driver of tourism development that is expected to increase in significance with the filming and producing of "The Hobbit" from 2011.

It remains therefore to be seen whether tourism in NZ can truly sustain itself as a major export earner in the long run. The current political framework suggests that there is only limited government support. Indeed, as made clear above, the current National

government mainly expresses interests in the economic aspects of the industry, leaving aside issues related to the natural environment and education. One focus of tourism industries must be the domestic sector. It is already significant in economic terms but there is neither marketing nor planning for domestic tourism. Taking into account NZ's aging population, increasing urbanisation as well as a likely decline in international tourism in the long term, the relevance of domestic tourism will increase. With much uncertainty ahead, few predictions can be made

Domestic trips	(in millions, year ending September 2010)
Day trips	27.5
Overnight trips	16
Total nights	47.7
Purpose of visit	
Holiday	16.5
Visiting friends and relatives (VFR)	14.9
Business	10.4

Table 2: Domestic tourism and purpose of visit

Source: Tourism Strategy Group 2010





for tourism but there is no doubt that the industries must adapt if they are to sustain the destination, themselves and their workforce economically, socially and ecologically.

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# First Light - a reinterpretation of the New Zealand "bach"



Tobias Danielmeier & Julia N. Albrecht

The Solar Decathlon, an international architecture competition hosted bi-annually by the U.S. Department of Energy, challenges 20 university teams to demonstrate innovative solutions to designing and building solar-powered houses that feature cost-effective, energy-efficient construction and incorporate energy-saving appliances and renewable energy systems. Since its inception in 2002, the Solar Decathlon has developed into a highly anticipated design competition that attracts significant media attention. In 2009, over 300,000 visitors attended the event on the National Mall, Washington DC. Befitting the size of its audience, the competition does not only address the student audience by providing participants with hands-on training and opportunities for inter-disciplinary collaboration; it also aims to encourage innovation, research, collaboration between academia and various industries involved in the field as well as to educate the general public about uses of renewable energy and energy efficiency.



Source all pictures: First Light, Victoria University of Wellington.

## PACIFIC NEWS PICTURES

The First Light house has been entered into the competition by Victoria University, Wellington. Accepted as a contestant in April 2010, it is the first ever competition entry by a university in the Southern hemisphere. The 75 m<sup>2</sup> house is inspired by the “Kiwi bach” (pronounced *batch*), a type of modest holiday home popular with middle class owners in the mid to late 20th century. As the houses themselves do not always offer much comfort (some baches still lack running water or electricity), the outdoors are a significant component of bach life. Whilst First Light’s amenities, of course, go beyond electricity and running water, the focus on social and family time, recreation and outdoor living remains. Deck and patio, fitted with planter boxes that hold New Zealand native plants, have been partly internalised so that the “outdoor” space can be used year-round as an area to meet visitors and dine together. The emphasis is on providing social spaces; First Light is not conceptualised as a permanent domicile. Sleeping (for up to six people) and living places are on either side of the indoor/ outdoor area.

Materials and colours for the First Light House have been chosen such that the holiday home blends into the New Zealand landscape. Furniture by

New Zealand designers accompanies custom built parts of the interior. The preparation of detailed renderings has assisted in the selection of materials, colours and finishes. Building timber is a comparatively inexpensive in New Zealand; however, its real benefit lies in its flexibility that allows for accommodating technological equipment while using traditional 2-by-4 construction techniques. The external timber canopy provides shade and houses the 40m<sup>2</sup> of photovoltaic panels as well as the solar water heating system. In order to minimise energy consumption and maximise possibilities for the use of solar energy, the building is flexible to climatic conditions (for example, sliding shutters allow the manual regulation of solar gain), efficiently insulated and mechanically ventilated.

All products used in the competition need to be commercially available; this includes appliances with high energy efficiency ratings, the LED lighting that replaces the conventional incandescent or fluorescent lighting and the heating and cooling system that consists of a heat pump in combination with a heat recovery unit. Overall, First Light uses only one third of the energy used by a comparable New Zealand dwelling. Users of the house are able to monitor their energy usage

with an intuitive home monitoring system. This example of easily transferable technology does not immediately reduce energy consumption but increases user awareness of consumption of specific products and, as such, can have impacts beyond the First Light project. The main sponsor, a “green” energy provider, and the university hope to build knowledge of sustainable building among New Zealanders. It is possible to receive financial support for insulating existing buildings through the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority; contributions towards installation of solar panels are unavailable at present.

The modules of the First Light House have been pre-assembled in a storehouse. Then, in May 2011, the house was assembled for the first time on the Wellington waterfront. During that period of four weeks, the performance of the technology was tested. As “communication” is another category of judging criteria, guided tours for visitors were also piloted during that time. Students of tourism management have worked with the architecture and landscape design students in the development of guided tours and visitor management to be implemented in Wellington as well as in Washington.





## PACIFIC NEWS PICTURES



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# From Chanting to Chán: About the Generational Gap among Vietnamese Buddhists in Switzerland

Frank André Weigelt

*Abstract: As a consequence of the wars in Indochina, thousands of Vietnamese Buddhist refugees have come to Switzerland since the mid-1970s. Today, there are 13,000 Vietnamese living in Switzerland; approximately 6,000 of them are Buddhists. Over the course of time, the first generation of these migrants established three pagodas in Switzerland. However, fewer and fewer of the young members of the second generation attend the pagodas today. The first generation fears the disappearance of their religion, traditions, and culture. In response to the lack of interest, the older laity is searching for a solution with the help of the Vietnamese Sangha. The purported solution is to practice more Chán (Zen) elements instead of sutra and mantra chanting, because many of the young no longer speak the Vietnamese language fluently.*

*The following paper is an extract of some research results from the author's Ph.D. project on Vietnamese Buddhism in Switzerland, a work that is still in progress. The author identifies problems arising between the first and second generation of Vietnamese Buddhists in Switzerland concerning their religious tradition and practices and describes how these people deal with them. The paper presents empirical findings collected during three and a half years of fieldwork and participant observation research in Switzerland.*

*The theoretical aim of the article is to provide a short analysis of how migrants of the first and second generations deal with the generational gap concerning their religious practices and which dynamics could be responsible for the changes of the religious needs among Vietnamese Buddhists in Switzerland.*

**Key Words:** Vietnamese Buddhism; generational gap; Switzerland; religious dynamics; diaspora; migration

*[Submitted as Scientific Paper: 30 March 2011, Acceptance of the revised manuscript: 10 May 2011]*

(Im)migrants in a diaspora situation have to reinterpret their individual and as appropriate their collective identity within the new cultural context in which they live, as well as across national boundaries (Vertovec, 2009; Baumann, 2000; Hall, 1994). Religion, religious practice, and needs are often among the main identity-markers for creating a new and stable collective identity (Levitt, 2001). The emerging pagodas and cultural-religious associations are among the main focal points for a new and changing group identity (Baumann, 2000). The question is how (im)migrants of the first and second generation deal with the generational gap in terms of their religious tradition and which dynamics account for the changes of the religious practices and needs. In this article, the main focus is on Vietnamese Buddhist immigrants in Switzerland.

