Challenges in Development towards a Mega City - the case of Ho Chi Minh City

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Ho Chi Minh City’s overview

• Location and the role in National Economy
  – Ho Chi Minh City is the largest city in Vietnam, located near the delta of the Mekong River, 60kms from the Sea.
  – Ho Chi Minh City has an area of 2,095.01 sq km and is organised into 24 districts: 13 of which are old urban inner districts; 6 expanded urban districts and 5 suburb districts
  – Ho Chi Minh is the largest city in Viet Nam and the primary centre of economic activity and, as such, its GDP growth has outpaced the national level growth: between 10% and 12% in 2001-2004 and more than 12% in 2004-2007. Since 2009, the growth has been slowed down due to the world economic declines. The rate recorded in 2009 was nearly 8%, and 11% in 2010.
  – The population of Ho Chi Minh City, as of April 2010, was 7,382,287 equivalent to about 8 per cent of the total population of Vietnam
• The data shows Ho Chi Minh City, with only 8 per cent of the national population, accounts for more than 20 per cent of key aspects of the economy. Those shares are often double or more of that recorded in other cities.

• Ho Chi Minh City’s growth rates compared with the country’s:
Spatial Structure

HCM city has 24 Districts
Development Corridors
Planning for City Development

Topography Map

High elevated in the north part of the city; low towards the south and southeast.

- The city development is planned to almost all directions, spreads out to all districts
- Districts have same ways of planning in spite of some differences amongst them
Ho Chi Minh City and Climate Change

• The Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) region is deemed as ‘hotspot’ and one of the world’s most affected agglomerations in the world in regards to climate change. This is due to the multiple and imminent hazards the region has to face, the large population exposed, and the natural and economic assets at stake

• HCMC is built mostly on low-lying marshland being part of a large river delta. 60% of the administrative area of HCMC is located below 1 meter a.m.s.l. According to the ADB: 40-45% of land cover is 0-1 meter, and 15%-20% is 1-2m in elevation
Sea level rise scenarios

2050
30cm flooded

2070
45cm flooded

2100
75cm flooded
Vulnerable to Climate Change

- More than 100 serious flooded locations, including many in the city centre, were reported after one single heavy rainfall event (127 mm) on May 16 in 2004, causing prolonged traffic jams as thousands of motorcycles broke down.
- Some 20 inundated sites are reported monthly due to high tides.
- The majority of the actual urbanized land is only 2 to 3 meters above sea level. This low elevation of the land and heavy rainfall makes the city susceptible to flooding induced by tidal fluctuations. From October to January when high tide reaches its peak, water level in rivers and canals rise as high as, or more than that the land elevation.
Current Development

- Almost new residential areas or new developments located around the extension part of the inner city
- Development pressure resulting from population growth, economic growth and higher levels of resource consumption has led to a sharp increase in land coverage, waste production, and traffic
- Urban (infra-)structures are more and more expanding into low elevated grounds which gradually lose their ability to host ecosystems and absorb floods.
• The figure above shows construction sites located in flooding and sea level rise affected areas. That means most of Districts want to have some residential development but some other factors are disregarded.
• Wrong population relaxation in long term.
Problems

• Ho Chi Minh City is a dynamically growing metropolitan area of Vietnam, counting around 8 million inhabitants today and facing ongoing in-migration, HCMC will soon cross the threshold to a megacity. One of the most pressing problems of the emerging megacity is the enormous demand for housing, especially for low-income residents.

• The extensive land use at the periphery is seen as a consequence, whereas some of the inner districts are so densely populated. At the same time, the climate change, especially the sea level rises and flooding become obstacles challenging the Ho Chi Minh City urban development.

→ *Weak urban management.*
→ *The Climate Change adaptation pressure.*
Towards the sustainability

- The urban planning system in HCMC will be a key tool for adaptation in the face of changing climate. The quality of the planning system and its operation constitute an important dimension in institutional vulnerability. The question is whether the current planning system in HCMC will be capable of accounting for climate change issues and whether it is efficient enough to implement the necessary measures.

- Recently promulgated Law on urban planning opens up the zoning that can go beyond traditional urban planning, cope with cross-districts problems such as climate change impacts.
Conclusions

• Long-term development needed through strategic, integrative planning and smart investment.

• Zoning is not new, but can be used as a strong tool to regulate and/or adjust the spread-out and monotone development seen in all Districts.

• Ho Chi Minh city still needs supports from the world: sharing experiences, strengthening the urban planning, development capacity and financial resources…
Thank you