

Down Highway One: Vietnam's Hybrid Urban Landscapes

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PRIMARILY RURAL

Stretching 3,200 kilometers along the South China Sea (called the Eastern Sea by the Vietnamese) and the Gulf of Thailand (Gulf of Siam) – covering 331,100 square kilometers – Vietnam is a country of rugged topography; the land area is mostly mountainous rain forest, apart from river deltas in the north and south and a coastal plain. The majority of the ethnic Vietnamese (87 percent of the population) lives in only one-fifth of the country's land area. Vietnam's farmland supports more than nine hundred people per square kilometer, making it more than three times as densely populated than nearby China or Thailand. The remainder of the population consists of 53 ethnic minority groups, living primarily in the highlands of the center and in the mountains of the far north.

Vietnam is slightly smaller than the state of California and significantly larger than Italy, but its population of 78.5 million makes it one of the world's most populous nations. Most of Vietnam's people, rice production, industrial output, political power and cultural activity are concentrated in two relatively small areas centered on the Hanoi – Haiphong axis in the northern Red River Delta and Ho Chi Minh – Bien Hoa – Vung Tau axis in the southern Mekong River Delta, accounting for approximately 47 percent of the urban population. The two plains – often called the 'rice bowls' of Vietnam – are joined by a narrow, mountainous strip of land that more than 1000 kilometers long but in some places only 50 kilometers wide. The country's long configuration not only creates different weather patterns but also make communication and political integration difficult. Regardless, only a small proportion of population lives in cities; the majority is in the countryside. However, that is changing as Vietnam rapidly modernizes.

THE SECOND REVOLUTION

Vietnam is completely redefining its place in the world's mental and physical landscapes. It is fifty-five years since Ho Chi Minh drew on the words of Thomas Jefferson to declare Vietnam's independence and twenty-five years since the end of what the Vietnamese call the 'American War' which, in fact,

brought independence to the reunified country. However, the country has only enjoyed the fruits of its independence for a just over a decade.

At the threshold of what is being heralded as the 'Pacific Century,' Vietnam – one of the few remaining 'heroes' in Marxist narratives – has embarked on the most paradoxical of endeavors. Vietnam has surpassed itself as a melting pot of anomalies: since 1986¹, it has been attempting to breed a new brand socialism by following the prevailing capitalist modes of production. In the country's attempt to 'leap-frog' from the status of the so-called 'developing nations' to that of an 'Asian Tiger', Western ways, technologies and know-how are imported, copied and adapted, improved and more recently, re-exported. Vietnam striving to beat its former colonizers on their own turf – economic development.

Travel along Highway One² epitomizes the 'second revolution' in Vietnam. The 2100-kilometer route, rich in history and immortalized by war, is paralleled for most of its length by the national railway;³ the two form the only north-south artery connecting Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC)⁴. The badly rutted, single pot-holed lane in each direction is shared by bicycles, ox carts, honking motorbikes, speeding and unreliable cars, ancient buses and transport trucks, billowing bilious exhaust fumes. Along the edges of the decrepit road, men, women and children on foot (barefoot in the poorer rural areas) carry incredible loads of various kinds either on shoulder-poles with hanging bamboo baskets balanced at both ends or woven baskets precariously poised on heads. Across the country, farmers take over part of the already narrow and congested highway as a drying and threshing floor for newly harvested rice. Informal markets, a growing number of billboard advertisements and State propaganda posters colorfully decorate and indicate an approaching town. As Highway One bisects towns – it simply becomes 'main street'. From early morning until late evening, hordes of motorcycles, bicycles and cyclos⁵ compete for space with a host of other activities which gravitate towards (and in) the street: washing, storing, playing, sitting, sleeping, selling, and eating. The complexity of land use in Vietnam is accurately encapsulated along Highway One.