The data presented is based exclusively on qualitative methods such as (narrative-biographical) interviews and discussions in German and French. In addition to the authors archive stu-

dies on the incorporation of Vietnamese refugees in Switzerland since the mid-1970s, he undertook three and a half years of fieldwork and participant observation among Vietnamese

Buddhists in Switzerland between October 2007 and the end of 2010.

The beginning of the Vietnamese Diaspora in Europe dates back to the time between 1946 and 1954 during



the first Indochina war (Lê Thành Khôi, 1969). Some students, members of the embassy staff, and merchants applied for asylum in European countries (Lê Thành Khôi, 1969). However, most ethnic Vietnamese and Sino-Vietnamese (Chinese citizens whose families had lived in Vietnam since generations) fled their country due to the various wars in Indochina between 1955 and 1979 (Vietnam War, war between Cambodia and Vietnam, Sino-Vietnamese war) (Ho, 2003).

Between 1975 and 1995, 8,000 refugees from Vietnam came to Switzerland as contingent refugees. The refugee population reflected the whole range of age, social strata, and gender (Weigelt, 2010). In the beginnings of this migration, most of the people came with their families. Later, people came by way of family reunification, marriage, and occasionally through labour migration. Today, more than 13,000 people from Vietnam live in Switzerland, approximately 8,000 of them have already acquired citizenship since 1991 (Weigelt, 2010). In total, they constitute 0.16% of the total Swiss population (of approx. 8,000,000 people). Although the resettlement of these refugees followed a highly dispersed pattern, there are three Swiss regions with a strikingly high number of Vietnamese refugees in the low-lands of Switzerland.

Over the course of time, three Buddhist pagodas emerged – one each in the regions of Lausanne (Canton Vaud), Berne, and Lucerne (Weigelt, 2010). It should be noted, however, that not all of the migrants are Buddhists. Some of them are Christians; some are followers of Cao-Dai, Hoa-Hao, Confucians or Daoists. Others simply practice the cult of ancestors, which may also be regarded as the fundamental religious practice of Vietnamese people (Lauser, 2008). Today, Buddhists make up approximately 50% of the entire Vietnamese population in Switzerland, while around 20% are Catholics. The remaining 30% are members of other religious affiliations (Weigelt, 2010).

Today, most of these people have lived in Switzerland for over 30 years. Some of them came as adults and some as children. This article will not discuss how the second generation should be categorized. When speaking of the “first generation”, we refer primarily to those people came to Swit-

zerland as adult refugees. The term “second generation” refers to those descendants of the first generation who were mainly or exclusively socialized in the country of immigration. The first generation introduced their religious practice in this case, Vietnamese-Buddhist practice – into the new context. In all three Swiss pagodas worshippers practice a traditional combination of Chán and Pure-Land Buddhism, which is part of the greater Mahāyāna tradition (Ho, 1999, 2003).

### Introduction to Vietnamese Buddhism

Buddhist practice came to Vietnam between the first and second centuries CE (Berchert & Duy-Tu, 1970; Ho, 2003). During almost 1,800 years of history, the Buddhist practices and teachings in Vietnam have adapted to country-specific customs and traditions and developed into an autonomous tradition of religious practice and teaching – a popular religion (Ho, 2003). Besides the connection between the two Buddhist schools of Pure Land (*Tịnh độ tông*) and Chán (*Thiền tông*), Vietnamese Buddhist practice includes many elements of the Vietnamese path of ancestor worship (*Đạo thờ cúng tổ tiên*), of hero worship (*Huyền Thoại Anh Hùng*), Daoism (*Đạo giáo*), and Confucianism (*Khổng giáo*) as well as the worship of guardian deities (*Tín ngưỡng thờ Thành Hoàng*) (Berchert & Duy-Tu, 1970). Daoism and Confucianism came to Vietnam as part of an ongoing cultural and political interaction with China (Ho, 2003). There was a great and sustained influence between the respective teachings and practices. Therefore, many respondents referred to the concept of *Tam giáo* – “the three teachings” or “the three teachings are one”.

Contemporary Vietnamese-Buddhist practice is primarily inspired by the ideas of the Chinese monk and Buddhist modernist Taixu (1890-1947) (DeVito, 2009). Until the beginning of the 20th century, Buddhist doctrine and practice in Vietnam was marked by an increasing decline and of minor importance (Ho, 2003). Inspired by the work of Taixu, Vietnamese-Buddhist reformers revitalized their religious practice since 1920 (DeVito, 2009). In theory and practice, the teachings of the Pure Land School (*Tịnh độ tông*) were emphasized, and the laity activities were strengthened (De-

Vito, 2009). The acquisition of religious merit was and is one of the main religious practices in order to gain a better rebirth – most prominently in the Pure Land of Buddha Amithaba (*A Di Đà Phật*) (Ho, 2003). This means that the adoration and recitation of the names of various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas occurs mainly through recitations of sutras and mantras (Ho, 2003). Good works are also regarded as important (Baumann, 2000). The main reason for this action is the assumption that the attainment of nirvana in life is almost impossible for lay people, and therefore the main focus is on the attainment of a better rebirth (Baumann, 2000).

### Empirical findings

The people concerned in Switzerland mostly practice their religious tradition twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening. Provided they do not have to go to work, they go to the pagodas. The chanting of sutras and mantras is done in Vietnamese language only. Based on the author's field research in the Swiss pagodas, it can be said that the majority of practitioners are elderly ladies as well as some men (Soucy, 2009). The second generation is hardly represented. What are the reasons for this demographic among religious practitioners?

The author interviewed many people from the 1st and 2nd generation. One of the main reasons seems to be the “language difficulties” of the second generation. Most of them do not have very good Vietnamese skills or simply “incomplete knowledge of the Vietnamese language”. Most of the younger interview partners were born and socialized in Switzerland. They are between 16 and 32, years old, are still in school, employed, or in an apprenticeship. All of them were asked about their religious affiliation. Some of them told that they “do not belong to any religion”, but if they had to decide, most of them “would be Buddhists”. When they were asked why they do not belong to a religion or why they do not practice Buddhism, the most common answer was they “had simply no time or no interest”. A frequent response was that respondents “have to go to school”, to work, and meet their friends. Another answer was that they do not practice Buddhism with their parents or at the pagodas because they “do not understand the Vietnamese





language of the sutras and mantras well". Their knowledge of the Vietnamese language is insufficient. Some young people told that they "understand the language of their parents at home", but they "cannot speak and read it fluently" themselves.

It is worth noting that there is no permanent private or official school in Switzerland for the young people to learn the Vietnamese language. All of the younger people have to learn German, French, and English in regular schools. Another problem is that in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, they also have to learn the Swiss-German language, which is a marked vernacular of the German language. A few people also told that some of the families "do not really speak the Vietnamese language at home but the German one" because the first generation came to settle in Switzerland permanently and so they "can improve their new language". This information attests to the will of the migrants to become incorporated linguistically.

All of the pagodas in Switzerland are experiencing a big loss or lack of young members due to a lack of capabilities for adequate teaching and practice for the second generation, mainly because of language difficulties and the lack of interest among the younger generation to go to the pagodas. As a result, members of the first generation "fear the disappearance" of their "religion, traditions, and culture". In response to the lack of interest, the older laity is searching for a solution with help of the Vietnamese Sangha. The Venerable Monk Thích Như Điển of the Viên

Giác pagoda in Hannover/Germany told that "one solution of this problem could be to practice more Chán elements instead of sutra and mantra chanting" precisely because "many of the young people no longer speak the Vietnamese language". But what does that mean, and which options do the elders take into consideration?

