

Informality and Governance in Peri-urban Southeast Asia: A Study of the Jakarta and Hanoi Metropolitan Regions

*Centre for Human Settlements · School of Community and Regional Planning
College for Interdisciplinary Studies – University of British Columbia*

Project Leader: Michael Leaf

Project supported by: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council
Standard Research Grant

Funding: \$92,646

Period: April 1, 2006 – March 31, 2011

Summary:

Indonesia and Vietnam, like other developing countries in Southeast Asia, are struggling to cope with the effects of extremely rapid urbanization. This is a phenomenon associated with each country's urban transition - that is, the historic shift from a society defined by a rural majority population to one in which urban populations predominate. Particularly problematic are the peri-urban areas adjacent to the major cities, as these are zones of hyper-rapid change, characterized by the influx of rural migrant populations, the outward movement of suburbanizing urban dwellers, and unprecedented local administrative challenges. Erstwhile rural villages must quickly adapt to being part of the city, with all the demands for urban infrastructure, services, land use, and environmental controls that this implies.

The basic processes by which peri-urbanization occurs are shaped by a mix of both formal (state-regulated) and informal (non-regulated) means, that in practice often subvert the expressed goals of state-defined urban planning. The research is therefore based upon a framework of regulatory informality, focusing on the complex interactions between state and non-state actors in the shaping of peri-urban change. Regulatory issues which unfold from processes of peri-urbanization and which will be examined in this research include: (a) land use and building construction, (b) security of property rights, (c) delivery of infrastructure and services, and (d) environmental protection.

The proposed research is expected to contribute to knowledge in two ways. First, in regard to policy implications, the research will seek to understand the bases of localized regulatory practices outside of direct, or formal, state control, raising the possibility of articulating new means of regulation in the peri-urbanizing regions of two major Southeast Asian cities. Second, in more theoretical terms, the research will contribute to the recent resurgence of interest in the study of urban informality and informalization in market-driven development. Dissemination of results will be undertaken through the presentation and publication of scholarly papers in both Asia and North America, and through a book project bringing together the Hanoi and Jakarta case studies with others in the region.