Fig. 1. Highway One, Vietnam

HYBRID URBAN LANDSCAPES

The ever-changing landscapes and climatic zones of Highway One contrast sharply with the remarkably constant urbanism. Nearly every piece of vacant land is intensively cultivated and businesses of every sort continue to spring up like mushrooms. In fact, in terms of land use, the two (agriculture and commerce) simultaneously compete and co-exist. Similarly, the economic culture of Vietnam, like most in Southeast Asia, is based upon two parallel – and seemingly contradictory – systems: one modern, firm-based and the other pre-industrial, rooted in extended systems of kinship. Cottage industries appear alongside high-tech corporate enterprises; rice, lotus, sugar cane, sweet-corn and spinach fields edge industrial complexes; sidewalk barbershops and noodle-stands affront entrances to new corporate headquarters. Along the numerous strings of roadside villages, cottage industries revel themselves through their neatly organized bamboo



Fig. 2. Tradition meets Modernity



Fig. 3. Advertisement and Propaganda, side-by-side

racks for rice paper and incense drying. The no-man’s-land, so common in Western mid- and high-rise housing estates is colorfully and productively animated at its base, where ground units are invariably converted into shops, restaurants and informal markets; sporting activities, meeting places, small husbandry and agricultural areas colonize the open space. A powerful sensation of barely controlled chaos pervades the atmosphere of Vietnamese urbanity – due in large part to the crumbling infrastructure, a complex, and nearly unregulated, land use system and the forever moving masses of people.

There are a few notable distinctions within the otherwise homogenous built environment. Since 1986 national economic and administrative reforms, all cities are experiencing change along common lines, although the areas of the poorer, rural west and north – with their smaller, more traditional cities – remain relatively unregulated and appear as reminders of a bygone era. Glaring inequalities also exist between the developed coastal areas and the poor regions of the interior. Structures along the coastal areas of Highway One are of stone or brick, faced with concrete painted pastel green, blue, pink or ochre and roofed with terracotta tiles. Eager to display recently accumulated wealth, a progressively increasing num-



Fig. 4. Street-side shops

ber of buildings are faced with marble, tinted glass, and enamel tiles. Meanwhile, houses in the highlands continue to be built of wood, bamboo and thatch. To date, there are also recognizable differences between the north and south of the country – the north being much poorer – although this is quickly being eradicated as international finance and global capital pervades and the authoritarian control of development is singularly master-minded from the capital city, Hanoi.

In urban areas throughout Vietnam, entire blocks of traditional houses are hastily being demolished and replaced by the superficial glamour of 'post-modernistic' office buildings (often 'regionalized' by pagoda-shaped roofs), 'mini-hotel' type houses⁶ of the *nouveau riche* or by the drab appearance of tile-clad 5-story housing blocks. Even in the rural countryside, the narrow-frontage, deep and ever-higher houses are dramatically marking the landscape; rural sophisticates are forging ahead in the new Vietnam. Land values are exponentially rising.

The highway/railway spine is the nerve center of Vietnam: the solitary double-strand, only occasionally interrupted by east-west junctions, is analogous to the relative level of isolation in Vietnam. Not only has the country been sequestered from its immediate neighbors, but also within the country, travel is rare. Admittedly this is beginning to change, as disposable incomes increase and efficiency of transport systems is gradually elevated. However, international exchange remains primarily restricted to business ventures, overseas development assistance and an escalation of (back-packer) tourism. Vietnam maintains tightly controlled borders with China, Laos and Cambodia. Nonetheless, there is a plan under discussion by the Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN)⁷ concerning the formation of a trans-Asian railway, which may pass through Vietnam linking Singapore to Beijing.

The journey down Highway One simultaneously confirms the so-called backwardness of Vietnam and its enthusiastic drive towards quickly over-coming its weaknesses. The nation's insufficient transportation infrastructure, water and power distribution network are slowly being upgraded. Until