To practise more Chán elements means to focus on meditation and less on recitation and chanting. The younger should improve their Buddhist practice through *Zazen* (seated meditation); *Kinbin* (walk meditation); *Samu* (concentrated activity), and the work with *Kôans* (short Buddhist riddles). In short, "they should improve their *samadhi*" or *dhyâna*, i.e., Chán. (meditative immersion). Thus, some interview partners of the second generation told that they "mostly practice meditation". They can do it whenever they want, both "in the pagoda" as well as "at work or during the car drive".

Accordingly, members of the first generation now frequently invite Vietnamese Chán monks from the US or France to teach meditation. But what about the spoken language of the monks?

Most are able to teach the youth in English or French. Also, the German-speaking monks and nuns teach increasingly meditative aspects of Vietnamese-Buddhist practice in addition to the traditional sutra and mantra recitations.

In addition to the pagodas, the Vietnamese-Buddhist youth groups in Switzerland are important contact



points and institutions for the second generation – mainly for those of the second generation who are interested in practising Buddhism regularly. In the context of the Vietnamese Buddhist revival movement since 1920, the Buddhist layman Lê Đình Thám (Dharmaname Tâm Minh, 1897-1969) founded the precursory institutions of today's GĐPT (*Gia đình Phật tử Việt Nam*) (Ho, 2003). In Switzerland, two Vietnamese-Buddhist youth groups exist today: the GĐPT-Thiền Trí and GĐPT-Linh Sơn. The goal of this institution is mainly the education of young people in terms of Buddhism and their ability to participate in a social society in the sense of Buddhism. This means that older members teach younger ones in rituals and teachings of Vietnamese Buddhist practice and also in cultural aspects like folkloristic dance, cooking, clothes etc.

But what actually happens is the same problem as in the pagodas. “The younger members don't speak the Vietnamese language any more” to the extent needed to recite and understand the appropriate mantras and sutras. What is striking is that most of the members of the youth groups are adults who already have family themselves. Most of them were born in Vietnam and came to Switzerland as children or teenagers. They speak the Vietnamese language fluently in addition to French and/or German. But people who were born and educated in Switzerland often have problems with the Vietnamese language.

The youth groups deal with these issues by pursuing a different goal than the pagodas. The leaders are preparing for the generation change by using “more German or French literature” in addition to Vietnamese literature. They are also beginning to translate Vietnamese-Buddhist sutras or other texts into German or French. It is also noticeable that they are “very interested in the Buddhist practice of Thích Nhất Hạnh especially concerning Mindfulness (*sati*)”.

Thích Nhất Hạnh is one of most famous Vietnamese Chán masters in the world today. He lives in Plume Village in France. But the members of the youth groups also emphasize that they are “only interested in the Chán practice and not in the doctrine of Thích Nhất Hạnh”. To the repeated question why they are not interested in the teaching, they mostly gave the



Chua Phat To Thich Ca, Emmenbrücke

same answer: “The teaching of Thích Nhất Hạnh is incomprehensible from the perspective of a 'traditional' Vietnamese-Buddhist doctrine”. Some people claim that his teaching of an “Engaged Buddhism is mostly aimed at Western people”, for example “his interpretation of the Sangha”, in which monks, nuns, and lay people are included.

### Analysis

The potential for change of the second generation is obvious. Many members of the second generation are socialised in the country of immigration, but, quite significantly, their socialisation happened mainly through their parents (Weißköppel, 2007). Consequently, they were able to establish ties to the country where their parents come from. Therefore, the second generation of immigrants is socialised through two different social systems and therefore “lives in two worlds” – in a metaphorical sense.

The second-generation experience of being socialised in two different social systems is a starting point for addressing the generational relationship. On the one hand, we have the aspirations of the first generation, who wish to hold on to the values, norms, and traditions of their home country. On the other hand, the second generation will manage their way of life in Switzerland. That means the second generation is in fact strongly influenced by their ‘parent culture’, i.e., the systems of meaning and significance of practices of the country of origin (Weißköppel, 2007). But they are also strongly determined through relations

and practices together with their peers and the residence country. It is clear that neither of these analytical classifications – the parental and peer-cultures – can be regarded as homogeneous (Weißköppel, 2007). Nevertheless, in the case of the Vietnamese-Buddhist immigrants, and their descendants, we can refer in an analytical sense to two different ways of life and horizons of experience. This results in a shift in religious practices and needs. Responsible monks and nuns emphasize aspects of their religious tradition in educating the second generation. They mainly assert religious aspects, which have held less importance for lay people since the reforms of Taixu in Vietnam (see above).

The data presented shows the great extent to which religious orientation derived from the country of origin is subject to new dynamics from the country of immigration. On the one hand, the religious self-conception will change, while on the other hand, the religious identity has been revitalized in both the first generation as well as in some parts of the second generation.

At this point, the author would like to note that in recent years, Chán or Zen Buddhist practices respectively have experienced an enormous surge and won increasingly numbers of new members. Since the 1960s, significant parts of the European population, mainly in the German-speaking part of Europe, have shown interest in Buddhism (Baumann, 1998). The growing interest in Buddhist contents and practices is closely related to the social processes of change since the 1960s



Ceremony to value the ancestors, Emmenbrücke

(Baumann, 1998). One of the main outcomes of the transfer of values at that time was that people increasingly felt free to choose and select their religious beliefs (Baumann, 1998).

The religious changes among Vietnamese Buddhists in Switzerland can therefore also be explained by postulating that the immigrant population share a similar religious need with those parts of the European population who are interested in Chán Buddhist practices. Both groups were and are confronted with a change of values, one through social processes of change within the European societies, the other through processes of mainly forced migration resulting in corresponding dynamics in the social and religious field of the sociocultural environment in which the migrants live.

## Conclusion

Today, there are more than 13,000 Vietnamese immigrants living in Switzerland. Over time, the Buddhist part of the Vietnamese immigrant population founded three pagodas in Switzerland, in which they practice a traditional combination between Chán and Pure-Land Buddhism. All Buddhist texts are in Vietnamese language, and this is one of the main problems for the second generation or for those younger people who do not speak the Vietnamese language at all or only insufficiently. One solution for this problem could be to practice more Chán

elements instead of sutra and mantra chanting in accordance with the practices of the venerable monks. To practise more Chán elements means to focus on meditation and less on recitation and chanting.

In addition to the pagodas, the Vietnamese-Buddhist youth groups in Switzerland currently have the same problems as the pagodas. In order to resolve the attendant difficulties, the youth groups have started to translate Vietnamese-Buddhist sutras or other relevant texts into German or French. In addition, they are also interested in Chán elements, mostly as developed by the venerable Chán master Thích Nhất Hạnh, who lives in France.

