

Report on the Definition Phase:

Work Package 4: Definition of Practical Implementation Activities

Regional Network for Sustainable Tourism Development

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Empowering urban regions for cooperative, synergistic and practical implementation of sustainability and resilience strategies considering the urban-rural nexus

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1. Introduction

The shifting focus of many developing countries from agriculture to services or industrial production of goods has resulted in an abandonment of rural communities along with decreased support for the agricultural activities. The worsening condition of agriculture is pushing rural communities towards migration into larger urban agglomerations and diversification of their economic activities. Globalisation has increased the international offer of low-cost agricultural produce delivered directly to large metropolises, hindering the possibilities for small farmers to commercialise their produce, thus having a negative impact on the socio-economic condition of rural communities by decreasing their income along with their purchasing power. This phenomenon can be observed in Vietnam as the country has strengthened its tourism approach in the past decade, increasing the proportion of the country's GDP produced by touristic activities (Hoa et al., 2020).

The focus area of the emplement! Project is located close to an important touristic hub at the centre of the country, Da Nang City, where local development has been focused on mass tourism facilities along the waterfront and welcoming large cruise ships from the neighbouring countries. Such a strong focus on mass tourism development in similar cases has attracted the rural inhabitants to move to the urbanised areas within and around the cities leading to smaller rural communities and diminished possibilities of human development in rural areas. The globalisation of agriculture, on the other hand, is also threatening the survival of what is left of the rural settlements. Therefore, a sustainable form of development requires a balanced approach that bridges the gap between rural and urban development policies, integrates the regional dimension of urban planning and pays attention to the rural-urban nexus.

If utilised properly, tourism can play a significant role in the development of the region as it already represents the key driver of the economic development of its centre. However, it is necessary to explore feasible options to approach this sector from a sustainable perspective that maintains the social, economic and environmental balances and grant mutual access for the local and rural population to benefit from tourism, on the one hand, and for the local, national and international tourists to reach out for local and rural attractions and enjoy sustainable forms of unique experiences, on the other. In other words, the emplement! Project considers tourism to be an instrument that has a huge potential to work on urban-rural linkages in the region and help shape a practical model for integrated and sustainable regional development.

In order to lay the foundation for the later stages of the project and for a proper development of a regional concept for sustainable tourism that can be deployed to enhance the life quality of the local population along with improving their socio-economic development and preserving their culture and identity, the FRA-UAS research team has sought in the definition phase of the emplement! Project to 1) provide a theoretical framework for sustainable tourism based on literature review and lessons learned from best approaches, 2) establish a solid understanding of the development conditions of the targeted region, 3) examine the existing touristic practices and characteristics and 4) set a preliminary set of guidelines to facilitate the further development of a regional concept for sustainable regional tourism that can be implemented by the local partners of the project in the later stages of research. This paper is meant to review the team efforts and research activities during the definition phase of the emplement! Project under the "Work Package 4 – Definition of Practical Implementation Activities – Regional Network for Sustainable Tourism Development". In particular, a master thesis that has been

prepared in the frameworks of the emplement! Project: "Tourism as a Tool for Integrated and Sustainable Regional Development – Connecting on a Rural Scale in the Provinces of Quang Nam and in Vietnam"¹ is conceived to provide a vital contribution to the research, highlighting its key findings and proposals.

2. Sustainable Regional Tourism

In developing countries like Vietnam, tourism represents mostly the main income source usually exceeding oil exports, food products or automobiles in its business value². It can be incorporated with other sectors, such as the various fields of rural, urban and infrastructure development, to boost progress, generate more direct and indirect jobs and contribute to poverty reduction³. For the long-term development of Da Nang and the Quang Nam region, therefore, there is a need for a sustainable approach to develop tourism and integrate it to the overall development system, properly. In this regard, the emplement! Project considers tourism to be a promising medium to advance the region in terms of upgrading infrastructure and reducing social discrepancies. Also, for environmental development, tourism can be instrumentalised to increase awareness and promote nature as well as responsible and green practices.

In a quick review, tourism appears in the socio-economic plans that lead the urban and infrastructure development of both Da Nang and the Quang Nam region. Quang Nam has already addressed tourism development as a strong service sector that became integrated to the planning mandate of the regional authority. The goal is to improve the economic status of the region and its population as well as to mediate the disadvantages imposed by its terrains⁴. Da Nang acknowledges tourism to be the city's leading economic driver and aims to strengthen its public transport network, roads infrastructure as well as its airport and harbour in the coming development rounds to serve this vital sector. Developing the city's mobility and transport gateways will certainly impact tourism not only in the city but also in the entire region. Da Nang, in this regard, acknowledges the need for capacity development to raise the capabilities of the local stakeholders involved in the tourism industry and to increase the value and efficiency of the associated services. Aligning sustainable tourism development in Da Nang and the region with the other development sectors in an integrated manner is crucial to generate considerable benefits for the overall urban, infrastructure and socio-economic development of the entire region as well as for the local wellbeing, culture and products of its inhabitants⁵.

To establish a theoretical framework for the regional network for sustainable tourism, it is important to articulate the terms of sustainable tourism as well as integrated regional development, since both

¹ Melissa Dopf. (2020). Tourism as a Tool for Integrated and Sustainable Regional Development – Connecting on a Rural Scale in the Provinces of Quang Nam and in Vietnam. (Master's Thesis, Hochschule RheinMain, Frankfurt University of Applied Sciences and Hochschule Giesenheim)

² UNWTO. 2020. www.unwto.org/why-tourism (retrieved on 28.01.2020)

³ ILO. Director of Vietnam Gyorgy Sziraczki. www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/features/WCMS_344212/langen/index.htm (retrieved on 12.12.2019)

⁴ Quang Nam People's Committee. 2013. Quang Nam provincial socio-economic development orientation to 2020 and vision to 2025

⁵ Da Nang's People Committee. 2016. Data collection survey on sustainable & integrated urban development in Da Nang. Final Report.

terms are required to be incorporated together in an integrated manner. The theoretical framework should also consider the evolving topic of urban-rural development as it is entirely relevant to the case at hand as well as the available knowledge that can be acquired from similar development approaches. The following points, therefore, introduce the major components of the literature review conducted by the research team during its definition phase.

2.1. Principles of Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable development, in general, is defined by diverse authors as the balance between social equity, economic efficiency and preserving the environment (Hall, 1998; Sanagustín Fons et al., 2011). In combination with tourism, sustainable development can be a way to improve the living conditions of local communities, contribute to their employment and generated income, preserve their capital assets⁶ and maintain their natural resources, all while promoting their culture and identity⁷. In this regard, tourism is seen to take a full account of the current and future social, economic and environmental impacts of the touristic activities on the overall development of a given context, addressing the needs of the associated visitors, industry, environment and host communities. For tourism to be regarded as sustainable, therefore, it must always maintain a balance between the pillars constituting sustainability in all its forms ranging from niche to mass tourism⁸. Sustainable tourism should also maintain a high level of satisfaction among the tourists, allowing them to have meaningful experiences, raise their awareness about sustainability and promote responsible tourism practices amongst them⁹.

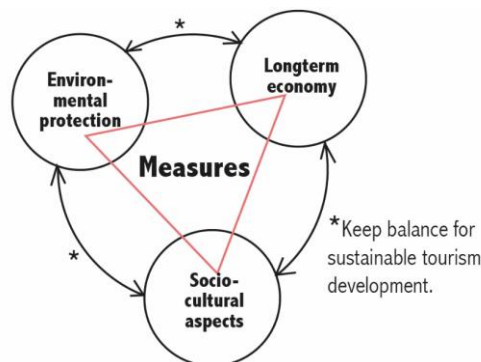


Figure 1: Three Pillars of Sustainable Tourism Development. (Dopf, 2020)

Tourism together with the associated services that come with it, are seen by most governments as an opportunity for economic development. It can transform the socio-economic dynamics among the stakeholders and communities in many ways. It is necessary, therefore, to formulate inclusive tourism planning processes based on the participation of communities, to provide the residents with the possibility to influence the definition of the suggested projects and engage the community in sustainable tourism practices generating economic and social development and strengthening the

6 Umweltbundesamt. https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/sites/default/files/medien/1410/publikationen/texte_53-2019_paper-sustainable-tourism-en_190429.pdf (retrieved on 27.01.2020)

7 Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment & Energy. 2005. VISIONS of Sustainability. Issue II.

8 UNWTO. www.unwto.org/sustainable-development (retrieved on 26.01.2020)

9 Green Tourism. www.greentourism.eu/en/Post/Name/Sustainable-Tourism (retrieved on 26.01.2020)

collaboration among the residents. Inclusion is crucial to avoid circumstances where distant communities may not agree with intrusive tourism developments or the transformation of their way of life. In such cases, opposition to development projects may foster community cohesion in the form of solidarity against the measures defined by the government, thus rejecting the implementation of projects (Hwang et al., 2012).

The concept of sustainable tourism does not define a specific type of tourism but rather sets out the guidelines to be adopted when carrying out tourism development measures. To break it down, the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) addresses several points to be the characteristics of sustainable tourism¹⁰, summarised as in the following:

2.1.1. Economic Viability

It is crucial to ensure the long-term competitiveness of the touristic destinations and businesses, where growth can be still conceived without harming the accommodating social and environmental fabrics. In other words, the concept of sustainable tourism that is economically viable should ensure that growth does not destroy the resources on which the future of tourism will depend, notably the physical environment and the social fabric of the host community (Swarbrooke, 1999, p. 13).

2.1.2. Social Equity, Community Wellbeing and Prosperity

Social equity provides a core principle for sustainable tourism development as it focuses on providing employment to the local residents, especially in rural settings, and improves their incomes. Consequently, it has the potential to promote the social development and livelihoods that are associated with tourism. Through proper measures to maximize the revenues that can be generated through tourism and seeking a widespread and fair distribution of economic and social benefits across the hosting community, the life quality of the local entrepreneurs as well as the population should be improved. This is through the contributions that tourism should make to further the development of the existing local infrastructure, public space and facilities, social structures as well as to enhance the accessibility to resources, amenities and life support systems, especially for the poor, and also to avoid all forms of social degradation and exploitation.

2.1.3. Local Employment

A sustainable form of tourism should enhance not only the sheer number of jobs generated directly or indirectly by associated sectors but also the quality of working conditions and availability of trained capacities and training opportunities. It should also secure accessibility to job markets that are inclusive to all willing members of the community with no discrimination of any sort.

10 What is sustainable tourism. <https://www.gelecekturizmde.com/what-is-sustainable-tourism/> (retrieved on 26.01.2020)

2.1.4. Touristic Fulfilment

To maintain the attractiveness of the place, sustainable tourism should ensure the safety of the visitors and invite them to navigate interesting and legible spheres. It should satisfy their expectations through sufficient range of services and activities and help them shape memorable experiences that are worth their time, efforts and expenses. Sustainable tourism should also ensure inclusion to all visitors with no discrimination of any sort.

2.1.5. Stakeholder Engagement

Involving and empowering the local community in the decision making, planning and implementation of tourism is crucial to ensure the sustainability of the development measures. A proper participation starts from the early stages of conceptualisation and continues through to the management of the implemented projects as well as to shaping the future development of tourism in the area, in consultation with experts and related partners in all stages.

2.1.6. Local Culture and Identity

A sustainable form of tourism should bring the visitors closer to the authentic culture and traditions of the hosting community. It promotes the local identity of the place to enrich the touristic experiences and stress the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the journey. It is important, therefore, to identify, maintain, preserve, integrate and promote the local heritage in its physical (e.g., historical buildings and natural monuments) and non-physical (e.g., traditional music, dances and practices) forms. It is especially critical to handle this aspect appropriately in vulnerable cases, where local culture and identity may suffer under the gentrifying pressure of high-class and mass tourism.

2.1.7. Physical and Environmental Integrity

Maintaining the social, economic and environmental balances of development requires sustainable tourism to enhance the quality of landscapes in both rural and urban settings and avoid the physical and visual degradation of the built and natural environments. This includes sustainable tourism's commitment to maintain and conserve the biodiversity, natural habitats, wild- and marine-life and serve the existing eco-systems. In this regard, it is also crucial to minimise the pollution of air, water and land and implement strict as well as creative waste management measures. Sustainable tourism, therefore, considers recycling and reducing the waste generated by the tourists, enterprises and local community as priorities.

2.1.8. Resource Efficiency

As in all sustainable practices, sustainable tourism must employ the required resources in an efficient manner. In the development and operation of tourism facilities and services, sustainable tourism should try to reach the maximum output possible from a minimum use of the capital assets of the local community, especially in cases of scarce and non-renewable resources.

2.2. Global Platforms for Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable forms of tourism appear in many global initiatives and leading international development references such the United Nations Development and Environment Programs (UNDP and UNEP). The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) is also an influential platform for sustainable tourism working closely with the frameworks set by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that have a wide acceptance and support from the governments around the world and provide the basis for the New Urban Agenda (NUA). To help mobilise the needed political support and promotion of sustainable tourism, the research connected the identified sustainable tourism principles with the correlating SDGs, as in the following points:

- SDGs 1 and 4, No Poverty and Quality Education and Life-long Learning, represent important aspects of the social equity, community wellbeing and prosperity principles of sustainable tourism. In connection with national poverty reduction policies and related initiatives, tourism can play a significant role in increasing access to jobs for disadvantaged labour. Similarly, tourism can promote inclusiveness and education in pursuit of building the capacities of the local community.
- SDG 2, Sustainable Agriculture, can be promoted under the local employment principle of sustainable tourism, by promoting the local agricultural production to supply the hotels and increase the sale of associated products to tourists. Also, introducing touristic activities revolving around the agricultural practices can generate additional income while enhancing the value of the tourism experience.
- SDGs 6, 14 and 15, Clean Water and Sanitation, Life below the Water and Life on Land, represent the core of the physical and environmental integrity principle of sustainable tourism. With an efficient use of water in tourism, pollution control and technology efficiency can help safeguard the water resources. The integration of tourism to coastal zone management can preserve fragile marine eco-systems and serve as a vehicle to promote a blue economy, contributing to the sustainable use of marine resources. Sustainable tourism can also contribute to the conservation of biodiversity in the touristic areas and help preserve fragile natural zones.
- SDG 7, Affordable and Clean Energy, indicates the relevance of the resource efficiency principle of sustainable tourism. Through the promotion of investments in clean energy sources, tourism can help to reduce harmful emissions, mitigate climate change and expand the access to energy for all.
- SDG 8, Decent Work and Economic Growth, correlates well with the social equity, community wellbeing and prosperity as well as the local employment principles of sustainable tourism. The associated value chains can enhance positive socio-economic impacts on the community and promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth.
- SDG 9, Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, agrees with the economic viability principle of sustainable tourism. As a sector, tourism can be utilised as an incentive to stimulate innovation and upgrade-oriented policies for urban development and public infrastructure making them more sustainable, environmental and resource-efficient.

- SDG 11, Sustainable Cities and Communities, represents an essential field. It is associated, therefore, with many principles of sustainable tourism including the social equity, community wellbeing and prosperity but also local culture and identity as well as physical and environmental integrity. Tourism, in this regard, provides a chance for advancing urban, environmental and infrastructure development. It can help optimise mobility and accessibility and promote the regeneration and preservation of cultural and natural assets of the local communities.
- SDG 17, Partnerships for the Goals, connects well with the stakeholder engagement principle of sustainable tourism. Due to its cross-sectoral nature, tourism can be utilised to strengthen private-public partnerships and engage multiple international, national, regional and local stakeholders.

2.3. Integrated Regional Development

Aligned with the project's focus on the regional dimension of sustainable tourism, the research has also articulated the terms integrated planning and regional development. In summary, integrated planning or integrated development represents a multi-sectoral and interdisciplinary approach to development that engages a multitude of related development sectors, stakeholders and planning processes, considers a wide range of sectoral development interests and concerns and bases the intended development measures on common agreements and shared visions of the development partners. Therefore, it differs sharply from the conventional sectoral planning, within which each sector plans and implements separately, or regardless to the other relevant sectors¹¹.

