

conclusion, which critically reviews the main chapters and discusses the way forward for Vietnamese politics, is also useful.

The main weakness of the book lies in the uneven quality of the chapters when certain ones prove to be more rigorous than others. The reference list of the book also causes some problems for readers as it doesn't include many works cited, including key ones such as the 'Reverse Effects of Sunshine' article, which forms the foundation of Malesky's discussion in his chapter. Some chapters use outdated, biased or unreliable sources. For example, in his chapter, Kerkvliet cited shocking information from *Điện thư* about former party leaders' corruption, alleging that they amassed billions of dollars in bribes (p. 105). When I traced the source, it turned out to be the electronic newsletter of a dissident organisation, which normally carries unverified rumours and false information disseminated by activists hostile to the CPV. That said, *Politics in contemporary Vietnam* is a timely book that provides fresh insights into Vietnamese politics. Hopefully, the book will inspire more authors to work on this important topic of Vietnam studies.

LE HONG HIEP

ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute

Sidewalk city: Remapping public space in Ho Chi Minh City

By ANNETTE MIAE KIM

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Annette Kim's *Sidewalk city* zeroes in on Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam's largest metropolis, and with good reason. Not only are sidewalks in that city teeming with activity, but Vietnam is actively renegotiating its 'sidewalk paradigm' through increased clearance enforcement (p. 21). Ho Chi Minh City serves as an in-situ laboratory for understanding sidewalks as contested spaces because both city districts and wards have been experimenting with sidewalk management policies. Through an innovative approach that combines spatial ethnography with a critical cartography, Kim challenges her readers to see sidewalks anew. The result is a lavish book with resplendent full-colour figures that testify to the importance of sidewalks in urban life, especially in the Global South.

The book is composed of seven chapters. The first chapter introduces the major theoretical questions and conceptual tools. Kim asks, for example, how property rights theory may be applied to public space in order to evaluate how claims to space are justified and operationalised in society. Rather than sidewalks in the city as disorderly, she shows why they are better understood as 'mixed-use public spaces', a perspective that may lead to better design and management policies (p. 25). In Chapter 2, she develops three narratives for understanding the importance of sidewalks to urban life. The first narrative is a tale of two cities, or how Ho Chi Minh City emerged out of two distinctive urban environments — Cholon, the bustling

commercial area inhabited by Chinese merchants, and Saigon, the orderly city of French colonialism. The second is that the city's sidewalks have long served as both commercial and recreational spaces. And third, that Ho Chi Minh City is a relatively young, multicultural city. She uses these narratives to ward off claims of 'traditional' Vietnamese culture with regard to public space and to underscore that municipal codes must be understood at the ward or neighbourhood level, a point she documents through empirical data in Chapter 4. But in this chapter, she draws attention to the fact that sidewalks have long served simultaneously as commercial and recreational spaces and how the informality of economic livelihoods in the post-war environment only enhanced empathy among residents and police towards itinerant vendors, contributing to the mixed-use character of the city.

Chapter 3 opens up a broader discussion of cartography in general. She traces how a Critical Cartography 1.0 allowed scholars to deconstruct maps and then makes the case for a Critical Cartography 2.0 (p. 71), which would deploy new conventions in map-making such as testimony and visionary maps, DIY urbanisms, and new forms of representing space that would 'unveil rather than obscure sidewalk life' (p. 84). This theoretical discussion leads into the empirical bulk of the book, Chapter 4, which is divided in two parts. Part one expands on her research methodology and questions. In 2010, Kim and her assistants carried out 250 interviews with vendors in two iconic locations of the city, District One where the stamp of French Saigon was the strongest, and District Five or Cholon. In addition, they used GIS coding to record non-pedestrian uses and interactions with the policy. Part two of the chapter presents nine innovative maps developed out of the empirical data, each of which dismantles the 'celestial' perspective of urban planners by capturing an aspect of the local view and allowing the social nature of sidewalks to emerge.

Chapter 5 builds on the empirical data and visual renderings by proposing an important theoretical intervention — how can these vital social spaces be understood through the lens of property rights? Through this question, she shows how diverse claims are made on space, including the informal contracts with abutting property owners and diverse modes of enforcing regulations to clear sidewalks. She then draws on the texts of official policies and regulations as well as content analyses of newspapers and interviews to evaluate the legitimating narratives about rights to public space.

The implications of her Critical Cartography 2.0 are made evident in Chapter 6, where she lays out a proposal for training tourists to focus their attention on the city's sidewalks. She details a packaged experience for tourists to draw their gaze, not upwards toward the stately and majestic buildings of the colonial era, but on the sidewalks themselves in all their lived vitality. In developing this proposal, she explains how she drew on theories of social cognition and fortified her analysis with an analysis of blogs and online commentary from English, Japanese, and Chinese tourists to show that despite common perceptions held by tourist agencies and urban planners, most comments mention sidewalks and vending and street food as key experiences of the city.

All too often, cities in the Global South are seen as spaces of disorder that do not conform to the norms and visions of planners. Perhaps, she proposes, this is precisely their value. How can we see the difference in these cities, not as something to be

eliminated but rather emulated? How does the vibrancy of city sidewalks bring mixed usage into the realm of public space not as empty space best cleared for pedestrians, but rather dense zones of sociality? *Sidewalk city* will surely appeal to scholars who are interested in space, city-life, cartography, and informal economies. It is as inspiring as it is informative in providing not only empirical insights about the activities that occur on sidewalks, but a strong moral claim of the importance of seeing and understanding the city anew. This book merits strong consideration for students and scholars who wish to bring innovative tools to questions of space and sociality.

ALLISON TRUITT
Tulane University