Analytically the potential of change is obvious. The second generation has been socialised within and in accordance with two different social systems, although most of them were born in Switzerland and have already obtained Swiss citizenship. The religious changes within the sampling unit can therefore be interpreted by postulating that the second generation of Vietnamese-Buddhist immigrants share a similar religious need with the many European people who are interested in Zen Buddhist practices. Both groups were and are confronted with a change of values, which creates the potential to a religious reorientation or to dynamics within the own religious tradition.

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# Tourism and the (Un)Expected: A Research Note

Anna Huebner

*Abstract: This research note attempts to introduce the reader to the recent notion of 'Last Chance Tourism'. Whilst the idea of travelling to places of destruction or devastation is not new to tourism studies, 'Last Chance Tourism' is being particularly associated with destinations already impacted or projected to be impacted by adverse affects of climate change. The note recognises latest studies in the field and puts forth a number of directions for future research in the Pacific region.*

*Key Words: last chance tourism; climate change; low-lying islands; Pacific region*

*[Submitted as Research Note: 10 April 2011, Acceptance of the revised reviewed manuscript: 06 May 2011]*

Introducing Last Chance Tourism: Alongside the global climate change discourse, travelling to destinations ceasing to exist in their original form has gained in popularity in recent years (Hall, 2010; Lemelin, Dawson, Stewart, Maher, & Lück, 2010). Different terms have emerged to describe this new 'travel trend', like 'doom tourism', 'the tourism of doom', 'climate change voyeurism', 'climate tourism', 'extinction tourism', or 'last chance tourism', to name but a few (Eijgelaar, Thaper, & Peeters, 2010; Farbotko, 2010; Kendle, 2008; Lemelin, et al., 2010). Explanations though of what such travel constitutes are scarce. Generally, last chance tourism, to which will be referred to herein, is described: as travel to destinations in which the pristine natural environment is to disappear (Dawson, Stewart, Lemelin, & Scott, 2010), as an exclusive travel experience delimited in space and time (Hall, 2010), as a new and somewhat abstract way of an eco-touristic experience (Eijgelaar, et al., 2010), or as yet another "niche tourism market where tourists explicitly seek vanishing landscapes or seascapes, and/or disappearing natural and/or social heritage" (Lemelin, et al. 2010, 478). On the other hand, it has been highlighted that last chance tourism may not necessarily be a 'new trend', but rather a "modern-day version of an old human impulse - to behold an untrammled frontier. Except this time around, instead of being the first to climb a mountain or behold a glacier-fed lake, voyagers [...] are eager to be the ones to see things last" (Expedition News, 2008). This research note offers a brief overview of last chance tourism and its role in tourism development within destinations impacted by climate change to date.



Source of all pictures: J. Sutton-Hibbert, Greenpeace

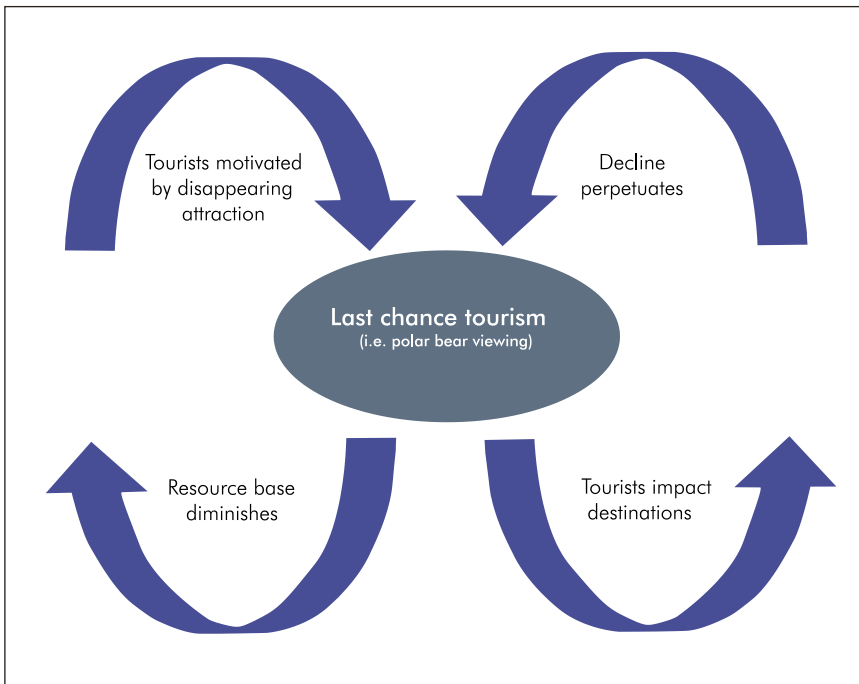


Fig. 1: Perpetuation of Last Chance Tourism in a Context of Ongoing Environmental Change

The notion of last chance tourism has prompted a wider range of popular publications announcing, and thereby somewhat advertising, the ‘last must-see’ places before it may be ‘too late’ to witness them in their yet unspoiled or almost unspoiled condition (Kendle, 2008; Lemelin, et al., 2010). In this regard, the Polar regions have been paid particular attention to in recent years. Declining glaciers and polar bear populations have become iconic representations of climate change and its impacts. At the same time, the fact of their decrease has stimulated an increase in travel. Dawson et al. (2010) illustrate effects and causes of the appeal of a diminishing resource base in their

model of ‘perpetuation of last chance tourism in a context of ongoing environmental change’ (Fig. 1). As is evident from this, the controversy of amplifying the negative effects by contributing to further degradation of the environment through own travels makes last chance tourism a highly questionable opportunity for long-term sustainable development (Dawson, et al., 2010). Moreover, scholars emphasise the ethical implications that come along with the ‘exhibition’ of and the ‘gaze’ at destinations and their environments. Nature and local populations are increasingly being ‘objectified’ (Farbotko, 2010; Lemelin, et al., 2010). The debatable longevity and morality

of a ‘climate change product’ have resulted in different responses within the industry (Lemelin, et al., 2010). In 2008, Frew examined tour operators’ web pages for advertisement or information provision referring to last chance tourism and to adverse affects of climate change in Greenland, at the Great Barrier Reef, and at Mount Kilimanjaro. She found that only few operators actively cover these aspects to market their destination products. On the other hand, besides providing an economic opportunity particularly for peripheral destinations, last chance tourism is said to also present an opportunity to visitors to reflect upon own contributions to climate change and upon own environmental behaviors. Accordingly, some operators started to include discussion groups, workshops, or specific lectures, relating to climate change and its meaning for the destination to be travelled to, into their tour packages (Eijgelaar, et al., 2010; Frew, 2008). However, Dawson et al.’s (2010) study of polar bear viewers to Manitoba as well as Lemelin et al.’s (2010) examination of Antarctic cruise ship passengers have shown that awareness and understanding of causes of climate change among consumers are yet very modest

### Last Chance Tourism and the Pacific Region

Besides the Polar regions, low-lying island nations have been highlighted for their vulnerability towards climate change impacts. Albeit the recognition of these to be severely affected by sea-level rise, coastal erosion, water and food scarcity, flooding, or coral bleaching, so-called ‘struggles over representation’ of truths or non-truths of impacts have evolved. In this regard, the two Pacific small islands states Kiribati and Tuvalu have been frequently named within international ‘climate negotiations’ over adaptation and mitigation needs (e.g. Farbotko, 2005, 2010; Mortreux & Barnett, 2009). The rising attention paid to these two island nations worldwide has also led to their being increasingly linked with the notion of last chance tourism. Herein, it is particularly the media that has facilitated associations of destinations in decline, translating scientific assertions of the inevitability “that these [low-lying] nations will be destroyed by climate change during the course of this century” into a coherent mes-



Waves from the ‘King Tide’ cause destruction inside the house, Tarawa Island, Kiribati



sage for potential travelers: these places must be seen before they ‘disappear’ (Aung, Singh, & Prahad, 2009 203). With references to common climate change tropes relating to low-lying island states, such as ‘titanic states’ (the sinking or drowning islands), ‘high tide’, ‘dark clouds over paradise’ (the paradise projection) or the ‘coalmine canaries’ (the guinea pigs), the media has become a major promoter of last chance tourism (Barnett & Campbell, 2010; Farbotko, 2005; Lemelin, et al., 2010).