Regional planning is related to urban planning as it also deals with the efficient allotment of functions, land-uses and infrastructure in relation with the available resources. It conceives the growth of all settlements that constitute the region. Therefore, regional planning handles a development scale that is usually larger than an individual city or town¹². It can also include formulating regional development laws to coordinate the development among the region's cities and town and optimise planning and land management at the regional level¹³.

Based on both terms, integrated regional development is a planning process that addresses a variety of development sectors, stakeholders and planning processes to transform an entire region on the basis of a holistic vision and integrated approach. Therefore, it is important for integrated regional development to manage the growth of the settlements under its mandate, maintain their economic growth and social development balanced with the capacities of available resources and protect the environment¹⁴. Integrated regional development is acknowledged to be essential not only for a proper development of the region as well as the incorporated cities and town but also to avoid unintended impacts on the social, economic and environmental assets of the region resulting from the lack of

11 OAS. www.oas.org/dsd/publications/Unit/oea03e/ch04.htm (retrieved on 27.03.2020)

12 "Growing Smart Legislative Guidebook: Chapter 6 Regional Planning". American Planning Association. American Planning Association Press (retrieved 22.12.2017)

13 Caves, R. W. (2004). *Encyclopaedia of the City*. Routledge. pp. 561. ISBN 9780415252256.

14 UNCRD Expert group meeting on integrated regional development planning. Japan. 2013.

coordination between the development sectors and stakeholders as well as between the cities and towns of the region.

Tourism, like other sectors, should be incorporated in the context of integrated regional planning. Integrated Rural Tourism, as a term in this field, refers to tourism as an important driver in regional rural development¹⁵. In the case of the emplement! Project, sustainable tourism is conceived to be a catalyst for regional development, from rural as well as urban development perspectives. On this basis, connecting the existing touristic practices in Da Nang and Quang Nam to spread the benefits of tourism across the region and enrich the visitors' experiences is the key mission that can be facilitated in an implementation of a regional network for sustainable tourism. It is required, therefore, to establish new touristic practices inside the region and open new paths for the development of the related infrastructure, public space and facilities and service provision. To ensure a proper management and operation of the regional touristic practices, appropriate measures of capacity development are also necessary. Based on the theoretical review established by the research in its definition phase, all these crucial aspects for the development of the proposed network are discussed in the following chapters.

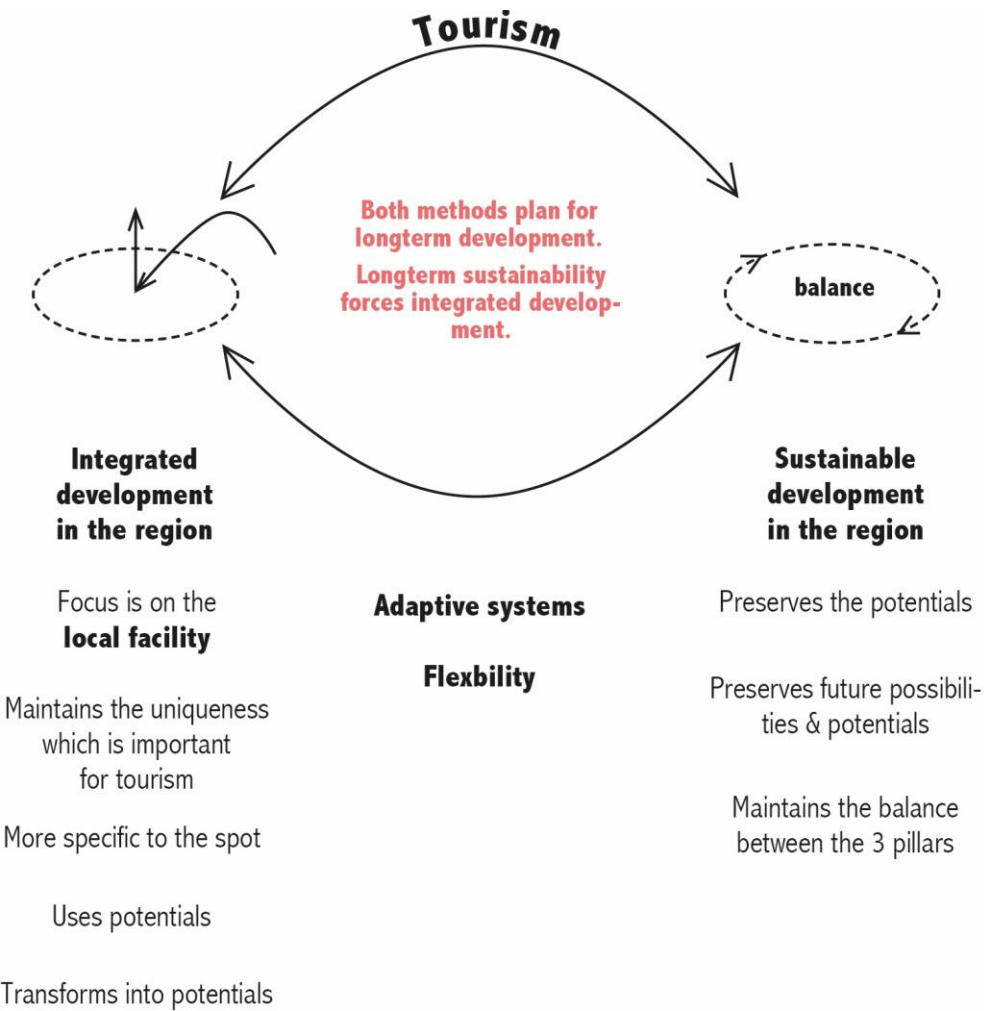


Figure 2: Combination of Integrated and Sustainable Regional Tourism Development. (Dopf, 2020)

15 Tove Oliver & Tim Jenkins (2003) Sustaining Rural Landscapes: The role of integrated tourism, Landscape Research, 28:3, 293-307, DOI: 10.1080/01426390306516

2.4. Urban-Rural Nexus

Addressing the development gap between the urban areas and their rural hinterlands is critical to achieve a balanced development across a given region. Polarised settlement systems especially in developing countries tend to reinforce strong differences in the level of development between urban centres and their rural hinterlands. Focusing on the urban-rural nexus, integrated regional development has the potential to create a fused system of settlements to diversify the services and facilities available to rural residents¹⁶ and thus help the rural communities cope with their challenges and mend their life quality.

As one of its strategies for implementing the New Urban Agenda (NUA), the UN-Habitat (2017) stresses the need to balance investments, planning and development between the urban and rural areas. Therefore, creating an interconnected region in terms of spatial, social and economic opportunities is important. In such development models, small and intermediate towns are seen to provide ideal locations near agricultural land-uses for job creation, especially in the related industries of food processing and food security. The potential they possess as market towns promoting local products and serving as entry points into regional, national and international food supply and value chains can reinforce their role in their respective regions (UN-Habitat 2017 pp. 81).

To bridge the gap between rural and urban development policies, development discussions concerning urban and rural areas should be brought together. For both, sustainable planning concepts, good governance principles and practical development measures are highly needed, which stresses further the increasing need for an integrated regional planning¹⁷. In this regard, to address development along urban-rural linkages, the UN-Habitat (UN-Habitat 2017 pp. 82-83) has proposed a set of issues that need to be considered. Keeping in mind that the development of urban-rural linkages is a planning process, these issues can be discussed under the principles of strategic planning, as in the following:

2.4.1. Mobilisation of Stakeholders and Resources

In the initial stages of urban-rural development, mobilising the required stakeholders and recourses can assume an advantaged position if the intended development is linked properly with enacted local, regional, national or international development goals and policies. Identifying the pressing challenges that can be addressed by strengthening the urban-rural linkages, together with conceiving the intended development to align well with a national constitution, formal development plans and visions as well as with stated development goals, can encourage the decision makers to approve the planning process and allocate the required capital assets.

2.4.2. Acquiring Data, Available Information and Mapping

It is important to understand the planning environment within which the intended urban-rural development is taking place. It is important, therefore, to lead a thorough data collection and mapping procedures within the identified urban-rural linkages to stand on the current conditions of

16 Integrated regional development planning: Linking urban centres and rural areas in Bolivia. Dennis A. Rondinelli. Hugh Evans. Syracuse University, USA. 2012

17 Rural Urban Nexus. 2020. <https://rural-urban-nexus.org/> (retrieved on 12.12.2019)

development. However, it is as important to formulate a comprehensive understanding of the planning environment. Therefore, acquiring contextual information regarding the development patterns, regulations and mechanisms of the country and the region at hand as well as the associated populations and all related socio-economic conditions is crucial to the development.

2.4.3. Assessment of the Status Quo

Based on the acquired data bases and available information, a thorough examination of the urban-rural linkages at hand becomes possible. The goal is to establish a solid understanding of their current development conditions, including the circulation of people, material and resources, as well as to identify the pressing challenges in the related aspects. Acquired knowledge should be extended to cover the key aspects of urban-rural development, such as regional flows and connectivity, transport, food security, rural urbanization, inclusive financial investments, governance structures and territorial and spatial planning, among others. In the later stages of the planning process, each topic can be instrumentalised as an entry development point that can be linked with the other topics.

2.4.4. Conceptualising a Development Vision

As mentioned in the initiation of an urban-rural development, the integration of the intended development in the frameworks of larger territorial developments is advantageous. Formulating a development vision, therefore, should be based on the established understanding of the current situation, future projections and development needs. But also, it should reflect its integrative nature, stressing its ability to be integrated by the enacted national or regional development policies as well as to integrate a variety of essential development sectors at the local level. To strengthen the strategic dimension of the vision, it is important to identify measurable and clear objectives for the urban-rural development that are bound with realistic timeframes on the short-, medium- and long-terms. To allow all relevant stakeholders to take ownership of the development measures, there should be a broad consensus on the objectives and distribution of roles and responsibilities. The UN-Habitat suggests that the roles and responsibilities in this context should be distributed in accordance with the available capacities and skill-pools of the development stakeholders as well as to their financial resources. Consequently, national governments are perceived to assist in policy development and capacity building, local authorities are seen to assume the responsibility of all implementation procedures and development partners are encouraged to lead technical advisory services and raise funding opportunities, if possible. Integrating the private sector as well as local producer and labour can push the development measures forward at local level, advocate for specific local challenges, provide community services and connect with the targeted population. On this basis, it is specifically important in this stage of work to formulate the development vision and objectives as well as roles and responsibilities in a participatory approach that includes all development partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries.

2.4.5. Prioritisation and Strategy Formulation

Formulating realistic strategies for the intended urban-rural development requires a proportioned allocation of the granted funds and assets based on an appropriate prioritisation of development objectives. Together with the development stakeholders, strategies should be formulated with the potentials and hindrances of implementation in mind. Practice-oriented strategies should also be

sustainable and inclusive integrating vulnerable communities and environmental aspects and contain elements of capacity development for the key implementation players. Cross-cutting issues such as human rights, gender perspectives and climate change are also to be considered.

2.4.6. Action Plans and Operation

Based on the prioritised development objectives and formulated urban-rural development strategy, endorsing a well-defined set of action plans addressing all involved development sectors is then needed. To ensure an active engagement of all relevant stakeholders that includes planning authorities and public administrations, infrastructure operators, private sector, civil society and academia, they need to be part of the management structures of the suggested projects. Considering the number of the associated stakeholders in urban-rural development, communication becomes a challenge that can hinder the development process if not handled properly. Therefore, a strong communication strategy needs to be put in place to ensure that the development partners can communicate seamlessly among themselves, on the one hand, and that the public is informed and aware of the development process, on the other. After clearing an organisational structure with the stakeholders and establishing the required communication channels, action plans need also to consider the potential risks and existing gaps that may hinder the suggested development measures. On this basis, definition of realistic action plans should be possible, in a manner that reflects the integrative nature of the suggested projects that are aligned with the overall vision and bound with clear roadmaps and schedules.

2.4.7. Development Monitoring, Assessment and Adjustment

Along the implementation of the development measures, a proper monitoring of the ongoing process should take place to measure the progress, outputs and pace of the implementation on the ground against the milestones, inputs and timeline of the advised action plans. Monitoring, in this regard is seen to continue the dialogue between the development partners as well as with the targeted communities. A proper monitoring can facilitate a thorough assessment of the implementation and a review of the development outcomes so far. It is expected that the reality of implementation will not entirely meet the expectations of the development due to emerging issues, unintended complications or simply unforeseen particulars. It is important, therefore, to regularly circulate the feedback and integrate necessary adjustments to the adopted vision, objectives, priorities, strategies and action plans, all in full inclusion of the development stakeholders.

Similar to the integrated regional development approach, sustainable tourism can also play a crucial role in urban-rural development. As a catalyst, or an entry point, sustainable tourism can be instrumentalised to encourage an intersectoral approach facilitating collaboration and multi-level engagement of the planning authorities along the urban-rural linkages. It can establish and nurture active forms of dialogue with the local communities and associated businesses¹⁸. Focusing on enhancing the existing characteristics of the communities and the enjoyment of the natural environment is essential. Inclusive tourism development processes, where communities have the

18 Research for integrated and sustainable spatial planning. Strategic Agenda for the National Research Programme for Sustainable Spatial Planning. 2018.

possibility to participate in the decision-making, could result in the empowerment of residents and promote community-based initiatives. The empowerment of the local residents to address problems from their own perspectives represent a model of community-based collective action (Hwang et al., 2012). This model functions as the means to find locally based solutions to the challenges posed by the introduction of tourism in rural areas, as well as the existing problems of rural communities. The participation of communities in the tourism planning process could create capacities for self-organisation, highlight the cultural, social and environmental strengths of communities and identify the deficiencies along with their possible solutions. Likewise, participation could improve the relationship between communities and governments, foster collaboration with the private sector and build trust among the actors involved in sustainable tourism development (Jóhannesson et al., 2003; Jones, 2005).

Such development dynamics are supported by the fact that tourism, as an economic driver, has huge impacts on the regional flows of people and resources, which enhances its potential to connect the urban centres with their rural hinterlands. Urban-rural linkages, in such a model, are pushed by tourism to make progress especially in mobility, recreation, cultural activities, transfer of knowledge, work, education and lifestyle. They are also expected to witness further transactions of resources and materials, migration, trade and money as well as energy, water and food¹⁹. In Da Nang and the Quang Nam region, these statements represent a chance to connect the busier coastal cities such as Da Nang, Tam Ky and Hoi An with the rural centres of the entire region. The abovementioned suggested strategic development process of urban-rural linkages is seen to guide the implementation of the project in its later stages.

2.5. Examples of Sustainable Tourism

Reviewing best practices of tourism development often leads to encounter two terms: eco-tourism and community-based tourism. Both approaches try to mitigate the negative economic and social impacts of mass tourism and integrate touristic practices to existing local, regional and national economic and growth policies²⁰.



Figure 3: Eco- and Community-based Tourism. (Dopf, 2020)

19 A. Repp, 2012. Regional Flows of goods & people focusing on tourism.

20 Development of tourism and travel industry. Robin Watts. Zishan Parks. 2018.

Therefore, it is important for the theoretical framework needed for proposing a regional network for sustainable tourism to examine both terms more closely, as in the following:

2.5.1. Eco-Tourism

Eco-tourism is a sustainable tourism development approach that revolves around the ecological capacities of the place. It addresses the specific potential of natural, environmental and socio-cultural assets to attract responsible forms of quality-tourism. It is then defined as responsible travelling to usually protected, fragile or excluded areas that seeks to minimize the impact of the tourists and the associated activities on these areas in the first place and on the region in the second. Consequently, this approach is fully concerned with the sustainability and well-being of the locals as well as with the empowerment of their communities. It involves educational and promotional measures, mostly on environmental issues²¹. Eco-tourism mainly takes place on a small-scale and is often promoted through its little footsteps leaving on the location. On this basis, the focus fields of eco-tourism are natural areas, wellbeing of the hosting communities and education. Examples of good eco-touristic practices include the establishment and promotion of organic hotel, eco-camping, green events, eco-mobility and development measures that focus on reducing the carbon emissions of the touristic activities and destinations, attract responsible visitors and encourage sustainable behaviours²². Green tourism can also be associated with eco-tourism as it also promotes the use of environment-friendly modes of transport but does not stress the social or economic factors of development. The term, however, is increasingly used in this wider context.