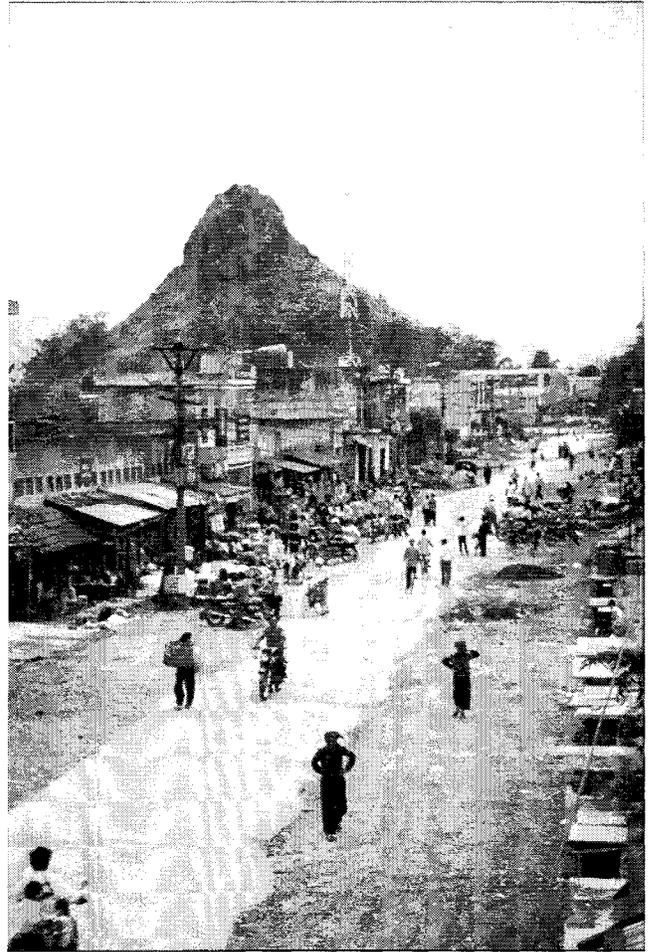


Fig. 5. Highway One as Main Street

1986, Vietnam operated with an economy of means; a case-in-point are the dual purpose rail-road bridges, where vehicular traffic would often be held up for hours waiting trains, only to then proceed over the train tracks across the single-lane bridge. In the south, as Highway One diverts inland, a series of ferry crossings mark passage through the Mekong Delta. The landscape is structured by an intricate system, of dykes and canals, originally built by the French. Travel through the Mekong Delta is slow, due to a proportionately large number of motorized vehicles, the poor quality of the roads and the waiting time for loading and unloading of traffic onto ferries. No longer shackled by an American embargo, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank have approved soft loans to up-grade Highway One and there is also talk of constructing a Trans-Asian Highway further inland. Various bi-lateral and multi-lateral projects are implementing Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) projects in numerous sectors, including power generation, telecommunications and water treatment.

Meanwhile, Vietnam remains a primarily agrarian country – currently the world's third-largest exporter of rice⁸ – and it is the muscles of men, women, children and water buffaloes that make Vietnam's soil yield its treasure, not machinery. At the same time however, export processing zones – strategic

sites where global processes and the linkages that bind them materialize – and new industrial zones are beginning to dot the landscape. The dynamic dispersal, centralization and hyper-concentration of facilities are strengthening the inequality of resources and infrastructure in various areas of the country. Highway One bears witness to the economic, social and cultural life of Vietnam today and tracing the urbanization along its route reveals that the scope of rapid transformation is leaving no part of the country untouched. Vietnam is undeniably chasing the ‘tigers’⁹ of South-east Asia.

Nonetheless, British economist Adam Fforde, a leading expert on Vietnam’s economy compares the country to a ‘tiger on a bicycle.’ Fforde points out that the Vietnamese tiger has been able to ‘pedal surprisingly fast’ since the Communist Party launched its de-Stalinization drive, but adds that the challenge now is to begin ‘motorizing the bicycle as the tiger grows its strength.’¹⁰



Fig. 6. Muscles of men, women and children yield Vietnam’s productivity



Fig. 7. Along Highway One

GLOBAL VILLAGE, LOCAL STREET

The urban patterns along Highway One’s length are emblematic of Vietnamese cities and urbanization. Travelling

north to south, the spine not only trespasses the country’s hybrid urban landscapes, but also reveals the primacy of the street as a focus of public life. The street is the penultimate public space of Vietnam.

Highway One begins in Lang Son, a provincial capital city in the rugged mountain area of Vietnam, 200 kilometers northeast of Hanoi. Lang Son, 14 kilometers south of the Chinese border, is an outpost that has suffered immensely due to its proximity to its great northern neighbor; in 1979, the city was leveled when Deng Xiaoping decided to ‘teach Vietnam: a lesson’ for invading Cambodia and ousting the Khmer Rouge. 13% percent of the population of Vietnam is made up of ethnic minority groups; of the 53, six (the Tay, Zao, Nung, Ngaim H’mong and San Chay people) live in Lang Son. Along Lang Son’s main street, Highway One, the coexistence of bare-foot, traditionally dressed H’mong people and young professionals with their mobile telephones and Honda Dreams¹¹ attests to the paradox of development.

