

SUMMARY

The authors, Dang Phong, Heinz Schütte, Shoichi Ota, and Christian Pédelahore, under the scientific direction of the latter, have produced an ensemble of investigations focused on observation, transcription and analysis of contemporary urban transition in Vietnam.

The texts of this presentation reflect a multidisciplinary approach based on contrasting geographical and professional origins. In a context of urban explosion and transition, of accelerated metropolisation and globalisation, they highlight the dynamics of change at work, and, at the same time, the existing dialectics between cultural continuity and social and economic transformations.

The texts put urban phenomena in Vietnam into perspective. In particular, they demonstrate that, despite not subscribing to the same scales and temporal rhythms, and thus not having a common denominator, Economic transformations – the most rapid ones of all – should be interpreted as being reflected in Spatial transitions, in their material and symbolic forms.

The latter constitute an intermediate stage and an opening leading to a more precise understanding of cultural transitions. These largely take place underground and unconsciously. Yet in the long run, they are historically constitutive of local urban and social identities, which remain consistently deep-rooted.

The PRUD 79 team has concentrated its investigations on a area so far hardly explored, introducing a new field of Vietnamese Studies, i.e. the analysis of spatial cultures, and of the ways local actors, in urban development, operate and think.

The authors have chosen the method of field observation and a phenomenological approach to reality, showing an understanding of processes, actions, and thoughts of two categories of actors; studied from the inside.

On the one hand we have architects and urban planners in a knowledgeable and erudite relationship to the city. On the other hand, there are inhabitants, who build and invest, and are representative of customary know-how and intuitive, pragmatic and practical ways of constructing their own urban space.

Analysis and synthesis show these two categories to be united in the figure of the "Passeur", a mediator, who links tradition and modernity, modes of local practice and exogenous knowledge. We thus have an operating link which allows the understanding of the deployment of endogenous practices of incorporation and adaptation. This model equally permits to identify the contemporary transmutations of Vietnam's urban space.