2.5.2. Community-based Tourism

Community-based tourism is a sustainable tourism development approach that counts on the socio-cultural capacities of the local communities. Local inhabitants especially those residing in less developed areas have various socio-economic problems. Tourism, in this regard, has the potential to ignite an economic change and improve the conditions of underserved communities and places²³. As evident in its term, community-based tourism aims at involving the hosting communities who are influenced by tourism, either in a direct or indirect manner. As sustainable tourism becomes more developed, it gives more recognition for important role of the communities and their active involvement as important development stakeholders. This approach is defined as an “economically, environmentally, socially and culturally responsible visitation to local and indigenous communities to enjoy and appreciate their cultural and natural heritage, whose tourism resources, products and services are developed and managed with their active participation and whose benefits from tourism,

21 The international ecotourism society. 2020. <https://ecotourism.org/what-is-ecotourism/> (retrieved on 12.03.2020)

22 Global Nature. Zimmer. 2020. www.globalnature.org/bausteine.net/file/showfile.aspx?downid=6995&sp=D&do-mid=1011&fd=2 (retrieved on 12.03.2020)

23 A conceptual framework of tourism social entrepreneurship for sustainable community development. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327766204_A_conceptual_framework_of_tourism_social_entrepreneurship_for_sustainable_community_development (retrieved on 13.04.2020)

tangible or otherwise, are collectively enjoyed by the communities”²⁴. Therefore, community-based tourism tries to connect the tourists with the local communities, products and their daily activities. This approach has also become a promising alternative to conventional approaches to development, comprising an inclusive process that can lead to positive changes to all communities. It can leverage and create employment, stabilize the environment, increase community control and reduce overall poverty²⁵.

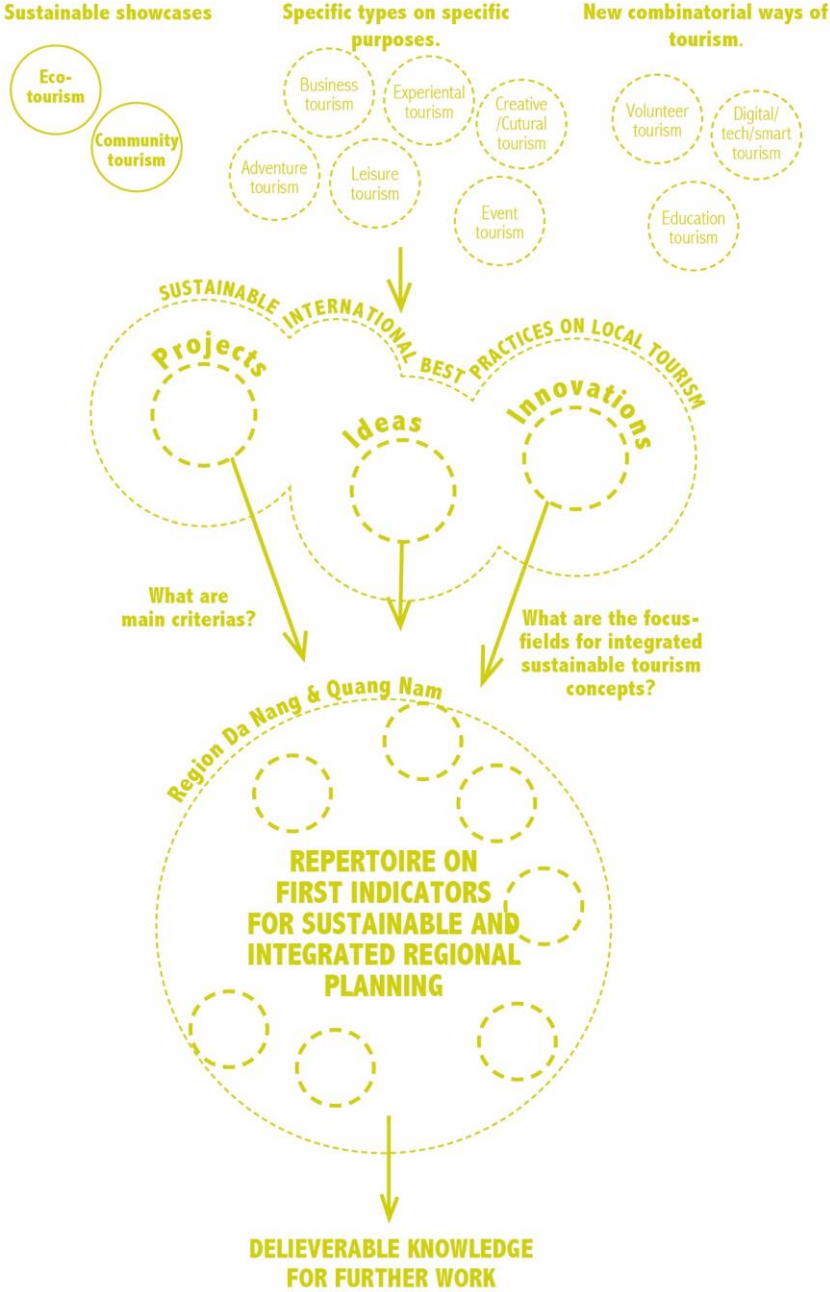


Figure 4: Indicators for the Regional Network for Sustainable Tourism Based on the Theoretical Framework and Best Approaches. (Dopf, 2020)

24 Boonratana, Ramesh. (2010). Boonratana, R. 2010b. Community-based Tourism in Thailand: The Need and Justification for an Operational Definition. *Kasetsart Journal Social Science*. Vol. 31(2): 280-289. 31. 280-289.
 25 UNWTO. *Tourism and Community Development: Asian Practices*. 2012.

3. Da Nang and the Quang Nam Region

Da Nang City and the Quang Nam Region are located in Central Vietnam bordering the Central Coast Region to the north and the Highlands Region to the south and stretching along the South China Sea on the east. To the west, the Quang Nam Region shares borders with Laos. The region falls under a tropical monsoon zone and has a very humid climate with high temperatures and partly tropical influences²⁶. There are three different eco-zones across the region, i.e., mountain rain forest towards the west, lowland rain forest around the centre and lowland dry forest towards the southeast of the region. Also, Quang Nam accommodates several natural reserves. The Bac Ma National Park in this context underlines the touristic potential of such expanses as it offers a rich habitat for a variety of species in addition to beautiful natural sceneries and varied trails for travellers²⁷.

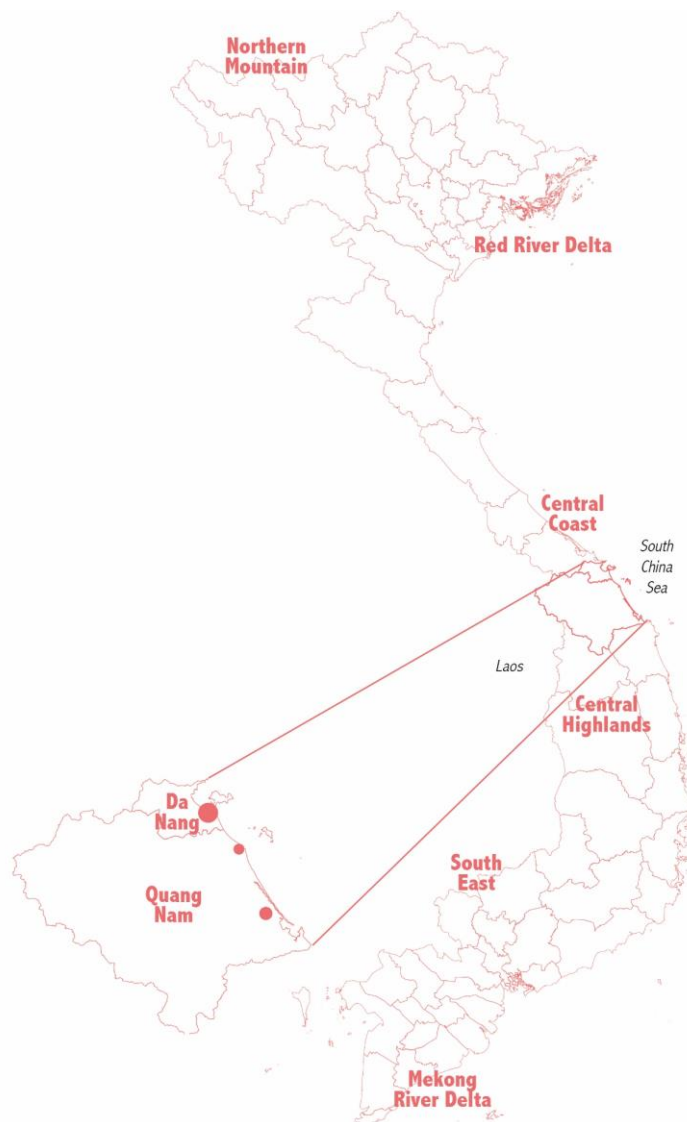


Figure 5: Main Regional Territories in Vietnam. (Dopf, 2020)

26 Climate classification. Köppen-Geiger. 1980-2016 (retrieved on 10.04.2020)

27 <https://nashaplaneta.net/de/asia/vietnam/danang-dostoprime-chatlnosti-bach-ma-park> (retrieved on 19.02.2020)

The Quang Nam province population density is 141.0 inhabitants/km² and has, according to the population census, a population of more than 1.4 million people (2014)²⁸. In the mountainous areas, the population density is sparse and can even fall below 0.2 inhabitants/km². The average population density of the 6 mountainous districts including Dong Giang, Tay Giang, Nam Giang, Phuoc Son, Bac Tra My, and Nam Tra My is less than 20 inhabitants/km². The least populated district is Nam Giang with a density of 12 inhabitants/km². On the other hand, the population density of Tam Ky, Hoi An and Dien Ban is more than 1000 inhabitants/km². In Da Nang, more than 10.000 inhabitants/km² are accommodated within the city centre²⁹. The entire region is home to 34 ethnic groups living together, of which the Kinh (Viets) ethnicity covers the majority population of Quang Nam accounting for 90%. The major minority groups are the Co Tu, Xo Dang and Gie Trieng accounting for 3.2%, 2.7% and 1.3% of Quang Nam’s population, respectively. The other ethnic groups form only 0,9% of the total population in Quang Nam³⁰. The ethnic minority groups are much less visible in Dan Nang forming about 0,5% of the city’s population, while the 99.5% belongs to the majority Kinh (Viets)³¹.

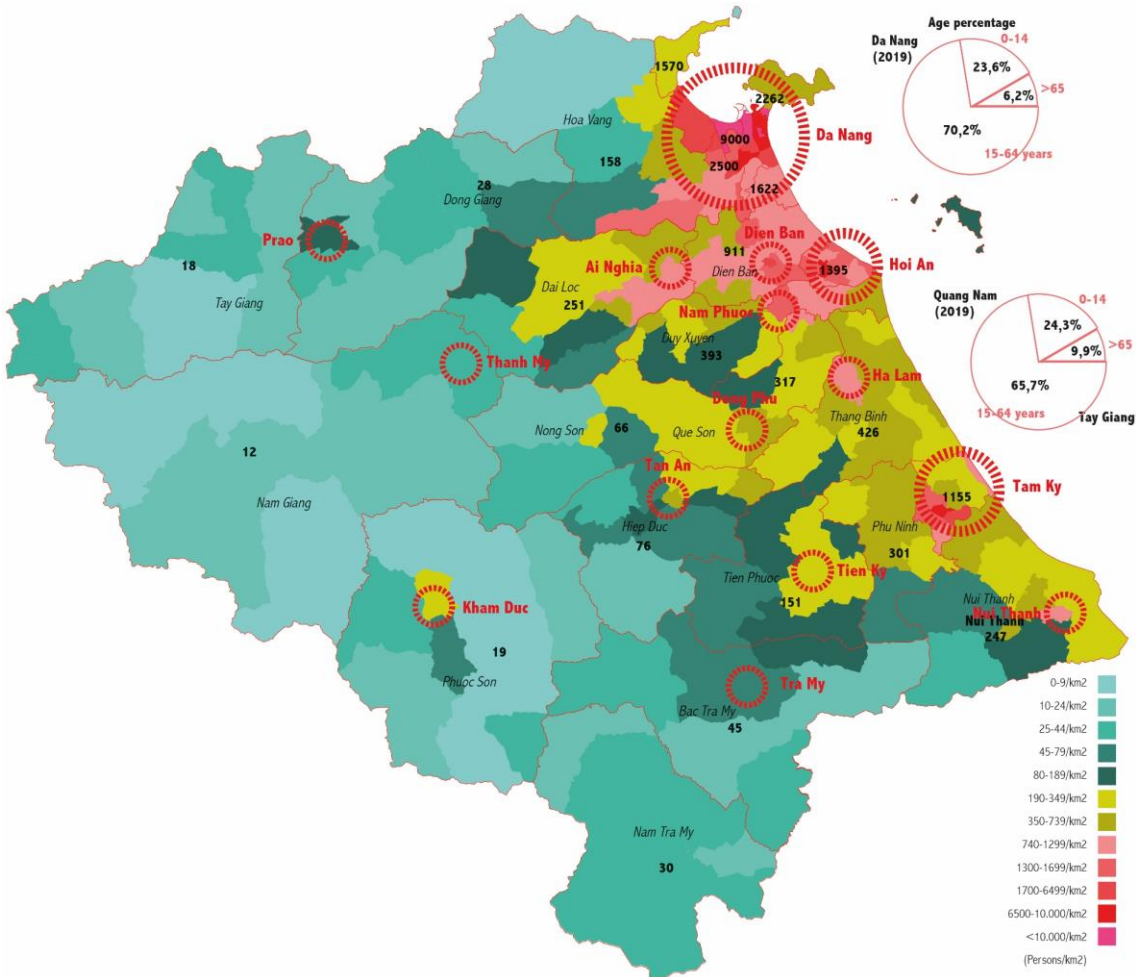


Figure 6: Population Densities in Da Nang and Quang Nam. (Dopf, 2020)

28 <https://www.alotrip.com/about-vietnam-overview/quang-nam-overview> (retrieved on 23.03.2020)

29 GSO Vietnam. 2017. gso.gov.vn (retrieved on 23.03.2020)

30 Alorip. <https://www.alotrip.com/about-vietnam-overview/quang-nam-overview> (retrieved on 03.02.2020)

31 Ethnic Travel Vietnam. <http://ethnictourvietnam.com/Da-nang-City/> (retrieved on 03.02.2020)

Da Nang represents the major city of Central Vietnam with the status of a municipality. Its administrative domain has a surface area of 1285 km² consisting of eight districts, where six of which are considered urban and the other two counts as rural³². The Quang Nam Region is eight times the area of Da Nang surfacing 10.575 km². It comprises two main cities: Hoi An, the touristic hotspot, and the province’s capital city Tam Ky. The cities are divided into city-level districts. However, the largest area of the region is occupied by 15 rural districts comprising a total number of 207 communes³³.