Heading southwards, a series of towns spread for one to two kilometers along Highway One. Otherwise, house appear clustered in small villages, linked by hard trodden dirt paths and vast rice fields. Open air markets and make-shift shops announce an approaching settlement. The highway is never free of activity; between urbanized areas, farmers, road-work crews, and those doing roadside mechanical work occupy the space.

Upon approach of Hanoi, one witnesses the phenomenon effecting large tracts of the two delta’s rural areas – a new, dispersed pattern of urbanization; industrial, commercial and tourist activities are transforming the landscape, forming urban and peri-urban corridors linking cities. Highly fragmented and seemingly random clustering of developments are materializing in peripheral or ex-urban areas – combining a coarse-grained juxtaposition of industrial, office, hotel, shopping and residential typologies with productive landscapes – rice fields, fish farms, rubber plantations, etc. – all served by new, often over-scaled boulevards.

Hanoi, the ancient cradle of Vietnamese civilization, is today the country’s subdued political and cultural capital. Settled since the 7th century, Hanoi is a city that was exposed to layer upon layer of imported cultures, localized over time and adapted to regional conditions. The urban patrimony is clear evidence of the ‘melting pot’ of heritages within the Vietnamese context. Vietnamese cities are hybrids of Chinese, Cham¹², Japanese, French, American, East German and Russian morphologies and traditions cross-bred with indigenous elements; hybridization is not so much the exception as the norm. French urbanism pervades most of Vietnam’s larger cities and ‘the taste for extravagance which characterized both Hanoi and Saigon Ö earned the derogatory appellation ‘*la folie des grandeurs*’ at a rudimentary level, the enterprise paralleled the contemporary work of Haussmann.’¹³ However, Hanoi remains as it was developed – a series of villages that have grown into one another. Built around twenty lakes, the city boasts a lively and nearly intact ancient quarter of ‘36 Streets’¹⁴ – which has one of Asia’s highest

housing densities. These hyper-densities of Hanoi inevitably leads to household territorial expansions. The sidewalk as public realm coincides with an intimacy and dynamism of temporary semi-private claims for areas affronting households and businesses. Public passage has to compete for space with games, motor cycle parking, outdoor seating of restaurants, 'living room' extensions, etc. Highway One bisects Hanoi as it does every other Vietnamese city, it is merely another main street of the city.

South of Hanoi, from Thanh Hoa to HCMC (1400 kilometers) Highway One is always within 20 kilometers of the sea. Vinh the capital of one of Vietnam's largest and poorest provinces (Nghệ An), represents the typical (re)birth of a northern city from repetitive war destruction, international isolation and failed Communist policies. Drastic urban transformations in Vinh are customary, whereas the city has undergone numerous hasty reconstructions. In 1946, the city was leveled by anti-colonial revolutionaries and rebuilt after the French defeat with Soviet and Chinese assistance, only to be destroyed by a huge fire in 1957. From 1964 -1973, due to its strategic location at the head of the Ho Chi Minh Trail¹⁵, no Vietnamese city suffered more from American bombs than Vinh. Following the American defeat, Vinh was rebuilt with large assistance from East Germany (the city was 'twinned' with East Berlin). Beginning in 1974, the eastern Europeans exported their mass construction of prefabricate tenements to the extreme heat of Vinh's summers and ravages of autumn's typhoons. A 21-building housing estate (gift of the GDR) affronts Highway One. Instead of investing in the rehabilitation of this dismal estate, local and national politicians have developed, 7 kilometers from the city center, a new, multi-lane highway to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Ho Chi Minh who was born in a nearby village. The project began at the rice fields but ended abruptly four kilometers later due to lack of funds. 'The development of Vinh signifies the degree to which dreams are divorced from reality in Vietnamese planning and development; Vinh is a living legacy to the assertion that the nemesis of architecture remains the arbitrary imposition of form by bureaucracy.'¹⁶

The infamous 17th parallel – the demilitarized zone (DMZ) – south of Vinh and 94 kilometers north of Hue, remains a divide crossed by a single-lane Bailey bridge.¹⁷ Here Highway One was most accurately dubbed the 'highway of terror,' where civilians would take to the street in a running flee south. Today, houses, fields and the buzz of road-side activities are refreshing signs of life amongst the wasteland environment of extensive deforested areas.

