“GHOST” AREAS IN HANOI: URBAN IMAGINARIES AND THE REALITY OF DIFFUSE URBANIZATION IN VIETNAM

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ICAS 11 – LEIDEN – 18/07/2019
“GHOST” AREAS IN HANOI:
URBAN IMAGINARIES AND THE REALITY OF
DIFFUSE URBANIZATION IN VIETNAM

1. Urbanization of the Outskirts of the Vietnamese Capital City via the “New Urban Area” (NUA) Concept

2. From “Urban Imaginaries” to Negative Externalities: Runaway Development of NUAs and Emerging “Ghost” Urban Areas
1. New Urban Areas – a policy to control urbanization and...
Hanoi New Urban Areas

Spatial Distribution (as of 2015)

- More than 250 projects approved by the local or/and the central government between mid 1990s and 2015;
- Most of the projects are located outside a 10km radius from the historical core of the capital.
1. New Urban Areas – a policy to control urbanization and…

“Mặt trời mới của Việt Nam sẽ mọc lên từ phía Tây”!
“Vietnam’s new sun rises from the west”

Source: Splendora project - Vinaconex - Posco
1. New Urban Areas – … to attract Foreign Direct Investment
1.1 Why did the VN Government adopt the New Urban Area policy?
1.1 Why did the VN Government adopt the New Urban Area policy?
1.2 New Urban Areas – “Urban Diffusion” and a “New Way of Life”

Hanoi Duong Noi - Ha Dong NUA
Source: the authors
1.2 New Urban Areas – “Urban Diffusion” and a “New Way of Life”
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2. Appearance of Negative Externalities: “Ghost Urban Areas”
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Hanoi New Urban Areas

Unoccupied new urban areas (as of 2016)

- Among the 250 projects approved by the local or/and the central government between mid 1990s and 2015; 39 can be considered as “Ghosts”;
- Features:
  - low occupancy rates,
  - large land areas remaining idle,
  - construction work stopped for more than 1 year,
  - serious shortages of urban facilities and services.
## 2. Appearance of Negative Externalities: “Ghost Urban Areas”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of planned residential units in 39 NUAs</th>
<th>= 70,000 units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of built residential units</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Buit residential units</td>
<td>= 39,000 units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Villas and townhouses</td>
<td>= 13,500 units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Occupied</td>
<td>= 4,725 units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Unoccupied</td>
<td>= 8,775 units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.1</td>
<td>Villas and townhouses</td>
<td>= 35% of the built units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apartements</td>
<td>= 25,500 units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Occupied</td>
<td>= 11,246 units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Unoccupied</td>
<td>= 4,820 units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Non available data*</td>
<td>= 9,435 units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1.2</td>
<td>Apartements</td>
<td>= 65% of the built units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Unbuilt residential units</td>
<td>= 31,000 units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>= 44% of the planned units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of units unbuilt and unoccupied</td>
<td>= 44,595 units</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>= 64% of the planned units</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Due to access and security issues, several units could not be surveyed.*
2. Appearance of Negative Externalities: “Ghost Urban Areas”
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Example – New Urban Area «Lê Trọng Tấn» - Ring Road 3.5

Source: Google Earth
2. Appearance of Negative Externalities: “Ghost Urban Areas”

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- The Hanoi case shows that, with the “New Urban Area” policy, political and planning processes contribute to:
  
  - the re-imagination of spaces of metropolitan territories;
  - diffusing urbanization by road extension, property development and mixed-use projects.

- But due to speculation (land and property) and the economic context, the “New Urban Area” model can “drift”.

- A consequence is the apparition of “unoccupied areas”, the significant waste of (agricultural) land that can jeopardize the future development of the city.
Thank you.