While the national tourist offices of Kiribati and Tuvalu do not necessarily explicitly seek to underline such representations, they are nevertheless aware of appealing effects these may have to potential visitors. Statements reflect both uncertainty and confidence in utilising last chance tourism for marketing purposes. The recently formulated Kiribati National Tourism Action Plan indicates, on the one hand, that “visitors to Kiribati should expect and experience that will make them reflect on their everyday lives” (GoK 2009, 19). On the other hand, last chance tourism is clearly considered an opportunity to underpin political messages when declaring that “tourism [can be used] to reinforce its [Kiribati’s] key international message relating to climate change and the rise of sea levels” (GoK 2009, 8).

In contrast to Kiribati, Tuvalu slightly more actively exploits climate change impacts as a promotional tool (Gay, 2011). In this regard, Farbotko (2010, 225) points out that Tuvalu has transformed “into a space of climate change tourism and renewable energy”, a space enriched by “interviews, photographs, newspaper and magazine articles, web pages, research papers and policy statements”. Statements made by the national tourist officer though are tentative. He remarks that “Tuvalu is looking to develop a niche eco-tourism industry [...and...] to balance tourism development with environmental sustainability” (Sami, 2010). The national tourist office is eager to promote ‘green tourism’ and carbon conscious travel without explicitly compromising the idea of the small island nation being an or rather one of the ‘icons of global warming’. In 2010, Tuvalu had arranged the first King Tide Festival<sup>1</sup> which is thought “to raise awareness of the effects of climate change on Tuvalu and [to] at-

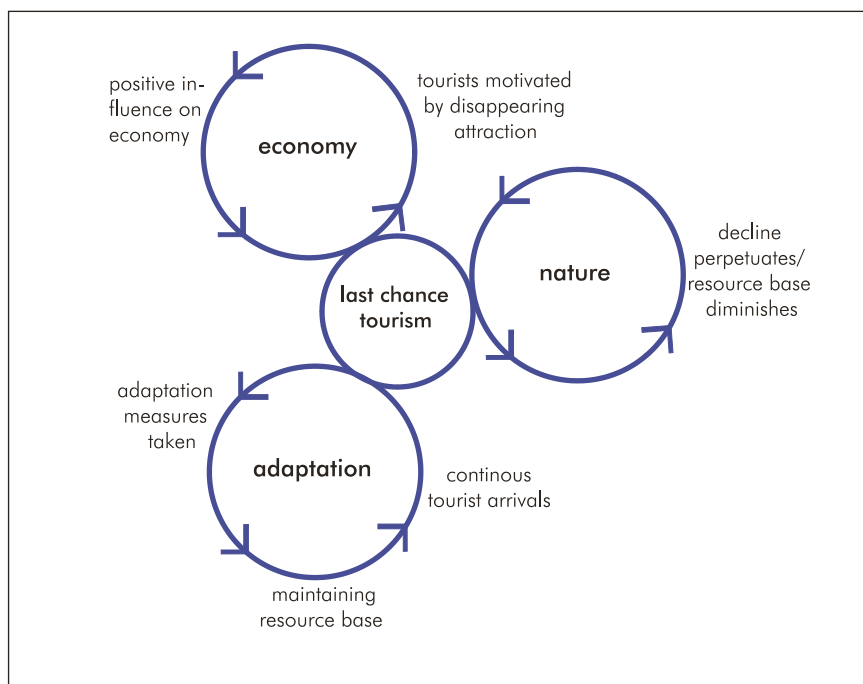


Fig. 2: Perpetuation of Adaptation in a Context of Last Chance Tourism

Source: Own Design after Dawson et al. 2010.

tract environmentally conscious travelers” (Gay, 2011; Sami, 2010).

Tuvalu and Kiribati seem overall restrained in their actions to fully display their island nations as last chance tourism destinations. However, this may only be comprehensible, since little is known about this ‘trend’ and its positive and negative consequences. Eventually, both island nations still highlight their “spectacular marine environment consisting of a vast expanse of ocean interspersed with atolls, magnificent lagoons, coral reefs and small islands” (e.g. TNTO, 2010).

### Future Directions

Travel to destinations impacted by climate change has become increasingly popular in recent years. Particularly the Polar north and south as well as tropical low-lying island nations, destinations in which adverse affects can ‘already’ be witnessed ‘first hand’, are associated with the last chance tourism notion. While particularly the media explicitly tell about vanishing natural features, or even about disappearing cultures, destinations themselves and tour operators are rather retentive in nourishing the last chance tourism idea. Particularly small island development states like Kiribati and Tuvalu are in a moral dilemma. Can and should economic growth which is based upon questionable ethical practice, be encouraged? Last chance tourism does indeed offer a potential solution for destinations suffering

from a chronic lack of natural resources. Actual economic outputs as well as ethical consequences (e.g. like local resident conscious), however, remain largely unexplored.

Studies may therefore further seek to examine on how last chance tourism is, in fact, understood and interpreted by stakeholders of tourism of effected destinations. These may include government and tourist office representatives, non-governmental organisations, aid donors, local populations and, indeed, local tourism businesses and visitors. In this regard, relationships among these stakeholders as well as their attitude towards tourism being based upon the last chance tourism notion should be brought into question. Likewise, it is unclear to what extent last chance tourism may be compatible with current tourism marketing of the islands and to what extent it could contribute to long-term sustainable tourism development at all. It may also be interesting to look at influences of last chance tourism on climate change-related adaption among local businesses (Fig. 2). Does ‘last chance’ promote thoughts of last opportunities to protect island resources or does it rather imply this to be the very ‘last economic opportunity’ before resources are to disappear?

Moreover, the role of the visitor could be further investigated. What are the pre-defined images held and how is climate change then experienced by on-site visitors? Does the experienced



have an influence on future visitor behavior and consumption? How is the 'last chance tourist' perceived by local business owners?

These are only few of the many questions to be explored. It is hoped to herewith encourage future examinations in this vast field. Last chance tourism is highly exciting for it challenges beliefs and pre-conceptions about impacts and causes of climate change held not only by visitors to islands like Kiribati or Tuvalu, but by consumer and supply side of destinations affected by the devastating consequences of climate change worldwide.

### Endnote

1) The first King Tide Festival was held in February 2010. The 6-day Festival is held during a time of the year when the highest annual tides occur in Tuvalu. While showcasing Tuvaluan traditions and culture, it is foremost to raise public awareness of impacts of climate change and their severe consequences for the island nation.