As Highway One proceeds south, it remains in the shadow of rugged mountains to the west. Paralleling the eastern bank of the Perfume River in Hue, once the old French administrative quarter, the highway animates a sleepy town trying to be a bustling commercial city without surrendering its long-treasured grace. Hue,¹⁸ one of Vietnam's few cities which has developed both sides of its river banks, exemplifies development of a Vietnamese sacred city. Hue served as the administrative, military and cultural centers of the Nguyen empire. It

had a forbidden imperial city based upon the traditional Chinese Citadel (on its western bank) and small settlements, of first Chinese and later French colonialists that were separated in form and distance from the indigenous city. Today Hue remains a center for culture and glimpses of temple tops and fading golden roofs suggest a wealth of architectural and cultural icons of its past.

The Hai Van Pass – the highest point of Highway One (79 km north of Hue) – offers a view of the sprawling metropolis of Danang and its huge harbor, with its remnants of an old French fortress and several American concrete bunkers. Danang has progressed from being a City of Soldiers to a City of Commerce. Today, Danang is modernizing not only infrastructure and modes of production, but also its service and tourism sectors. Hoi An, 25 kilometers south of Danang on the coast of Central Vietnam, typifies a market city. The bend in the Thu Bon River was originally a port for the Cham empire and became, in 1535 when the Portuguese raised their flag, the first permanent European settlement in what is now Vietnam. The small city flourished in the 17th and 18th centuries as trade port with China and Japan and Hoi An developed as two distinct urbanisms, one Chinese the other Japanese, linked by narrow, winding streets. From the highway, the city itself is not even noticeable, however, vast fish farms demarcate the landscape.

In the southern cities, tradition appears to be lost to a melting-pot of modernity, liberalism and Westernism. Qui Nhon and Nha Trang appear as odd mixtures of tradition and modernity, the former striving to become like the latter – a seaside resort and a bustling small-scale metropolis. The potential for tourist development (like Pattaya Beach in Thailand 30 years ago) has spurred foreign investors to build hotels and the quaintness of the protected bays is in danger of surrendering to the global forces of mass tourism and gated communities.

West of Highway One, before approaching Ho Chi Minh City is Dalat. Once the exclusive domain of Montagnard hill tribes, Dalat was one of several new cities in the French colony created according to western models. It became a hunting base and favored destination of Chochin-China's French aristocrats and wealthy mandarins. At an altitude of 1500 meters, it was a refreshing escape from Saigon's oppressive heat. In 1921, Ernest HÉbrard arrived from Paris and became Indochina's first professional planner. He not only sought to create an architecture that was in keeping with France's 'assimilationist' policies of the time, but also to 'order two forms of chaos – 'native' life and industrial growth.'¹⁹ Dalat was planned as a model city – a highly controlled environment. 'In their efforts to create a perfectly planned environment, HÉbrard and the colonial government felt they could avoid the complexities of real cities. The plan downplayed industry and even large commercial districts, for Dalat was envisioned as a resort and summer capital. This city would supposedly inspire governmental efficiency, high-minded leisure, and health of body and mind through its site and design-at least for European residents. Strict racial and envi-

ronmental controls characterized the town from its very origin. Although the emperor would later vacation here, other Vietnamese needed permission even to enter Dalat, and they lived only beyond the northern hills.²⁰

Down Highway One, 1565 kilometers from Hanoi, is Ho Chi Minh City. Saigon, affectionately named 'Pearl of the Orient' where 'anything goes' is the growth engine that propels the Vietnamese economy forward. When the Communists seized the former capital of US-backed South Vietnam, they vowed to transform the 'reactionary and rotten' city into a sober bastion of socialism. To underscore their intent, they renamed it in memory of their deceased revolutionary hero Ho Chi Minh. Nonetheless, the young – the city was not occupied until 1974 and officially founded in 1968 – brazen Saigon spirit persevered and HCMC has made up for its loss of capital status by taking the role of commercial capital. Cholon, HCMC's Chinatown, has witnessed a vast inflow of investments by overseas Chinese; foreign investors prefer the southern city due to less bureaucratic red-tape. Twenty-five years after reunification, average per capita income in HCMC is approximately one and a halftimes that of Hanoi. Similarly, the scale of the city is grander than that of Hanoi – streets are wider, there are more and ever-higher office buildings and hotels towering over the colonial villas, Chinese shop-houses and austere utilitarianism of the Soviet-inspired buildings. Communist rigor has not prevailed against the drive for individual expression and with the iron-fist literally so far away in the north, the development of HCMC, since *doi moi*, has been less regulated. The result is a more chaotic skyline, a preponderance of neon billboards, satellite dishes, glittering karaoke bars and fashionable restaurants and cafes. HCMC also claims a number of unfinished building sites, stark monuments to the 1997 bust of the business boom. Highway One is indistinguishable from a large network of streets in the city.