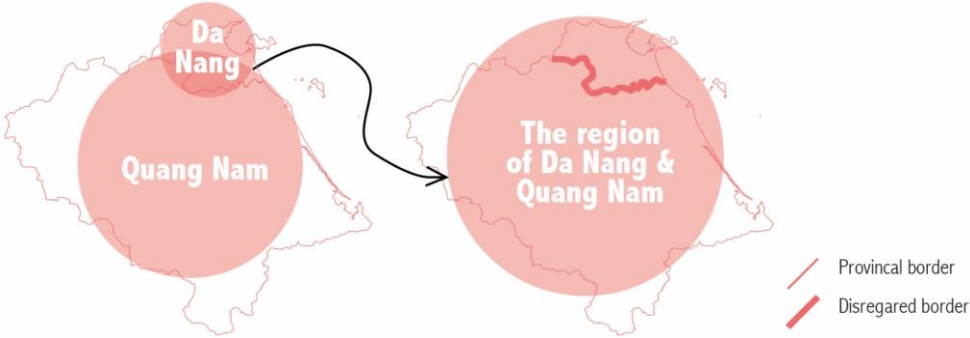


Figure 7: Da Nang and Quan Nam Provinces as a Region. (Dopf, 2020)

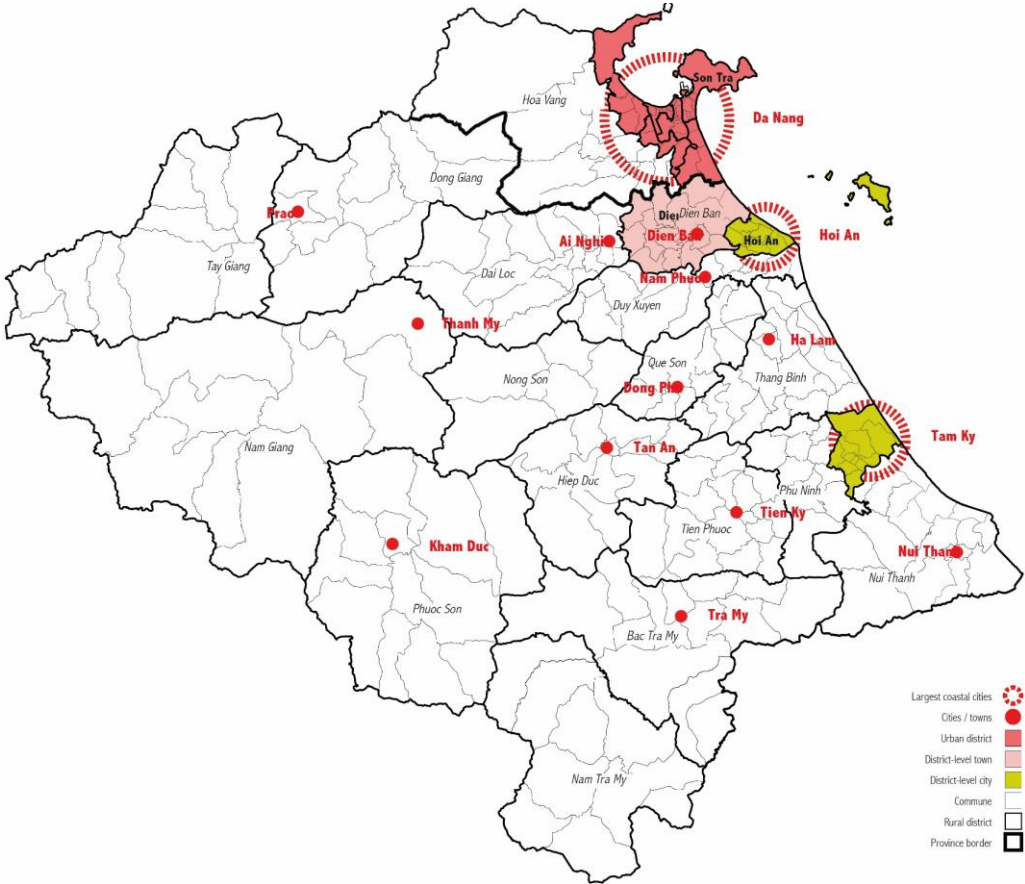


Figure 8: Administrative Borders of Da Nang and Quang Nam. (Dopf, 2020)

32 City Population www.citypopulation.de/en/vietnam/prov/admin/ (retrieved on 20.03.2020)

33 General Statistics Office Vietnam. www.gso.gov.vn (retrieved on 15.03.2020)

In the fringes of Da Nang and Hoi An, the poverty rate is around 20%. Lower poverty rates can be observed along the urban sprawl corridors of development that go deeper into the central parts of the region. In this regard, the Hoa Bac settlement in the rural district of Hoa Vang is the poorest community in the entire region. Since 2010, however, Quang Nam has seen a significant drop in its multidimensional poverty index (MPI) close to 72%. Nonetheless, there is still a big gap in poverty distribution especially between the rural and the urban settings. The main rural districts accommodate around 60% of the inhabitants under poverty³⁴.

The urban sprawl is visible along the highway forming an axis crossing the region in the north-south direction. Another axis lays in the central inlands along the Thu Bon River, which was in historical times, the central point of the Champa culture. It is noticeable that the main development in the rural depth of the region is reduced to the townships away from the main corridors of urban sprawl. Along the coastal stripe of the region, the two cities of Da Nang and Hoi An are in a process of merging territories that are often occupied by the growing presence of touristic complexes, while there is much less activity along the coasts to Tam Ky towards the south. In 2019, the urbanization rate in Da Nang was around 87,2% of the total population meaning that only 12,8% lived in the rural areas under the city’s jurisdiction. On the contrary, Quang Nam’s urbanization rate is only 25,4% since around three quarters of the region’s population live in rural settings³⁵.

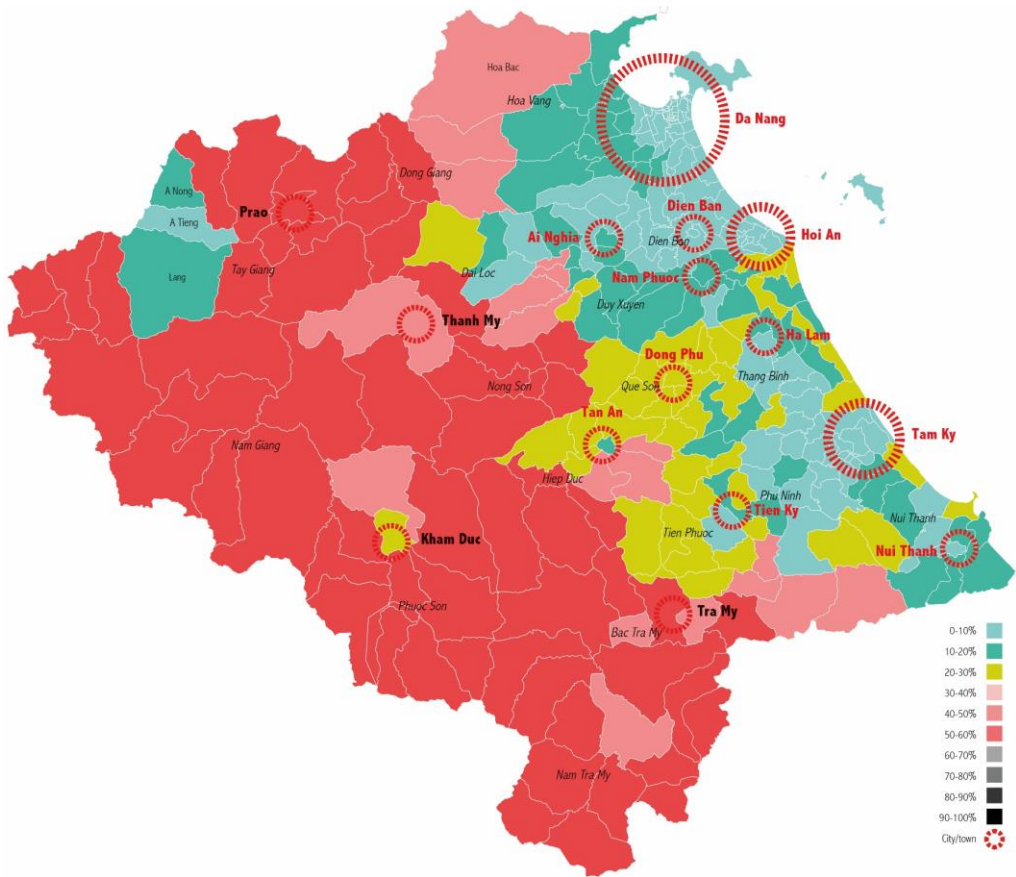


Figure 9: Poverty Rates in Da Nang and Quan Nam. (Dopf, 2020)

34 Multidimensional poverty in Vietnam. 2018. <https://www.wider.unu.edu/sites/default/files/Publications/Working-paper/PDF/wp2018-127.pdf> (retrieved on 23.03.2020)

35 City population. 2019. <https://www.citypopulation.de/de/vietnam/prov/admin> (retrieved on 23.03.2020)

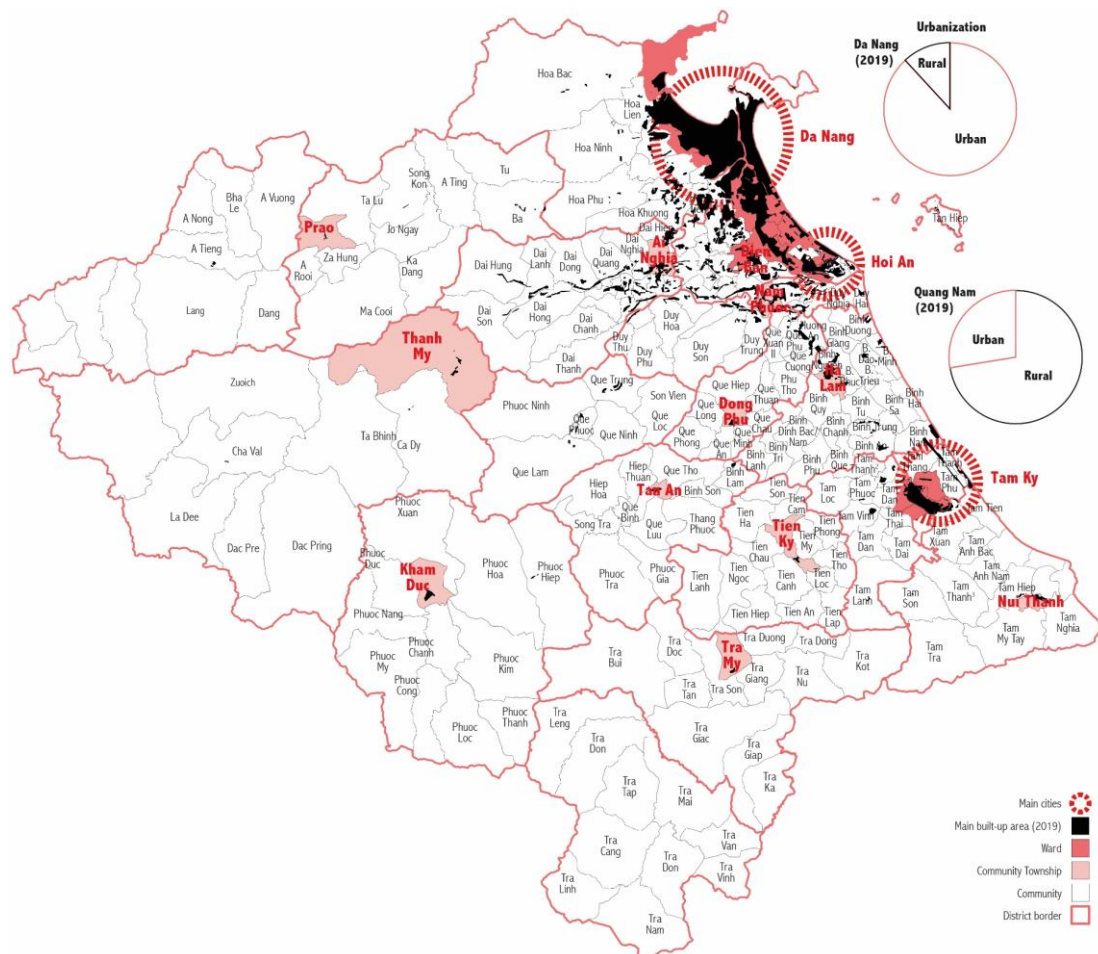


Figure 10: Communities and Built-up Areas of Da Nang and Quang Nam. (Dopf, 2020)

In its definition phase, the emplement! Project has investigated the Quang Nam Region through literature review, on-site examination and spatial analysis, all in cooperation with the local partners. The goal was to establish a solid understanding of the current conditions of development in the region and provide a basis for the later stages of the project. In relation with the project’s proposals, the following points were identified as the key findings:

3.1. Environmental Risks

Under this point, two categories of risks can be identified: natural and human-made risks. The first category comprises firstly the increasingly frequent extreme weathers that is manifested in the form of tropical cyclones, due to Vietnam’s location in one of the largest cyclones’ formation zones in the world. In the northwest Pacific Ocean, the storm period is generally between June and November. The period between July and October can be specifically active bearing storms more frequently. The other forms of possible extreme weathers are heavy rains causing flash-floods, especially in the mountainous parts of region to the west, and droughts that are more common between April and September affecting agricultural yields such as rice and vegetables³⁶. And secondly, it also comprises the costal

36 Weathers Park. <https://weather-spark.com/y/118173/Average-Weather-in-Prao-Vietnam-Year-Round> (retrieved on 10.04.2020)

erosion that is taking place along Quang Nam’s 16-kilometer beach, especially in the Cua Dai commune next to Hoi An. In this regard, Da Nang’s 6-kilometer beach seems stable.

The second category, risks that are caused directly through human interventions, comprises firstly the reduced sediment supply in the river systems in the region due to the construction of numerous embankments such as hydropower dams and other forms of water regulation. Secondly, the exploitation of sand bars and riverbanks can be listed under this category. This is due to extreme mining and dredging water canals along the riverbanks and estuaries close to shore, mainly in the Thu Bon River basin in the north of Quang Nam. It can be also noted that large portions of mangrove trees have been already eradicated in Binh Phu, a part of Quang Nam (Cong, 2001). Thirdly, landslides and active deforestation represent the most worrying demonstration of human-made environmental risks. Especially in the mountainous parts of Quang Nam, deforestation does not only create bare patches of forest lands, but also has massive effects on biodiversity and land-erosions and landslides.

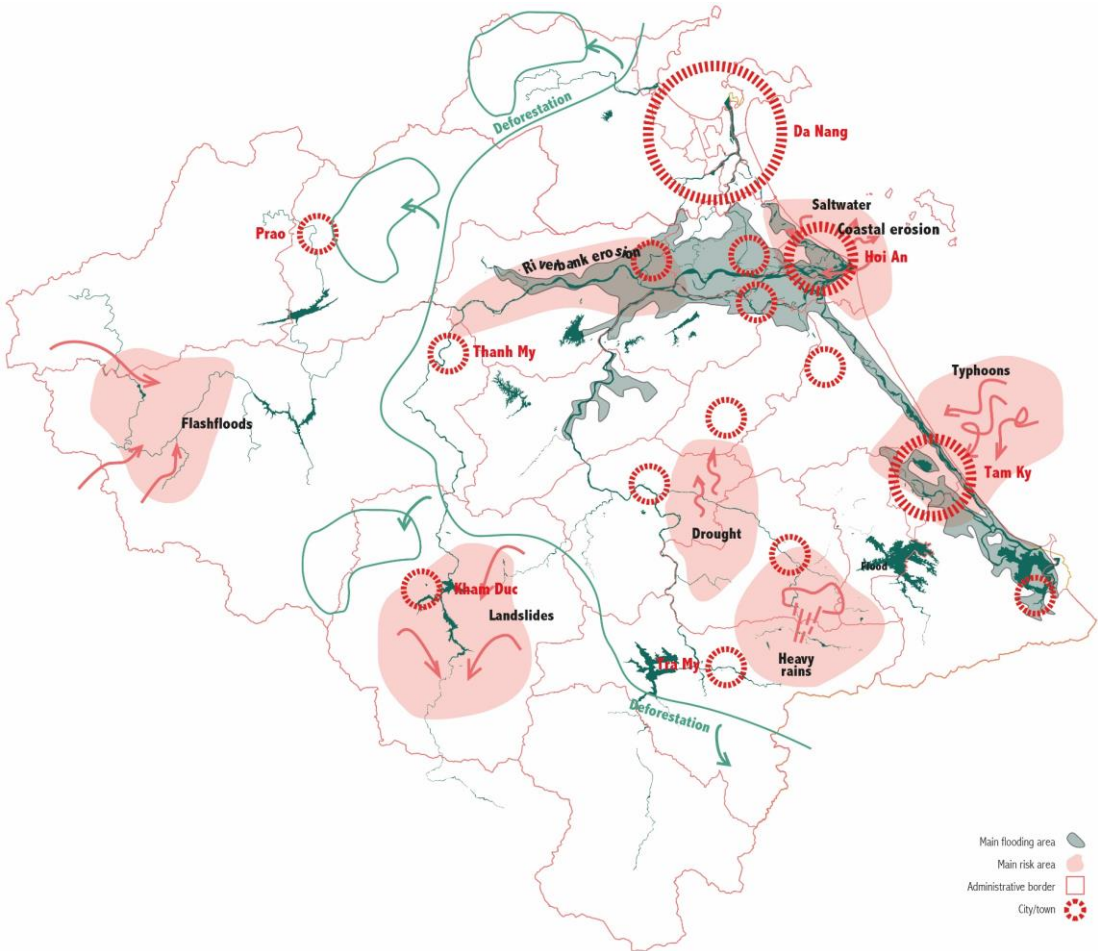


Figure 11: Environmental Risks in Da Nang and Quan Nam. (Dopf, 2020)

3.2. Mobility and Public Transportation

The road network in the region is strongly north-south oriented, due to the stripe-shape of the country as well as to the adjacency to the ocean. The coastal cities of the region are better connected than the ones within region. Coastal roads, therefore, appear to be essential for traffic and mobility, especially between Da Nang and Hoi An, also serving a high presence of touristic complexes. There is also a

national highway, known as Trans-Vietnam, running through the region in the south-north axis connecting the region with the southern as well as the northern parts of the country. Another 130-kilometer expressway, Thuy Loan-Dung, runs parallel to the highway between the cities of Da Nang and Quang Ngai. Construction works to extend the expressway are taking place through the Hoa Vang District in the north of Da Nang³⁷. This is in addition to four national roads connecting Da Nang, Hoi An and Tam Ky with the western and southern townships and communes of the region, considering that most of population is concentrated in the north-west of region, within and close to Da Nang. In terms of public transport, the bus system plays the prominent role in Da Nang and the entire Quang Nam region. The system consists of a variety of lines and bus terminals serving Da Nang, Hoi An, Ai Nghia, Tam Ky and Duy Phu and connecting the cities in the region together³⁸. In the hinterland, there are more inter-regional suppliers for trans-national transportation. However, in general, the supply there is inadequate, especially in terms of connections to the coastal cities. It is noteworthy to mention that the city of Da Nang is preparing plans for metro lines and tramways to be implemented by the year of 2030. Also, the suggested plans employ the Bus Rapid Transport model (BRT), containing standard as well as urban bus routes. Parts of the constructions of the urban bus systems are already ongoing³⁹.