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# Green Governance: The Role of Governments on the Way to Sustainability in Asia-Pacific

Susanne Müller

*Abstract: Asia's population and economies continue to grow and put pressure on natural resources. Asian Governments face increasing challenges and opportunities on their way to sustainable development. In May 2011, governments meet in New York for UN Commission on Sustainable Consumption and Production (CSD). The Commission is responsible for reviewing progress in the implementation of Agenda 21, the Rio Declaration and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (cf. UNDESA). Ahead of the UN Meeting, this paper presents examples of policy measures implemented in Asia to boost green development. Governments have the power to use pricing and fiscal policies to move towards sustainable development. The objective of the article is to list effective policy instruments for sustainable consumption and production and at the same time show where governments in the Asia Pacific region have taken first steps towards implementing policy on sustainable consumption and production issues.*

*Keywords: UN-CSD; public policy; sustainability; sustainable consumption; sustainable production*

*[Submitted as Research Note: 04 January 2011, Acceptance of the revised reviewed manuscript: 03 March 2011]*

In 1992, the international community put sustainability on the world's agenda. The Earth Summit in Rio saw the adoption of an unique global plan of action for sustainable development. 179 heads of state and government signed the Agenda 21 - the blueprint for sustainable development into the 21st Century (UN - United Nations, 1992). 2012 will see the twentieth anniversary of the Earth Summit. World leaders will gather again in Brazil to hopefully renew their commitment to sustainable development. The conference aims to assess the progress and implementation gaps in meeting already agreed commitments, and addressing new and emerging challenges. Preparations for the Earth Summit 2012 are already in full swing. The UN Commission for Sustainable Development in May offered the opportunity to Governments to agree on a 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Pattern. After two weeks of intense all-night negotiations, presentations, side events, round tables, the UN Commission of Sustainable Development did not come to an agreement. The 19th session ended without a closing document. The nations of the world have another twelf months until Rio + 20 to return to the path of sustainable development. A change not to be missed.

Source of all pictures: S. Müller



Empty streets in Singapore due to its road-pricing system



Sustainable development and secure livelihood for all is still a challenge for many countries

Most of the countries in the Asian Pacific region face challenges in moving towards a sustainable economy. Population increase, changing life styles, and an economic structure shifting from agriculture to industry lead in most cases to a skyrocketing domestic demand for energy (Hubace, 2007). Thriving small and medium sized enterprises aggravate the situation by using inefficient production methods, placing a further strain on the environment. The current state of the world requires more effective sustainable consumption and production strategies. But such an approach involves leadership, smarter policies and the engagement of all stakeholders. Good

governance plays a key role in sustainable development: as governments must establish the framework conditions and mandates for sustainable production and the related incentives for sustainable consumption.

According to Zhao and Schroeder the SCP approach aims to decouple economic growths and human well-being on one hand and on the other hand resource consumption and greenhouse gas emission. (Zhao & Schroeder, 2010). To reach such a position of sustainable consumption and production, markets need to take full account of environmental and social costs, as well as those for production and marketing. Governments have the

power to use pricing and fiscal policies when establishing a framework within which the markets can operate. They are therefore able to adjust existing markets to support and encourage sustainable practices.

### Market Interventions

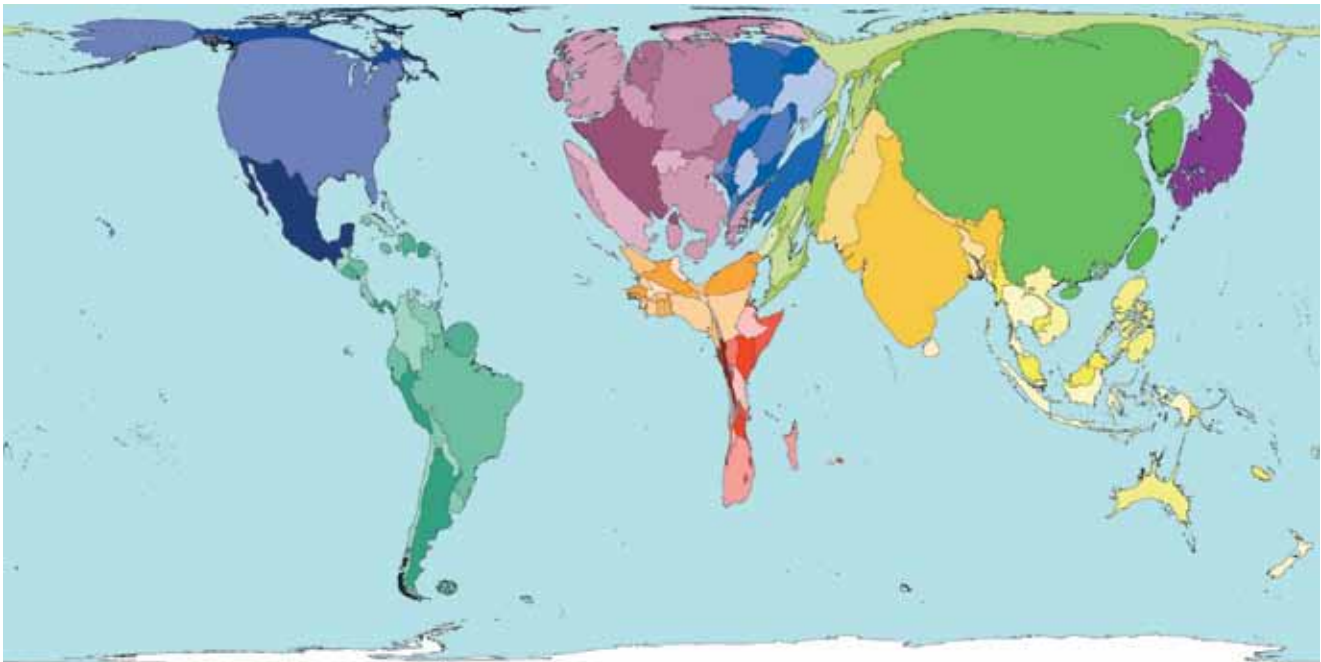
Governments can also intervene in markets to encourage consumers to change their behaviour to take greater account of the environmental and social costs of their consumption by using taxes and subsidies to raise or lower the costs of consumer habits. In many countries taxes on household consumption are already being used to motivate consumers to be more conservation minded (Stevens, 2010). Electricity taxes, water charges, and deposit fund schemes (a type of tax which is paid back once the product is returned for recycling) are typical. The government of Malaysia, for example, aims to increase the recycling quota up to 22% in 2020 (Government of Malaysia, 455). In Singapore congestion charges are based on a polluter pays or pay-as-you-use principle and an electronic road-pricing system discourages driving during peak periods (Singapore, w.y).

Economic and sustainable development relies on the efficient use of resources and the minimisation of pollution. The extent to which this occurs varies from country to country. As prices rise decision-makers find themselves with increasing responsibility for determining a path towards sustainable development. Governments may use 'push' or 'pull' approaches to encourage industry to behave more efficiently and to generate less waste: taxes and regulations push businesses to use fewer unsustainable products, and subsidies pull them towards the use of more sustainable processes. Regulations are the most widespread public policy mechanism for getting industry markets — mainly manufacturers — to pay for public costs such as pollution. Increasing environmental concern lead many countries across Asia to introduce regulations for industry to reduce waste and polluting emissions.

