

New Urban Frontiers:
Periurbanization and
(Re)territorialization in Southeast Asia

Michael Leaf
University of British Columbia

Context: Policy & Pragmatism

- An initial contextualizing point - presumptions of the “knowledge to action” framework:
- State of knowledge > development of policy > efficacy of policy.
- Contrast to the governance question: only understood in relation to local specificities.

A Question of Terminology

- Suburbanization vs(?) periurbanization: a difference in meaning, or context, or disciplinary perspective?
- A theoretical divide: theorizing urban expansion in rich world vs poor world contexts.
- Contrasting “a suburban world” with “periurban America.”

Fragmentation and Frontiers

- Frontier as interface, or as “empty space” to be occupied.
- Frontier as discourse: hope, inevitability, uncertainty - a metaphor for development.
- Frontier as geo/political strategy: state interests, but also market interests.
- “Lawlessness” of the frontier - institutional unsettledness.
- Rural/urban interface as part of the larger system of socio-spatial structure: (re)territorialization.

The Multiple Frontiers of the Periurban

- A frontier of urbanization: demographic, economic and socio-cultural dimensions.
- A frontier of globalization: a leading edge of FDI, symbolic flows, institutional change.
- A governance frontier: as state reterritorialization, and as reconfiguration of relations between state, society, capital.

The Case of Ho Chi Minh City

- Rapid growth: from 4.1m (1990) to 6.7m (2007) - officially - plus or minus 2m(?)
- Implications of information constraints: example of *ho khau* and “people out of place.”
- Doi moi and the rearticulation of informality: example of property rights.

Residential Development

- A category to slice through periurban fragmentation, through the “donut city.”
- Multiple forms, possibilities, layers of state and capital involvement:
 - Geopolitical roots of Saigon South / PMH
 - State sector origins of firms (Intresco); promotional role of HoREA
 - *Nha tro* development: local fiscal underpinnings under decentralization

Industrial Development

- As state developmental strategy at multiple levels.
- Geopolitical roots of industrial parks/EPZs.
- HEPZA as an autonomous (central) state agency.
- Contrast to periurban “guerrilla” industrial development.
- Apparent fragmentation obscures integrated, though segmented, system.

The Periurban as a Governance Frontier

- Reterritorialization: nominally about redrawing boundaries, both anticipatory and post-hoc.
- Admin change - and shifts in authority structures at the intersection of rural and urban.
- Institutional unsettledness, accommodationist approaches from HEPZA to *nha tro*.
- Governance as continual negotiation, rather than presumed predictability that underlies planning
- “Integrated” system challenging dichotomies of formal/informal, local/global.

The Big Unknown

- As all of this has arisen within context of ongoing economic expansionism and neo-liberalization, can the resilience of established practices of negotiation accommodate the coming global recession?
- What does this mean for the future of periurban Ho Chi Minh City?













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Toward a Periurban Research Agenda

- Spatial/environmental change (sustainability?): new morphologies; connection and fragmentation.
- The globalization question: relative to local (regional?) political/cultural formations/relations.
- The governance question: institutional development and persistent informality.
- Periurban society: social fragmentation, multiple “cultures;” periurbanism as a way of life? / living in the city vs. living in the “megapolis.”