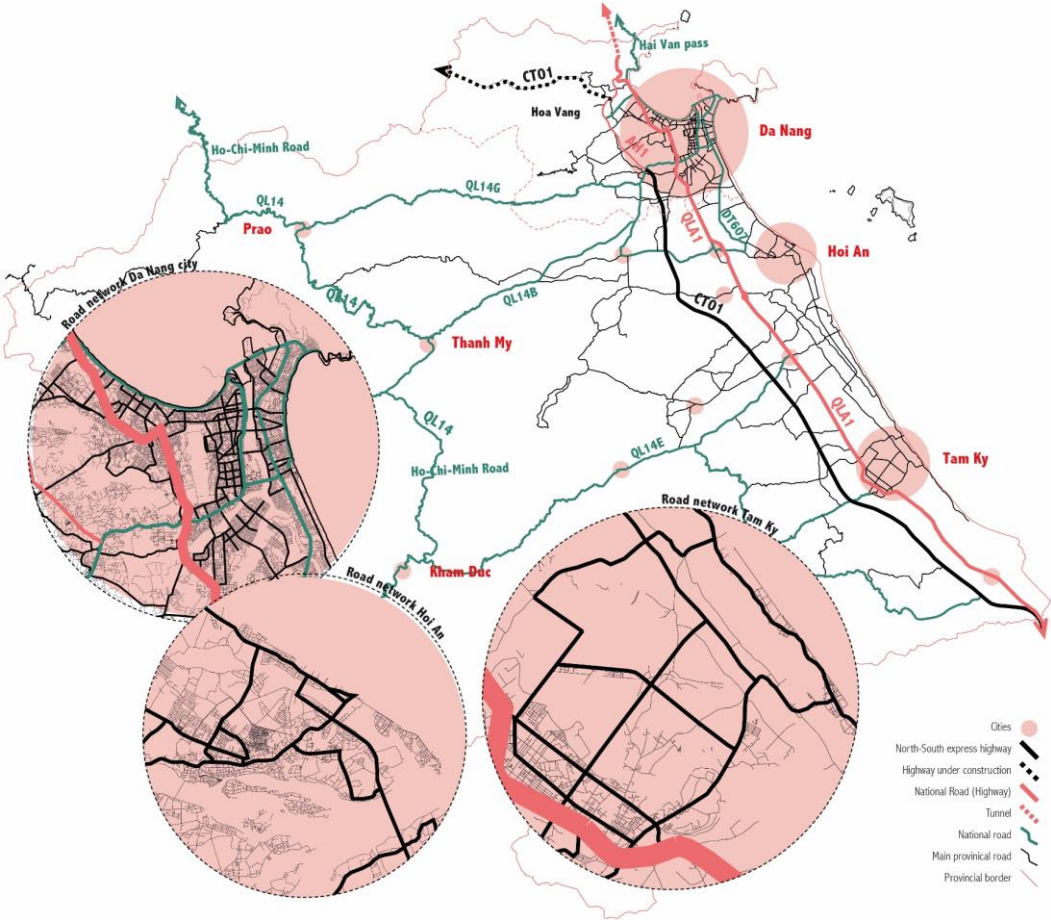


Figure 12: Road Network in Da Nang and Quan Nam. (Dopf, 2020)

37 Da Nang City Government. 2014, Da Nang Transport Development Master Plan 2020 and Vision to 2030

38 Da Nang Bus. <https://www.danangbus.vn/> (retrieved on 29.01.2020)

39 Da Nang City Government, 2014, Da Nang Master Plan for Public Passenger Transport by Bus for 2013–2020 and Vision to 2030.

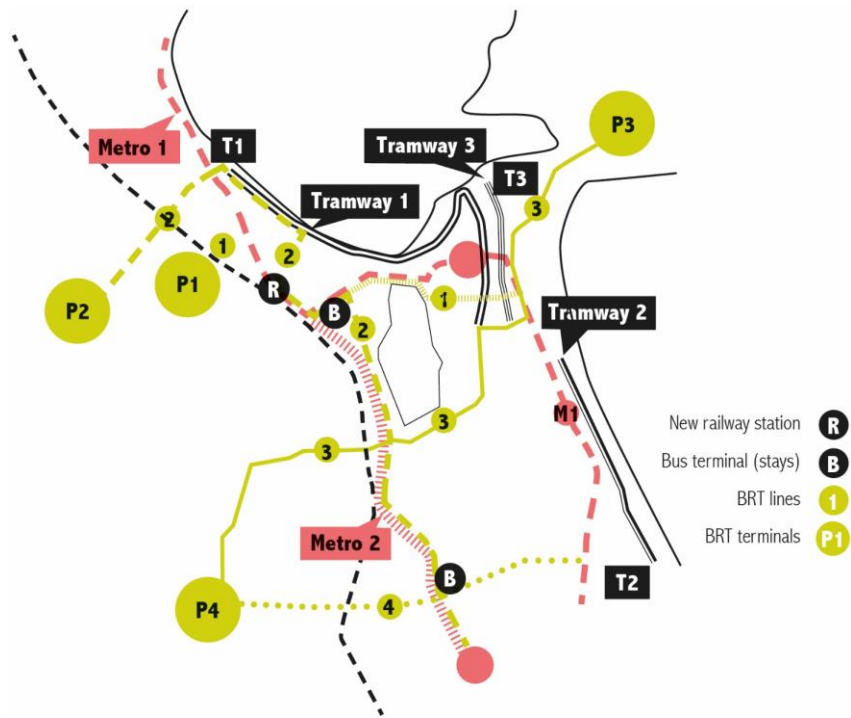


Figure 13: Planned Metro and BRT Network for Da Nang. (Dopf, 2020)

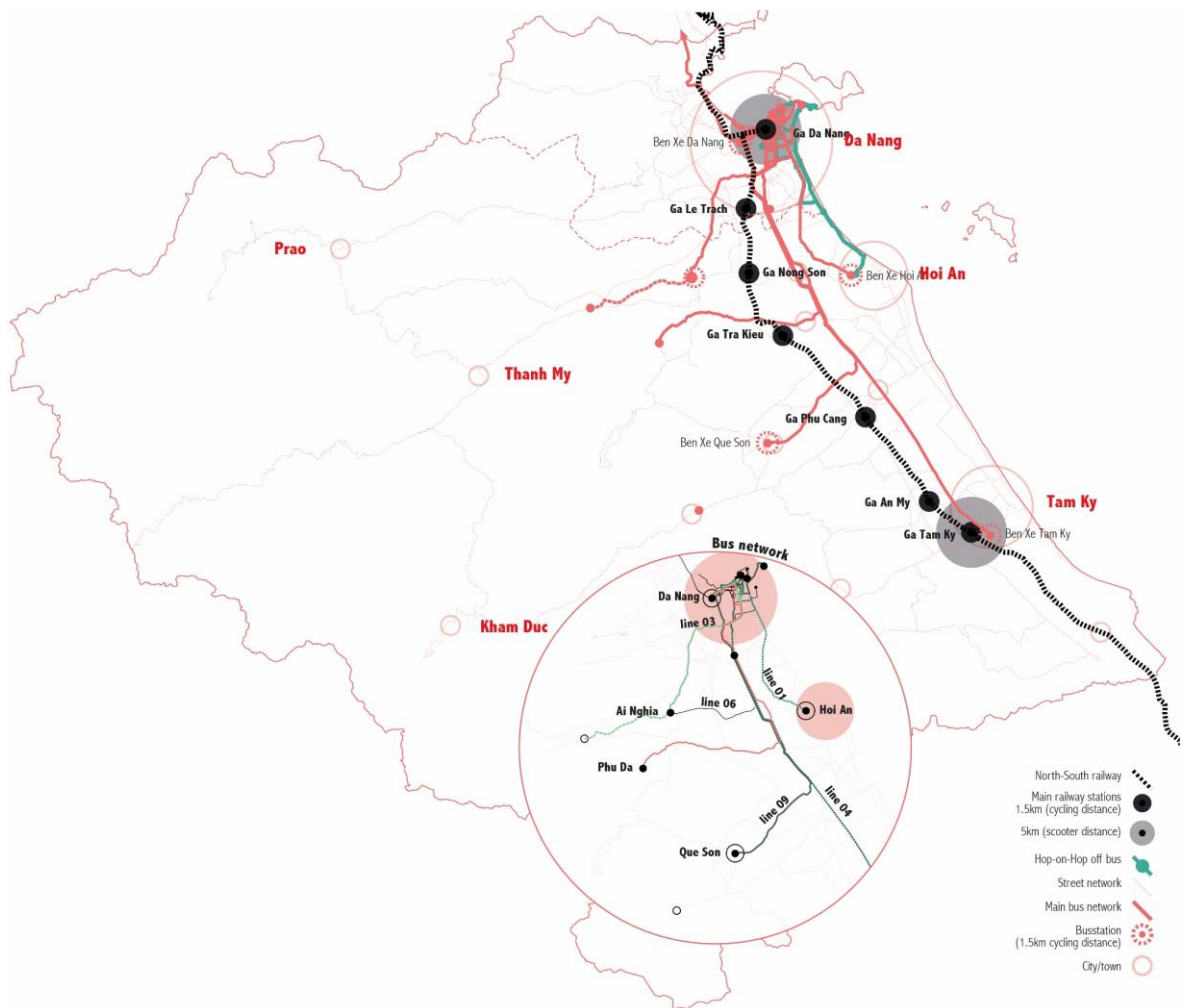


Figure 14: Railway and Bus Network in Da Nang and Quan Nam. (Dopf, 2020)

3.3. Major Land-uses and Economic Functional Zones

In terms of economic development, three main sectors come to sight in the region: agriculture, tourism and industry. From this perspective, the region seems to have three main zones of economic activities. The uplands, firstly, land is largely occupied by forests as well as perennial- and annual-crop farms. Therefore, agriculture and forest product exploitation, next to the field of hydropower generation, represent the prominent fields of economic activity occupying land. Secondly, the forests as well as the perennial- and annual-crops farms continue to occupy large portions of the region's midlands of the region. Paddy rice fields, however, are added to the agricultural usage of lands. Like the uplands, the midlands' primary economic activities revolve around agriculture, forestry and hydropower generation. In the lowlands, including the coastal line of the region, there are large paddy rice and annual crops fields around the settlements. Also, there is a considerable presence of industrial and touristic land-uses. Processing- and light industrial services, tourism and intensive agriculture represent the major economic activities of this zone.

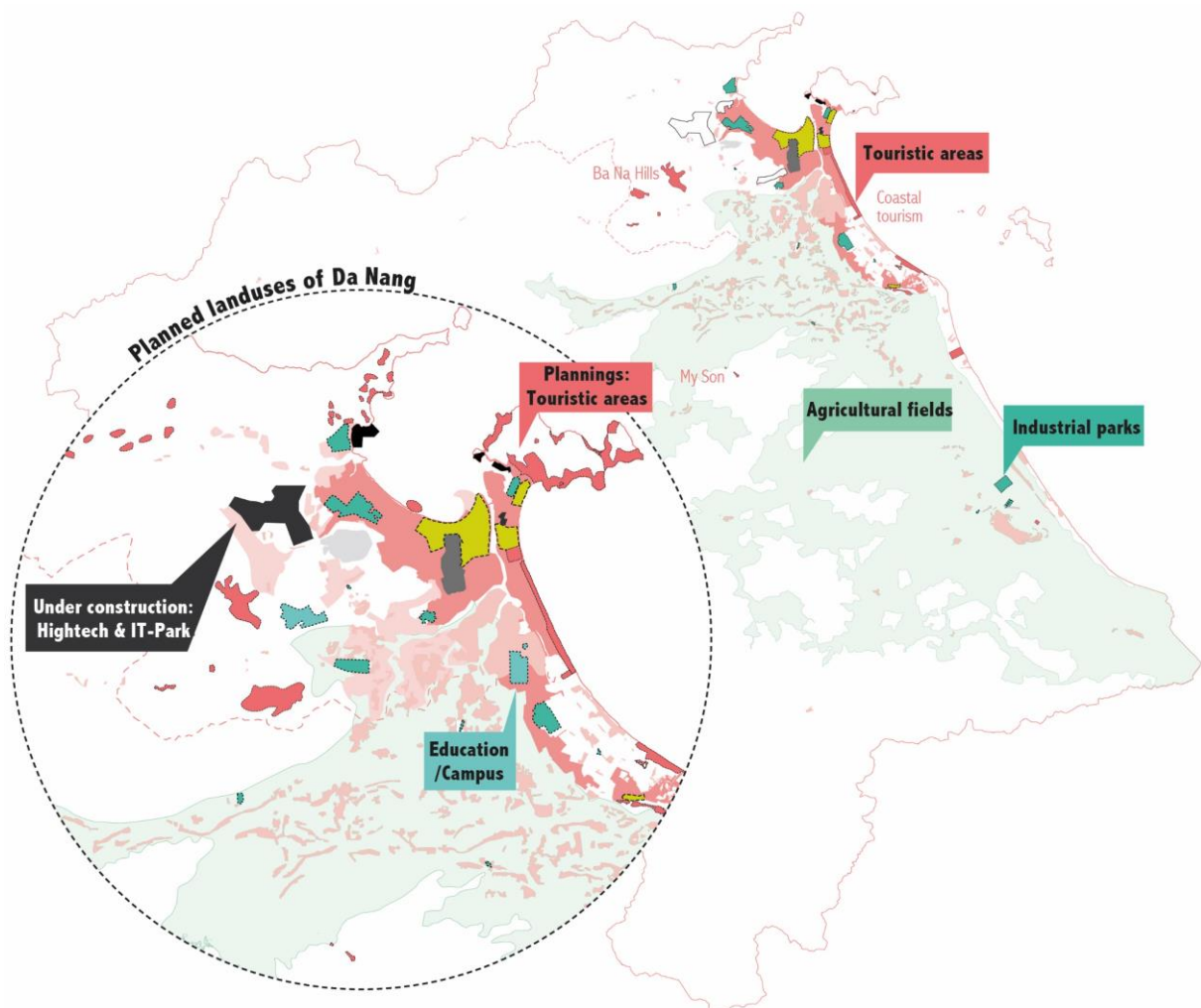


Figure 15: Major Land-uses in Da Nang and Quang Nam. (Dopf, 2020)