### Resource Efficiency

The 3 R approach (reduce, re-use, recycle) has been adopted by several Asian countries including Malaysia, Philippines, Korea, Thailand, Vi-





**Global Meat Consumption.** Territory size shows the proportion of worldwide meat (including animal products) consumption that occurs there © Copyright SASI Group (University of Sheffield) and Mark Newman (University of Michigan).

etnam, India and Nepal (Visvanathan & Tenzin, 2010). Another example are established rules or regulations which mandate a switch to more sustainable practises. As in other countries, the government in Vietnam banned unleaded petrol in 2001 to cut air pollution (ADB 2011, 9) but it also introduced regulations to limit the age of vehicles on the road. From 2001 to 2006, 44,500 old cars of all types were excluded from use according to legal stipulations. As a result, the air pollution in urban Vietnam was reduced significantly (Murray 2010, 128). This measure contributed significantly to the reduction of air pollution in Vietnam's urban centres.

Governments also tax industry to promote an efficient use of resources and to penalise the use of business practices that are damaging the environment. As they do for the people, governments may also employ subsidies or tax incentives to promote sustainable production — for example for environmental research, innovation, or infrastructure. Indonesia, for example, has the biggest geothermal potential in the world and the government is offering tax incentives to encourage the development of renewable energy projects, including those based on geothermal energy, to ultimately cut dependency on fossil fuels (Friedman, 2010).

### **Policy to Create Market Pull**

'Changing Consumption Patterns'

was already a subject in the Agenda 21. In Chapter 4 the authors call for 'special attention' to be paid 'to the demand for natural resources generated by unsustainable consumption' (UN, 1992b). Already nearly two decades ago the authors saw the need to know more 'about the role of consumption in relation to economic growth and population dynamics in order to formulate coherent international and national policies' (UN, 1992b). Sustainable consumption has since been interpreted differently. Debates have moved from production focused resource efficiency, to lifestyles and behavior change (Jackson 2006, 7)

Tim Jackson stipulates "consumer behaviour is key to the impact that society has on the environment". (Jackson 2005, iii). Millions of consumers in the newly industrialised countries of the Asia-Pacific region are currently changing their consumption patterns. Especially younger generations strive for western lifestyles.

Through their purchasing power, consumers can play an important role in stimulating enterprises to adopt more sustainable practises, in terms of both products and processes. Consumers can create markets for sustainable products and encourage companies to innovate and develop new technologies. Governments can encourage consumers to buy green and in this way indirectly promote sustainable production. All policy instruments mentioned i.e. economic ins-

truments; regulatory instruments or voluntary instruments can be used to influence consumers' behaviour.

To promote the cultural shift towards sustainable consumption communication based policy instruments play an important role. Communication-based policy instruments include a variety of activities aimed at influencing consumers through the transfer of knowledge, information or exhortation (Heiskanen et al., 2009). For reaching out to consumers a wide range of tools is available campaigns, consumer information centres, or feedback on consumption.

Different societies and different policy makers favoured a different mixes of policy tools. Product standards, for example have been introduced as a tool to help fulfil SCP policies where markets do not, for example in energy efficiency or in a complete product ban as with lead paint. SCP policy tools aimed at fixing market failures are product standards, e.g., for energy efficiency, or complete product bans, e.g., on lead-based paint. Here, the government stimulates or even directly forces producers to remove unsustainable or less sustainable products from the market and by doing so, directly affects consumer choices. A number of countries have imposed energy efficiency standards on a variety of household goods. China, for example, has developed mandatory minimum efficiency standards that cover more than 20 types of major products



Family on Motor Cycle: To guide Asia consumers towards sustainable choices a variety of policies are needed

such as residential and commercial appliances, lighting, heating and cooling equipment. (Levine et al., 2009).

Voluntary labelling schemes to motivate sustainable consumption are widely available across Asia. Already in 1992, the Bureau of Product Standards of the Philippines (<http://www.bps.dti.gov.ph>), for example, established voluntary labelling for household air conditioners. The energy label displays the appliance's energy efficiency rating so that consumers can use the information to compare products. Since then this label has been extended to various other product groups.

Public communication campaigns are also used to provide information to consumers to enable them to make more informed purchasing decisions. The Philippine Governments invested in campaigns to increase awareness and understanding of the voluntary energy label. To boost sustainable consumption, governments can also make sure the topic is incorporated into formal and informal education. However, as Jackson points out, providing accessible and appropriate information to facilitate pro-environmental choice is

insufficient on its own. Information campaigns, Jackson states, do not to reflect the complexity and social nature of human behaviours (Jackson 2005, 128).

Mandatory product labels or corporate reporting can reinforce voluntary consumer approaches. Mandatory levels established by governmental authorities influence consumers' choices much more effectively. By demanding manufacturers to label their goods with information on their environmental and social features, governments can affect relative levels of demand and give incentives for the production of more sustainable products.

### Role of Public Authorities

Traditionally, Governments are seen a legislators, policy makers and facilitators. The fact that Governments and their public administrations are major consumers themselves has been increasingly recognized. Public consumption in Asia typically account for 20-30 per cent of the national products and services. (UNEP 2005, 13).

Public authorities are often the largest single purchasers of goods and

services. By introducing green public procurement standards, governments have enormous influence to steer manufacturers and markets towards sustainability. Amongst others China, Thailand, Japan and South Korea have already established green procurement policies, and other Asia countries are discussing it. The Chinese government for example enacted already in 2003, a Government Procurement Law. In September 2006, China's Ministry of Finance and the State Environmental Protection Administration (now the Ministry for Environmental Protection) issued a directive fostering green public procurement, which is accompanied by a frequently updated "green purchasing list" of eco-friendly products and producers (Ho et al., 2010).

### Need of Good Governance

Good governance plays a key role in sustainable development: as governments must establish the framework conditions and mandates for sustainable production and the related incentives for sustainable consumption. An effective sustainable consumption and production policy mix should combine



soft tools such as the provision of information via labelling, and reporting with hard tools including regulations and taxes. Consumption and production should be targeted together. An integrated policy mix, where efforts to guide consumers towards environmentally and socially responsible choices are reinforced by policies forcing producers to internalise environmental and social costs, is most effective for sustainable development. The sustainable consumption and production approach is pulling in just about every environmental challenge. At the same time SCP offers possible and practical solutions to address a range of global environmental and socio-economic challenges, including climate change. Multiple options for innovative policymaking for SCP already exist. Some have been applied in the Asia Pacific region as the article has shown. The UN Commission for Sustainable Development offers the opportunity to Governments to agree on a 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Pattern. A chance not to be missed.

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# SÜDOSTASIENS MEGACITIES



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# A Learning Environment between Noodle Soup, Motorbikes and Cross-Cultural Friendships: Study Project "Climate Change & Sustainable Urban Development in Vietnam"

Vanessa Densow

Vietnam could rank among the five countries mostly affected by climate change. This vulnerability will predominantly disturb the lower coastal regions, accommodating almost a quarter of Vietnam's total population, and in particular metropolises such as Ho Chi Minh City. Students from the University of Hamburg went on a two-week study project to explore the impacts of climate change and options for sustainable urban development in Vietnam.