In Vietnam, Highway One ends 50 kilometers from Saigon at the border with Cambodia. All differences aside, the north-south linear link of Highway One, attests to the vibrancy of the street as a public space. Although Vietnamese urban fabrics (the sacred precincts excluded) appear to lack civic spaces – hallmarks of a Western civilized society – the richness of its urban culture holds lessons for the (re)development of Western cities. Vietnamese cities are emerging as vibrant points in the network society constellation. The ring of cellular telephones is becoming as commonplace as the chants of the streets hawker; cyber-cafes as normal as noodle shops. The 'global village' has become another layer of the cities, but at the same time, the local street has retained its identity as a local street.

AN AMBIVALENT URBANISM

The journey down Highway One is indicative of Vietnam's development; hybrid urban landscapes are the result of a stratified development process. The odd mix of romance and consumerism, liberty and conformity, hope and despair confirms that the country continues to be a place of extremes.



Fig. 8. Forever moving masses of people

Vietnam remains on the margins of modernity. The ingenuity born of necessity is translated in urbanistic terms to an ambivalence that imbues the street as an unmatched public realm. Although planners and politicians are understandably anxious to 'catch-up' with its neighbors in the 'South-east Asian miracle,' the question that becomes evident is: Can Vietnam develop an intelligent, alternative mode of urbanism which builds upon and embraces its inherent – rural and urban – forms and programs into a single entity? Or is it doomed to become yet another conurbation such as Jakarta, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur or any of the cities of China's Pearl River Delta?

The stunted development of Vietnam can play strongly into its future physical form. Vietnam's cities have not yet lost their ambivalence; the urban / rural, modern / traditional, east / west polarities are not clear-cut. Present and future challenges for Vietnam are enormous and the obstacles great. However, it has an opportunity that most countries in the region have already lost. Vietnam has the possibility to develop a new urban paradigm – where the logics of agriculture are cross-fertilized with urban structuring, where globalization is fertilized by a 'Vietnamese' identity, where *yin* and *yang* appear in modern guise.

Vietnam is a country of revolutions – with each new era borrowing from the previous one only what is still deemed useful. Dramatic change has made Vietnam what it is today. The present leaders do know what they want – proven models that have successfully worked in other countries. The combination of a strong state with an open-market economy is essentially pragmatic; the Vietnamese want the same for the form of their cities, they have no desire to become guinea pigs for experiments on idealistic urban ideas. 'Within the regional dimension, economists and social theorists such as Peter L. Berger, Michael Hsiao and Manuel Castells have been describing this phenomenon (the sustained high growth rate and the structural transformation of domestic industry for its integration within the global economy), common to the region, as an East Asian path of modernization, a 'Confucian developmental program' with a central coordinating force, 'the developmental state'. Within the cultural theoretical

dimension, philosopher Tu Wei-ming, focusing on the more industrialized East Asia area, suggests that a new vision of modernity is emerging which combines Confucian ethics and humanism with Western science, capitalism and a liberal polity, which thus differs from classical Western modernity and the related approach advocated by Asian intellectuals in the early 20th century.²¹