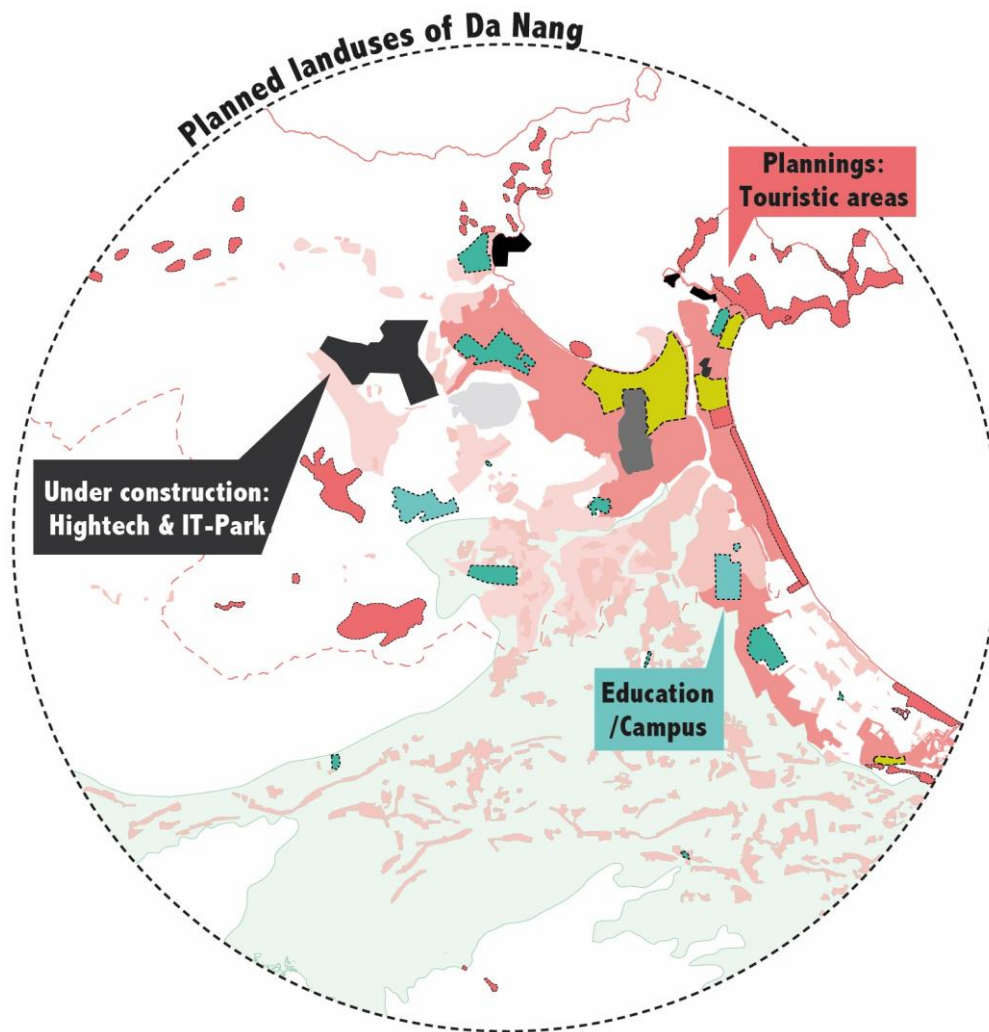


Figure 16: Da Nang Master Plan – Vision 2030 towards 2050. (Dopf, 2020)

Examining the three suggested zones of economic activities in the region and the space these activities occupy, three major forms of functional land-uses/zones can be identified as in the following:

3.3.1. Industrial Land-uses

In the recent years, lots of investments went to the industrial zone around Da Nang allocating lands for industrial purposes in the city. There are industrial parks of a specific nature, such as the high-tech park located on the outskirts of the city producing software products and services. Apart from that, the main products of the conventional industrial areas are rubber, food processing and garments. There are also other forms of traditional industries based on handicrafts. The industrial land-uses surrounding Da Nang is still growing⁴⁰. In the north of Hoi An, a huge industrial park, next to Coco Bay, has emerged. Also, Tam Ky is still constructing another huge industrial park, close to the Bay Say Song Dam Lake.

40 Land Use and Climate Change Interactions in Central Vietnam. Alexandra Nauditt. Lars Ribbe. Institute for Technology and Resources Management in the Tropics and Subtropics. LUCi. Springer Verlag. Cologne. Germany. 2017.

3.3.2. Touristic Land-uses

The touristic land-uses are mainly located within the cities. Bigger, consolidated and more complex forms of touristic facilities takes place along the coast, especially between Da Nang and Hoi An. Other two touristic complexes should be noted: the one on the Ba Na Hills, which is rather an immense development, and the one close to the My Son sanctuary.

3.3.3. Forestry and Agricultural Land-uses

Forestry and agriculture are crucial to the region's economy. Examining the available maps and satellite images shows a stronger presence of forests in the western half of the region and agriculture in the eastern half closer to the bigger urban agglomerations. Examining agriculture, based on the proportion of the main agricultural produce in each of the Da Nang's and Quang Nam's districts, it can be observed that farming in the central region ranges from aquaculture and livestock to crops and fruit trees. It certainly generates a considerable number of jobs inside the region. It should be also noted that land-uses associated with agriculture are often associated with poverty too, especially in the rural and mountainous areas of the region⁴¹.

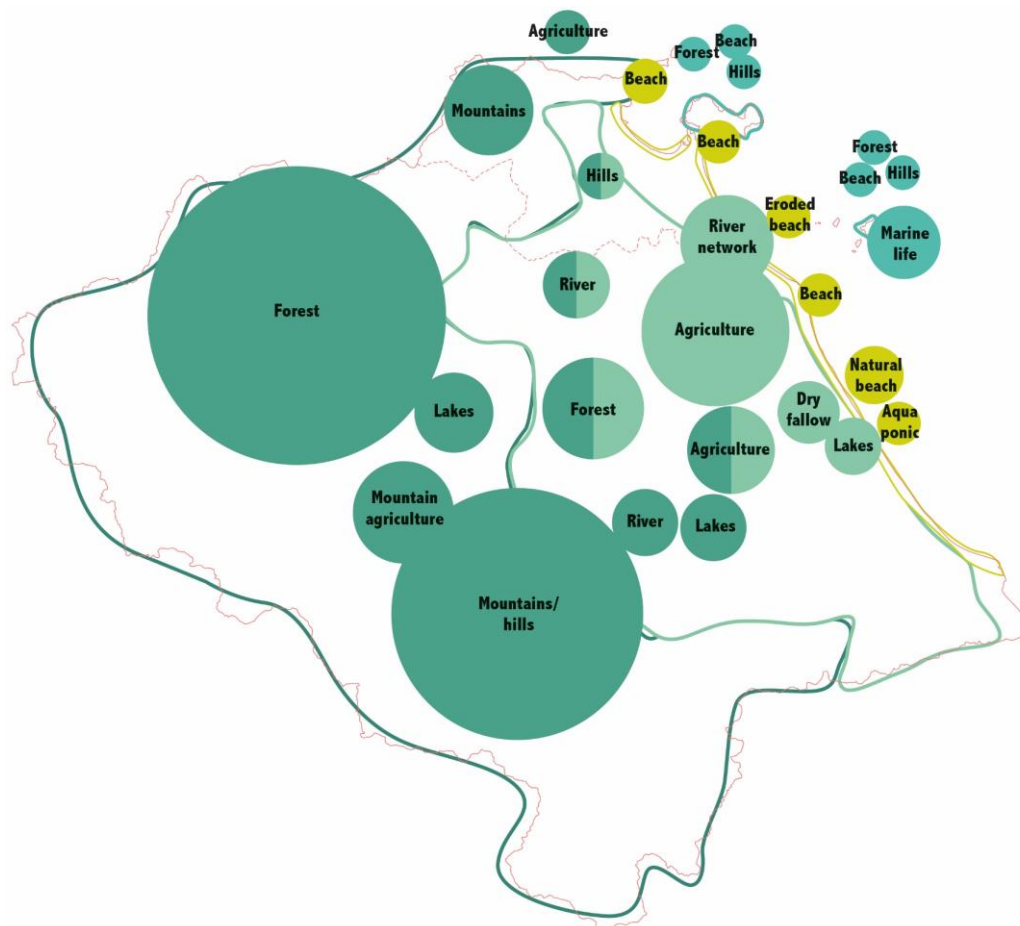


Figure 17: Nature-based Land-uses in Da Nang and Quang Nam. (Dopf, 2020)

41 UN-Habitat and the Quang Nam Provincial Socio-Economic Development Orientation to 2020 and Vision to 2025.

4. Current Conditions of Tourism in the Region

Tourism represents the core of economic development in Da Nang and Quang Nam. The region, in this regard, has a lot of to offer, from touristic attractions to decent infrastructure that is mostly concentrated in Da Nang and along the costal line stretching to Hoi An. In the project’s definition phase, the following points were examined closely to better understand the current conditions of tourism in the region:

4.1. Touristic Hotspots

The key touristic hotspots in the entire region were identified including the central districts, Son Tra Peninsula, Marble Mountains, Co Co Bay and Ba Na Hills in Da Nang in addition to the Cham Islands, Hoi An, Tam Ky and My Son Sanctuary in Quang Nam. These hotspots were examined closely, to the extent that is possible, in terms of their location, accessibility, infrastructure, communities, visitors as well as the economic, social and environmental expenses they cause or values they generate. Other 45 spots of cultural or historical significance as well as of natural value have been listed within the entire region. Exploring these in more depth could be considered in the later stages of the project.

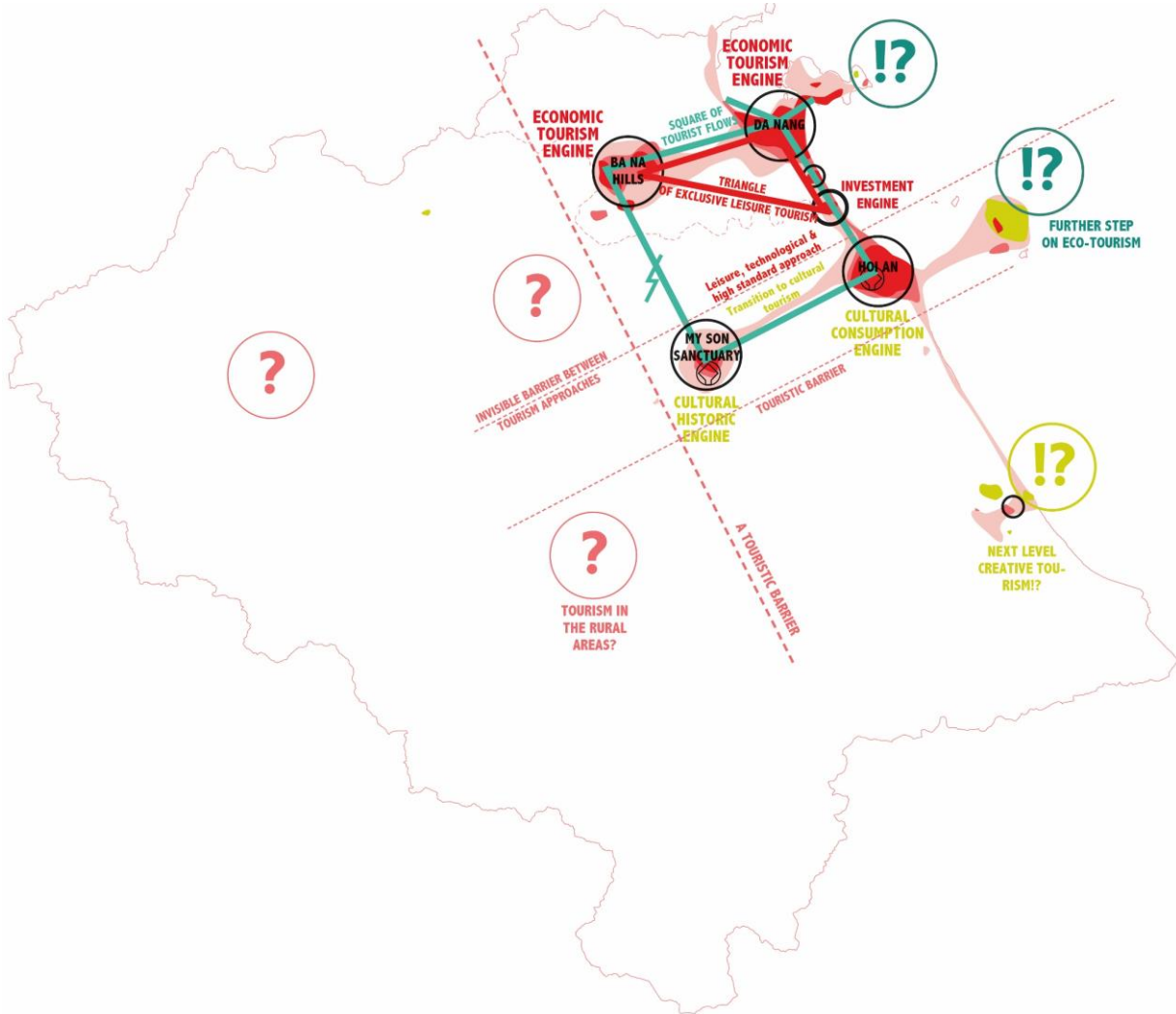


Figure 18: Touristic Hotspots in Da Nang and Quang Nam in Relation to Each Other. (Dopf, 2020)

In Da Nang, the city is trying to take advantage of its ideal location at the centre of many touristic attractions between Hue and Hoi An by an increasing number of mass-tourism investments that can be identified, especially in the prestigious parts of the city along the beaches and on the Son Tra Peninsula, offering a lot of hotels. The city, therefore, relies heavily on higher-class vacationers, which can be shown in the development of Co Co Bay, Ba Na Hills and the planned projects for the Son Tra Peninsula, forming what can be described as a “triangle of leisure and high-class touristic destinations”. Apart from its social and environmental costs, this triangle of hotspots represents one of the region’s greatest economic engines, especially in the field of tourism, generating a considerable number of jobs, but lacking authenticity, culture and the real identity of the place.

In Quang Nam, Hoi An seems to invest more in its heritage promoting a series of cultural and touristic activities to enrich its historic atmosphere even further and make it a preferable destination for tourists who may stay longer, unlike the UNESCO My Son Sanctuary that lacks in such activities making it a destination for shorter trips only. Primarily in the Cham Islands, and in Hoi An to some extent, there are promising initiatives of eco-tourism focusing on trash reduction and alternative mobility.