Vietnam is prone to natural disasters anyway, experiencing typhoons, flash floods, droughts, etc., with climate change currently increasing the occurrence and intensity of storm surges or floods, for example. In this context Ho Chi Minh City is of specific interest, as this emerging mega-city is the country's most important economic engine while it is predicted to have severe impacts of climate change. Furthermore, climate change and urban development are closely linked and often reinforce each other in a negative way. As a consequence, sustainable urban development may play a key role in increasing the resilience against the impacts of climate change.

Against this background, fifteen German students took part in a study project, led by Dr. Michael Waibel from the University of Hamburg, to further investigate aspects of adaption, mitigation, sustainable consumption and urban livability in Vietnam. An intensive preparation, including cross-cultural training, was held in Germany and followed by an introduction into the topic upon arrival in Hanoi with expert talks, workshops and visits to policy makers at the national level,

such as the Ministry of Construction and the Ministry of Industry and Trade. In Ho Chi Minh City the students intensified their research in binational working groups with on-site surveys to pursue their own research questions and hypotheses. Combining results from these studies, the students were able to acquire in-depth understanding of the connectivity of climate change impacts and challenges for sustainable urban development. All of this was made possible due to Dr. Waibel's involvement into the program "Research for the Sustainable Development of the Megacities of Tomorrow – Energy- and climate-efficient structures in urban growth centres", funded by the German Federal Ministry of Research and Education (BMBF), as well as by a generous financial support from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).

## The First Sustainable Capital?

In Hanoi the students experienced many layers of historical urban development. For instance the traditional 36 Streets Quarter was explored, as well as the city's most important cultural legacy, the famous Temple of

Literature. As a contrast, the most prominent monuments of French colonial and socialist architecture as well as town planning were visited, among other the municipal opera house, the Ba Dinh Square and the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum. Of course, the main focus was laid upon more recent urban development, for example, newly developed residential quarters, such as the Manor new urban area, overwhelmingly dedicated for high-income earners. Hanoi's aspiration to become the first sustainable capital of Asia seemed to be far away when the students observed the tremendous traffic densities, mostly consisting of motorbikes, or the abundant amounts of trash lying on the streets. In terms of future urban development the students got more information about the ambitious plans of Hanoi municipality during a talk of Mr. Do Yeon Kim, CEO of JINA, a Korean company, which won the competition to design the Hanoi Capital Construction Master Plan for 2030. However, according to Mr. Kim the most sustainable urban development solutions often do not match the ideas of local authorities. Furthermore, a visit to the National Ministry

Source: M. Waibel 2011



Artificial retention basin within a new urban area of Distr. 2 of HCMC





Group picture after joint Workshop at HCMC University of Architecture, 8 March 2011

of Construction (MoC) allowed the group to access first-hand information on ideas of sustainable urban development from the Vietnam Urban Development Agency, which is a mediating institution for Hanoi's new master plan between the office of Vietnam's Prime Minister, Hanoi's People's Committee as well as the national and local planning bodies.

As part of the Vietnamese-German Workshop "Climate Change and Sustainable Urban Development" held at the Geography Faculty of the Hanoi National University of Education, field research was done in cooperation with Vietnamese students in a nearby neighbourhood. This served to provide an understanding of local perceptions on urban management, quality of housing, provision with social and technical infrastructure, etc. In addition, this gave the German students an idea of the manifold obstacles of doing fieldwork within a cross-cultural environment, including amongst other difficulties the language barrier. All in all, the workshop was a great opportunity to experience working together with students from Vietnam and building-up new friendships.

### A Mega-City in the Making

In Ho Chi Minh City, formerly known as Saigon, the students intensified their fieldwork. Surveys were conducted in four case study neighbourhoods characterized by contrasting building densities, diverse socio-economic profiles and supposedly specific degrees of vulnerability to climate change. In cooperation with

four-year-students from the Urban Planning Faculty of HCM University of Architecture the bi-national working groups investigated distinct aspects of adaption, mitigation and energy-efficiency, sustainable consumption as well as urban livability.

In terms of adaption, students found out, that people in certain areas, for instance in District 6 and 8, were highly aware of flooding occurring in their district on a regular basis. However, the residents of these mostly low-income districts did not attribute this to climate change, as they did not realize a significant correlation between extreme weather events and climate change. Nevertheless, local individual adaption, for example a higher ground floor to prevent water from entering, was observed almost everywhere. In contrast to this, governmental adaption measures such as adequate sewage systems or retention areas were largely missed.

The results from the group researching mitigation in District 2 showed surprisingly high energy-efficient standards among the surveyed households, mostly due to high income and education levels. However, the reasons for these trends were traced back to individual action due to economic saving potentials and much less as a result of incentives provided by the government. Overall, it can be concluded that governmental measures, such as incentives, need greater incorporation into urban development strategies.

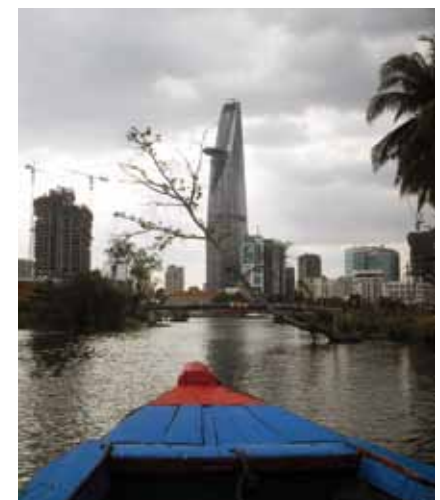
Another working group wanted to find out how the Vietnamese consider the quality of life within their neigh-

bourhood. This survey on urban livability was conducted at various sites within the city. These investigations revealed surprising results, as almost all people from different districts generally rated their quality of life as very high. Among the top five most important factors regarding good quality of life were listed: good housing, adequate roads, a functioning sewage system, a friendly neighbourhood and – most important of all – a safe neighbourhood.

### Conclusion

Although the study project had a very tight schedule, it still allowed for some leisure activities such as joint-karaoke singing. During this time and the fieldwork many new friendships were built between the German and the Vietnamese students. In particular, the urban planning students from Saigon, guided by their enthusiastic lecturer Ms. Hang, impressed us with their deep knowledge and research skills. It will be up to the young people of Vietnam to address climate change threats and the many other challenges Vietnam faces in the future.

The bi-national study project offered the possibility to get to know this fascinating country from more than just a tourist perspective. Not only did it contribute to scientific research, it also offered both sides the chance to learn from each other and become more familiar with each other's cultures. Another pleasant bonus was certainly the fine Vietnamese cuisine. Invitations from both sides were given to stay in touch and to meet again. Hopefully, this will be realized soon.



Rising water levels threaten HCMC

Source: Vanessa Densow 2011

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### **Picture Detail of the Marina Bay Sands Building in Singapore**

This superlative structure is billed as the world's most expensive standalone casino property as well as the world's largest public cantilevered platform, called "Sands SkyPark". It spectacularly overhangs the tower by 67m.

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