ENDNOTES

- In December 1986, facing bankruptcy and famine, Vietnam's National Assembly agreed on a program of economic reform known as *doi moi* (literally meaning 'renovation' but more commonly translated as the 'restructuring' of the economy). The 'restructuring' of Vietnam has not merely been the erasure of the economic disaster but the dismantling of the 'cradle-to-grave' social achievements of the 'command economy' era.
- In a significant rewriting of history, the government has recently acknowledged that it was the first emperor of the Nguyen dynasty (1802–1911) Gia Long, who first united the country by building the road linking its two halves together. During French times, the road was known as the Mandarin Way. During the Vietnam-American War, it was known as the 'Highway of Terror.'
- I. In addition to city building, in 1893 (under governor-general Paul Doumer) the French embarked on a vast public works program – eventually producing two major rail lines: one from Haiphong to Hanoi, up the Red River Valley into the Chinese town of Yunnan Fou; the other, the 1,000-mile-long Trans-Indochinese (finally completed in 1936), connecting Hanoi and Saigon, paralleling the Mandarin Road. The line was a particular target of the US bombing in the north and of the communist sabotage in the south. Bringing it back into service after the war required the rebuilding of 1,334 bridges, 27 tunnels and 158 stations. Nowadays, the fastest train is called the 'Reunification Express,' but taking at least 36 hours to do so at an average speed of 30 miles per hour it is one of the slowest railway journeys between major cities anywhere.
- II. Saigon, affectionately named 'Pearl of the Orient' where 'anything goes' is the growth engine that propels the Vietnamese economy forward. When the Communists seized the former capital of US-backed South Vietnam, they vowed to transform the 'reactionary and rotten' city into a sober bastion of socialism. To underscore their intent, they renamed it in memory of their deceased revolutionary hero Ho Chi Minh.
- III. A cyclo is a combination of a rickshaw and a bicycle; in some cities of the Mekong Delta, the cyclo is motorized.
- IV. Throughout the country, very narrow yet forever higher house typologies have been dubbed 'mini-hotel' types. The name stems from the fact that, immediately following reforms, several owners added floors to their homes in order to rent out floors and gain in the euphoria of the market system.
- V. Association of South-East Asian Nations, formed in 1967 by Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore. Brunei joined on independence in 1984. ASEAN's role was to oppose communist expansion from Vietnam. Times change: in 1995 Vietnam became a member; so too in 1997 did Laos and Myanmar (Cambodia's accession was delayed).
- I. In 1989, for the first time in decades, Vietnam exported rice, becoming – virtually overnight – the world's third largest exporter behind the USA and Thailand.
- II. Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan have been labeled 'tiger economies' due to their unprecedented growth records in the late 1980s and 1990s.
- III. Murray Hiebert, *Chasing the Tigers: A Portrait of the New Vietnam* (New York: Kodansha International, 1996) p. 29.
- IX. Honda claims a near-monopoly on the scooter/motorcycle market in Vietnam. The fashion of the day is a 'Honda Dream' – a status symbol that is much sought after.
- X. The Cham Empire (300 BC – 1692) ruled over much of what is now southern Vietnam. The Chams have been called the 'Etruscans of Vietnam,' were influenced by culture from India and to a lesser degree Indonesia.
- XXI. Wright, Gwendolyn, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991) p. 162.
- XXII. The fast-beating heart of Hanoi's old commercial area, the 36 streets district actually has 78 narrow, crooked roads lined with shops on the ground floor and residences above. Still today, street names indicate the goods sold: Hang Gai is the street of jute sellers; Hang Bun for rice noodle merchants; Hang Bac for the jewelers and so on.
- XXIII. In the language of the American military, Vinh was 'the main marshalling yard of the Ho Chi Minh Trail', or the 'northern railhead' of a vast network of mountain and jungle paths over which North Vietnam dispatched its men, arms and supplies to the National Liberation Front (Viet Cong) battles in the south. Locals still refer to Vinh as 'the mouth that fed the stomach.'
- XXIV. Kelly Shannon, 'All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Transitory Character of the Contemporary City, *A Moving City: Three Years of Architectural Explorations in Brussels' Canal Zone* (Brussels: cAD, 1998) p. 93.
- XXV. A Bailey bridge is a temporary structure of lattice steel designed for rapid assembly from prefabricated standard parts, especially used in military operations.
- XXI. Emperor Gia Long (Nguyen dynasty) transferred the capital from Hanoi to the city of Hue, which lies at roughly the mid-point on the north-south route.
- XXII. Wright, p. 215.
- XXIII. Wright, p. 230.
- XXIX. Jianfei Zhu, 'An Archaeology of Contemporary Chinese Architecture, *Instant Cities: Notes on an Urban Transformation* (Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 1999) p.96.