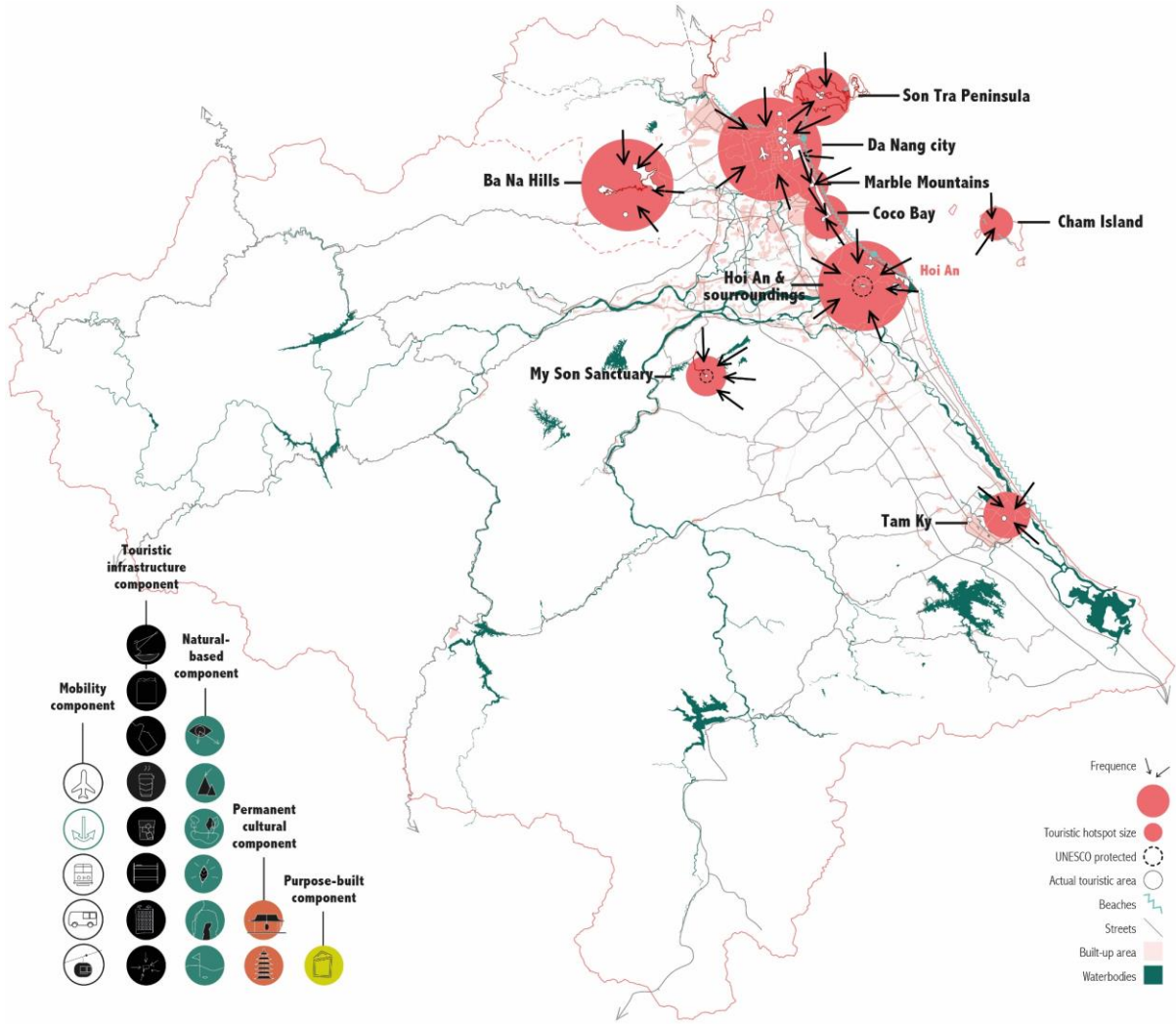


Figure 19: Main Touristic Hotspots in Da Nang and Quang Nam. (Dopf, 2020)

Observations show that most of the touristic businesses refer mainly to the same tours and services within a “regional square” that is constituted by the Marble Mountains, My Son and the Linh Ung Pagoda on Son Tra and the Golden Bridge on the Ba Na Hills as its four corners. For the further integrated development of the region, it is crucial to think outside of this square and involve more potential spots and target groups. It is also crucial to establish sustainable forms of tourism that can attract more visitors who are interested in authentic experiences. In this regard, eco-, nature- and community-based tourism should define the principles of future proposals that ensure a balanced development that considers the social, economic and environmental impacts and integrates the entire region and its communities in a proper manner. Following the Hoi An example, allowing visitors to take part in the farming activities, shows that the creative forms of tourism can be extended into the region and include its local communities. Supporting the local environmental movements, such as the eco-development in the Cham Islands, can help the local partners shape better conditions for sustainable tourism in the region development, but also provide the project with fertile settings for pilot projects that can solidify appropriate development proposals.

4.2. Types and Concentrations of Touristic Accommodations

There is a high concentration of touristic accommodations along the coasts stretching from Da Nang to Hoi An that can be marked as a high-class along the beach and more standard towards the central and western parts of Da Nang. Less accommodations are found in the in the central parts of the region, such as Hoi An, the Cham Islands and Tam Ky, where a rising trend of offering homestays can be seen. The rural parts of the region have only a limited number of low-budget facilities that can accommodate tourists.

4.3. Regional Settlements of Touristic Interest

In the region, there is a considerable number of villages that have been reviewed roughly in an effort to explore the regional contexts for potential sustainable tourism. Two categories of villages were specifically relevant: the villages accommodating ethnic minorities and the villages accommodating traditional handicrafts.

Under the first category, two villages that are mostly populated by the Co Tu ethnicity were examined. In the Bho Hoong village in the Dong Giang District, there is currently an initiative offering the guests to stay in authentic stilt bungalows and get involved in the traditional practices of the community. Other activities, such as attending traditional dances and festivities, crossbow shooting, handicrafts, trekking, and motorcycling are combined. The offer is however limited to small numbers to keep it management and respect the privacy of the community. The initiative’s revenues are dedicated to enhancing education, health and environmental practices. The Za Ra village in the Nam Giang District is home to a cooperative promoting the Brocade weaving in the village. With more than 300 members, the cooperative succeeded in attracting the attention of domestic and foreign tourists. The visitors of

the village's shops are seen to help promote and preserve the local traditions of the Co Tu community⁴².

Under the second category, four villages were examined. The Tuy Loan village in the Hoa Vang District is famous for making rice paper and Quang noodles as a tradition that has existed for the last 200 years. This rice paper-making village has existed for almost 200 years and its products are highly appreciated by consumers⁴³. Also, in the same district, the Phong Nam ancient village is about 10 km southwest of Da Nang. It represents one of the few remaining featured Vietnamese traditional villages in the region. The Nam O village is a small fishing village that is specialized in producing fish sauce. It is located near the Cu De River, at the foot of Hai Van Pass in the Lien Chieu District of Da Nang. Visitors of the village can see the process of making this famous sauce and buy the product directly from its origin. In the central Thu-Bon and Vu Gia basin, villages like the fruit growing village Dai Binh have also started attracting tourists with their products. Most visited handicraft villages are in the vicinity of Hoi An⁴⁴.

4.4. Tourism's Weaknesses and Opportunities in the Region

A SWOT analysis of the key sectors related to tourism took place to shed the light not only on the essential development aspects of a regional concept for sustainable tourism, but also on the urging matters that require attention for the regional integrated development in general. Under this point, four fields of development have been articulated in relation to regional tourism, as in the following:

4.4.1. Transport and Mobility

Certainly, the massive use of private vehicles and mobility services used by tourists between the main spots represents one of the major challenges of sustainable development. This is due to the weak presence of public transport that is often invisible to tourists. The hubs for short- and long-distance modes outside Da Nang and Hoi An are not well coordinated, let alone the poor condition of the bus facilities. Road accidents are very common in Da Nang and Quang Nam. Also, during the rainy season, flooding often impairs mobility. There is a need, therefore, to develop a holistic model for public transport in the region that can compete with the private modes the tourists are increasingly using to explore the region.

Such a model can take advantage of many available mobility hubs, such as Da Nang's airport, seaport and planned metro lines as well as the railway stations and bus terminals in the region, to develop sustainable inter- and multi-modal transport system and significantly reduce emissions. The strong flow of tourists along the region's coastal line needs to be addressed properly and to be linked better with the bus terminals and railway stations serving the interior parts of the region. Using proper

42 <https://vtv.vn/kinh-te/quang-nam-6500-san-pham-det-tho-cam-o-zara-duoc-tieu-thu-20160929095101649.htm> (retrieved on 05.02.2020). Also: <http://vca.org.vn/quang-nam-thu-vai-cua-nguoi-co-tu-co-gi-la-ma-ai-cung-muon-xem-a19687.html> (retrieved on 05.02.2020)

43 <https://www.vntrip.vn/cam-nang/lang-duc-dong-phuoc-kieu-quang-nam-66403> (retrieved on 15.03.2020)

44 <https://www.asiatouradvisor.com/blog/vietnam/famous-traditional-villages-tourists-must-visit-visiting-da-nang/> (retrieved on 16.03.2020)

modes, the national roads running across the region provide an opportunity to access the more rural towns of the region. Associated with high-class touristic services, there is a trend of e-mobility that can be expanded to serve public transport in fitting settings.

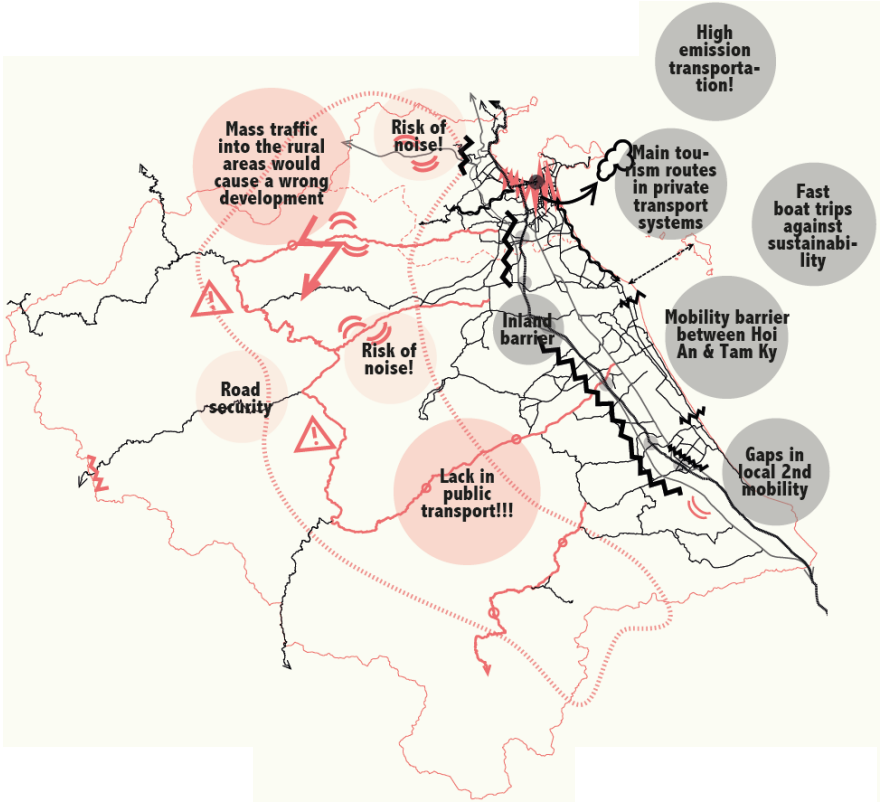


Figure 20: Mobility Weaknesses in Da Nang and Quang Nam. (Dopf, 2020)

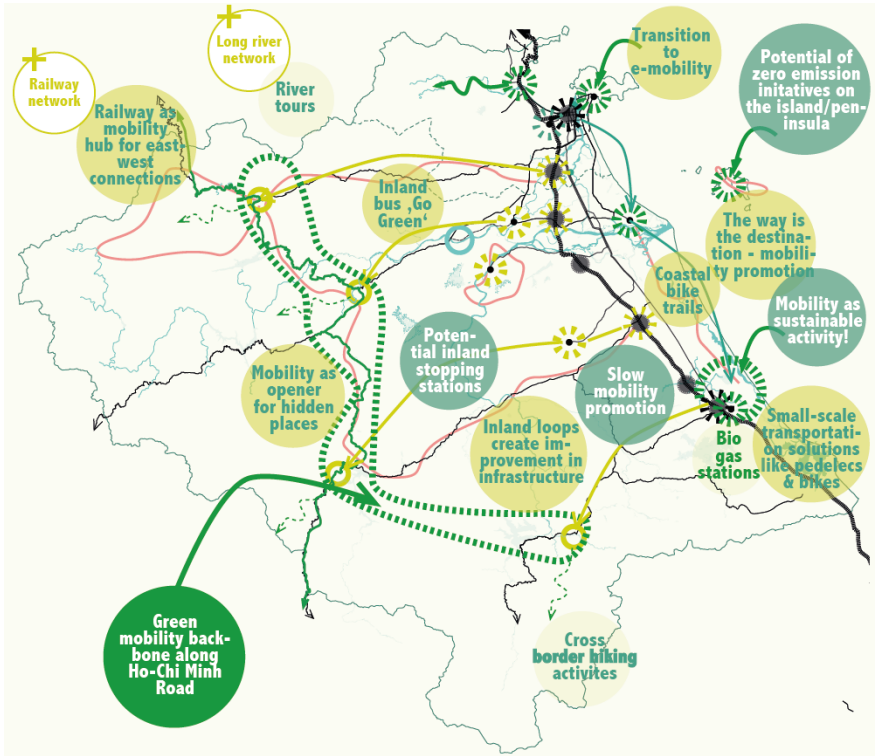


Figure 21: Mobility Strengths in Da Nang and Quang Nam. (Dopf, 2020)

4.4.2. Environmental Conditions

The ongoing deforestation processes inside the rural areas remains a major concern. It destroys the natural habitat of many species and ruins the landscape and increases land erosion. Mass tourism can easily overload vulnerable ecosystems, especially through waste generation that cannot be processed by the area. Beach erosion, especially in Hoi An is also a natural risk that needs attention. Except for the Ba Na Hills, Son Tra, Cham Islands and the coastal line, many natural attractions remain under-promoted.

The region is certainly rich in terms of natural attractions with an extraordinary repertoire of large lakes, waterfalls and rivers originating from the mountains. The river system of the Thu Bon and Vu Gia rivers connect the natural zones from the beaches to the hinterland, providing room for establishing green-blue linkages and enhancing eco-tourism. Natural protection zones such as the Saola Nature Reserve, Ba Na Hills Zone and Bach Ma National Park provide cornerstones to expand preserving the region's flora and fauna. Tourism, in this regard, should be used as an instrument to promote nature and environmental awareness, especially in the spots that are not yet fully developed. The generated income of future regional tourism, especially in the rural areas, should contribute to reforestation efforts.

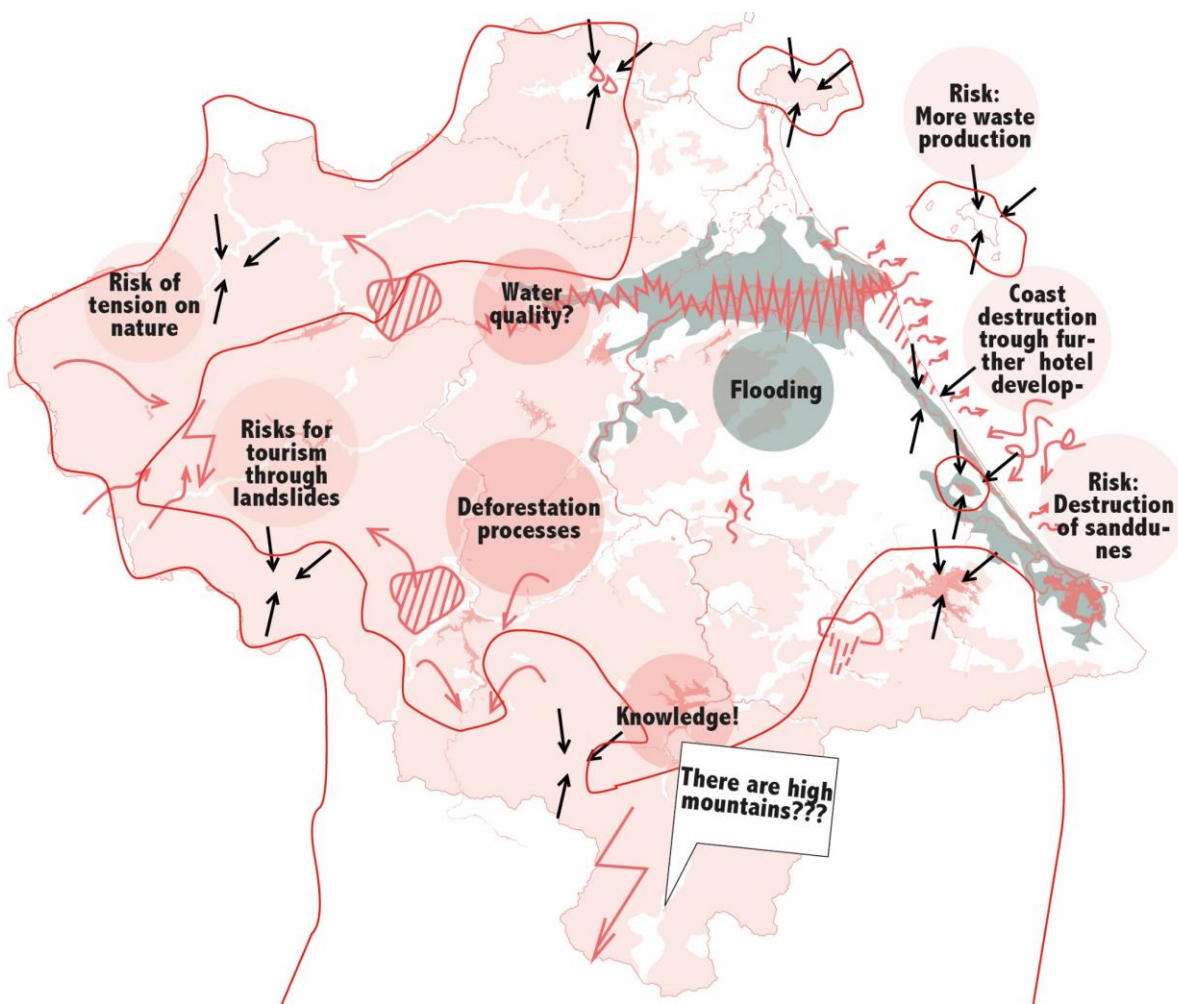


Figure 22: Environmental Weaknesses in Da Nang and Quang Nam. (Dopf, 2020)

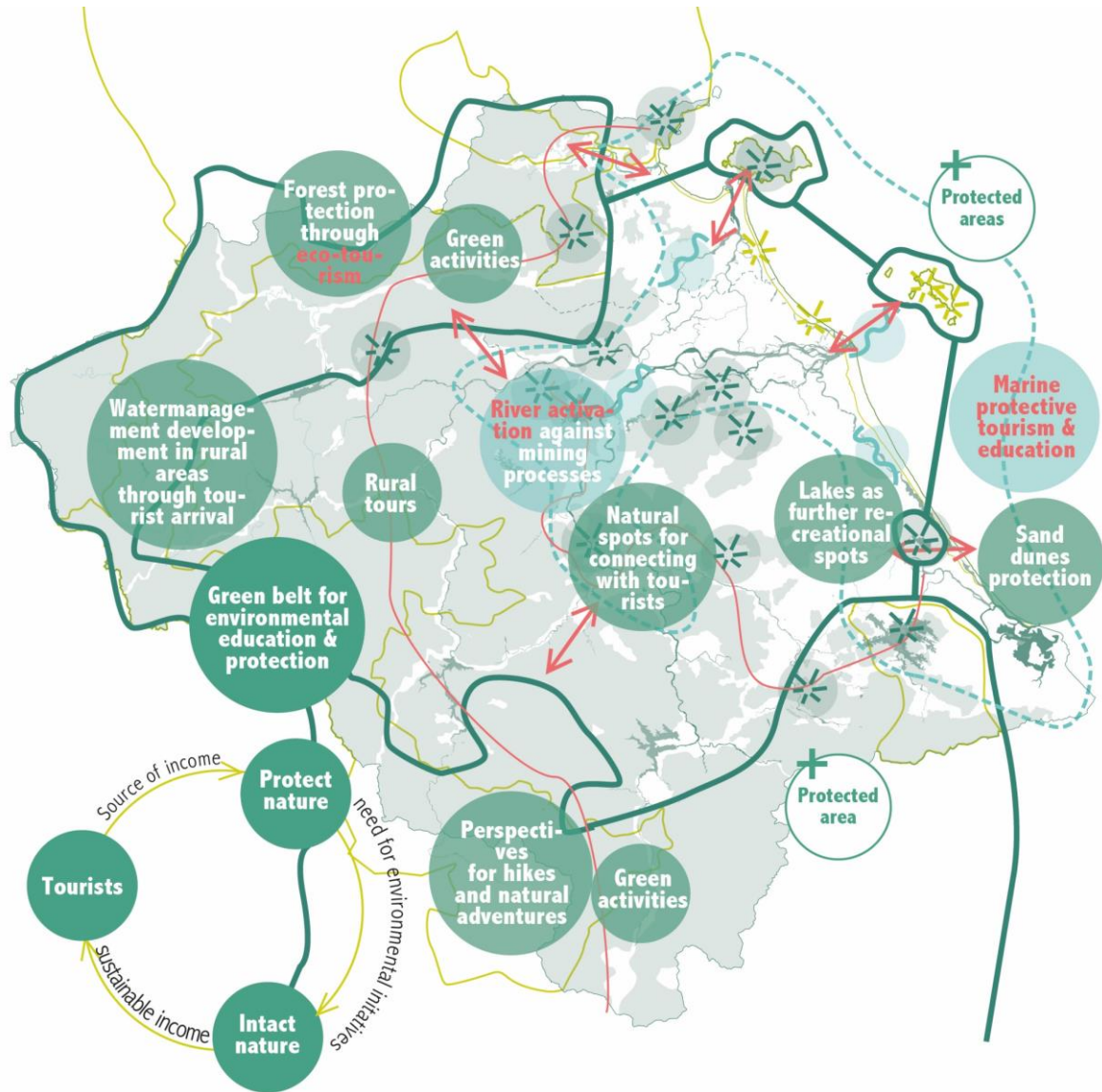


Figure 23: Environmental Strengths in Da Nang and Quang Nam. (Dopf, 2020)

4.4.3. Local Culture and Identity

Pursuing modernity, monotonous replicable touristic products tend to conquer the scene in Da Nang in the form of middle- to luxurious-class hotels along the Bay towards Hoi An. The Coco Bay is one example of the lack of local identity. Also, the Ba Na Hills complex is another as it is set to attract similar target groups as the Sun World Park in Da Nang. These huge touristic investments lack in authentic cultural values and are mainly artificially created attractions. In Hoi An, the risk of losing the place's identity is growing due to the mass tourism the city attracts. The growing touristic attention to the Cham Islands can also cause pressure on the traditional charm of the fishing villages.

However, it must be acknowledged that the region around Hoi An enjoys a strong sense of local identity that is manifested in a variety of traditional lifestyles, handicrafts, events and activities. In the hinterland, many ethnic minority villages are still intact and must be preserved, in a proper manner. Tourism, in this regard, should promote culture and local traditions, through creativity and community-based approaches.

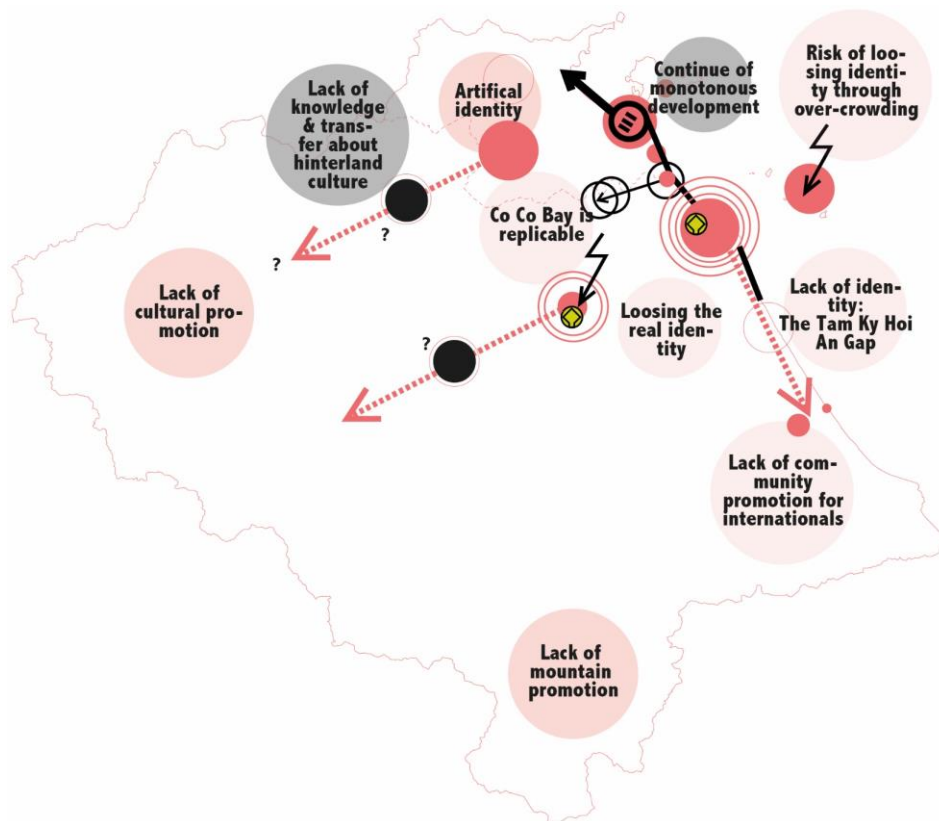


Figure 24: Weaknesses in Aspects of Local Culture and Identity in Da Nang and Quang Nam. (Dopf, 2020)

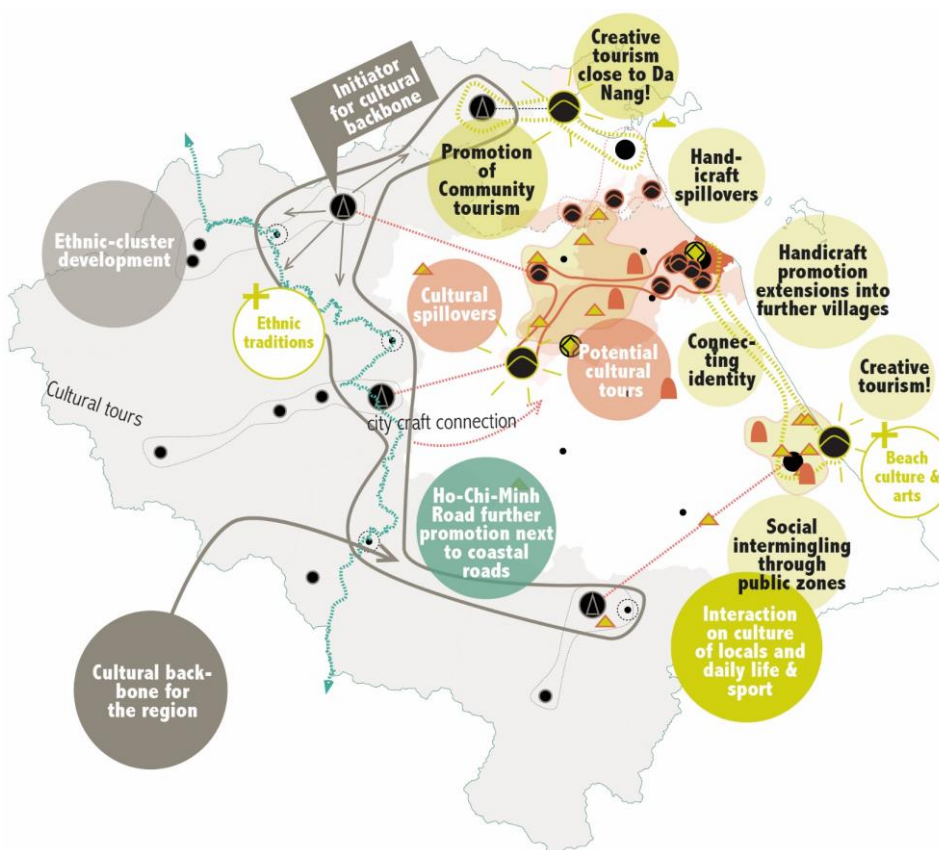


Figure 25: Strengths in Aspects of Local Culture and Identity in Da Nang and Quang Nam. (Dopf, 2020)

4.4.4. Associated Land-uses

The high concentration of hotels targeting a gentrified model of tourism along the coast is an issue to be considered. Also, the weak value chains between rural and urban areas seem to increase the development gap between the coastal cities and the region's internal settlements and exert negative impacts on the socio-economic development of the rural population, which remains under poverty and high unemployment rates. Allocating industrial parks near populated and touristic areas, as in Tam Ky, may impose pollution if not handled properly. Agricultural production remains small and unconsolidated often using inefficient methods, which pushes the rural working force to migrate or commute to the urban centres for jobs in services or industry. Sustainable transport and mobility, in this regard, represent a trans-sectoral issue that must be considered thoroughly in the later stages of the project to link key sectors such as agriculture, industry and tourism.

Agricultural and aquaponic practices in the region has the potential to enhance different forms of tourism that involves the daily farming life of the inhabitants as an attraction that can generate an additional source of income for the locals. The available public spaces, in this regard, can provide the required flexibility for relevant activities and events as well as for temporary tourism concepts.

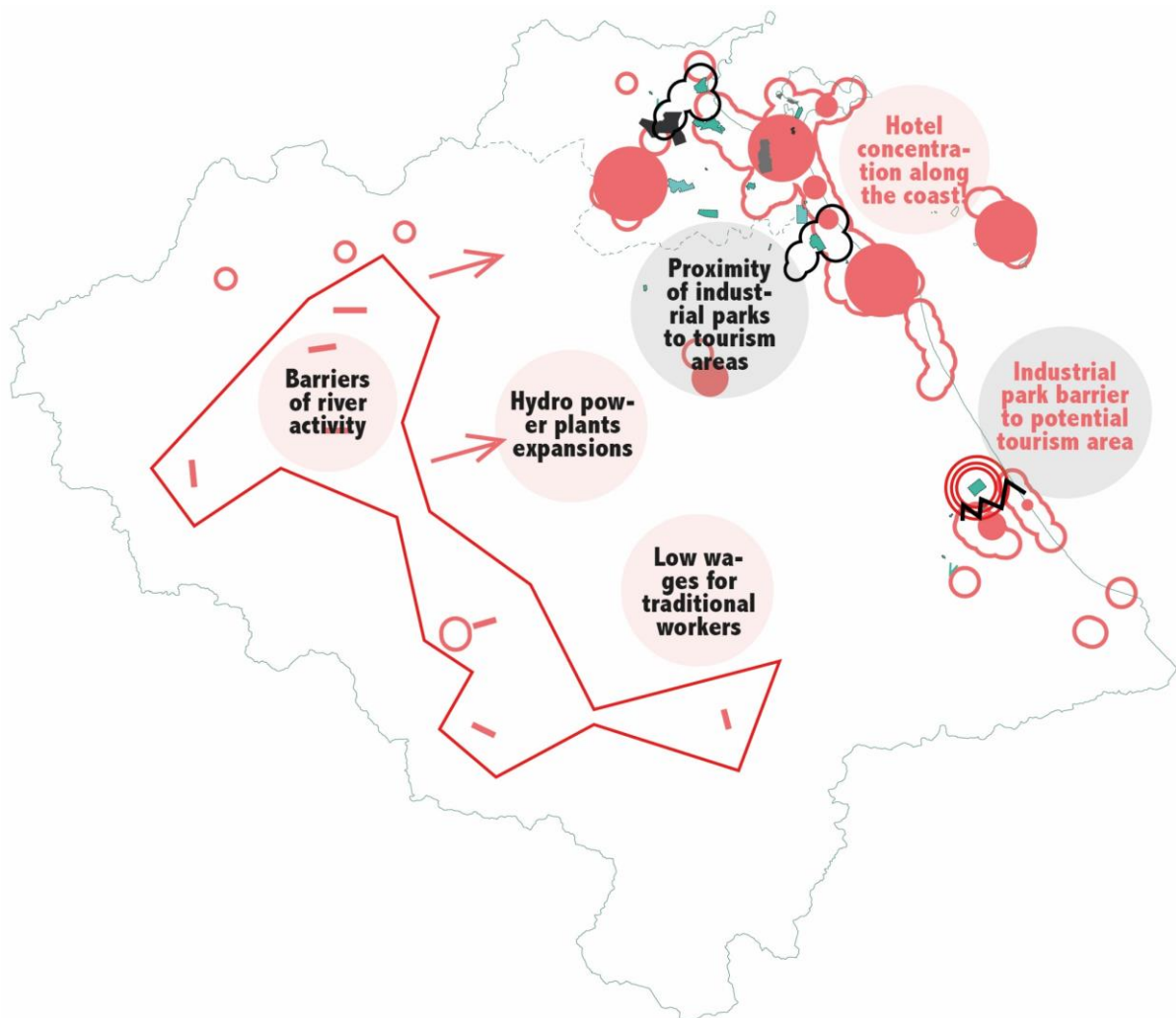


Figure 26: Weaknesses of Land-uses Associated with Tourism in Da Nang and Quang Nam. (Dopf, 2020)

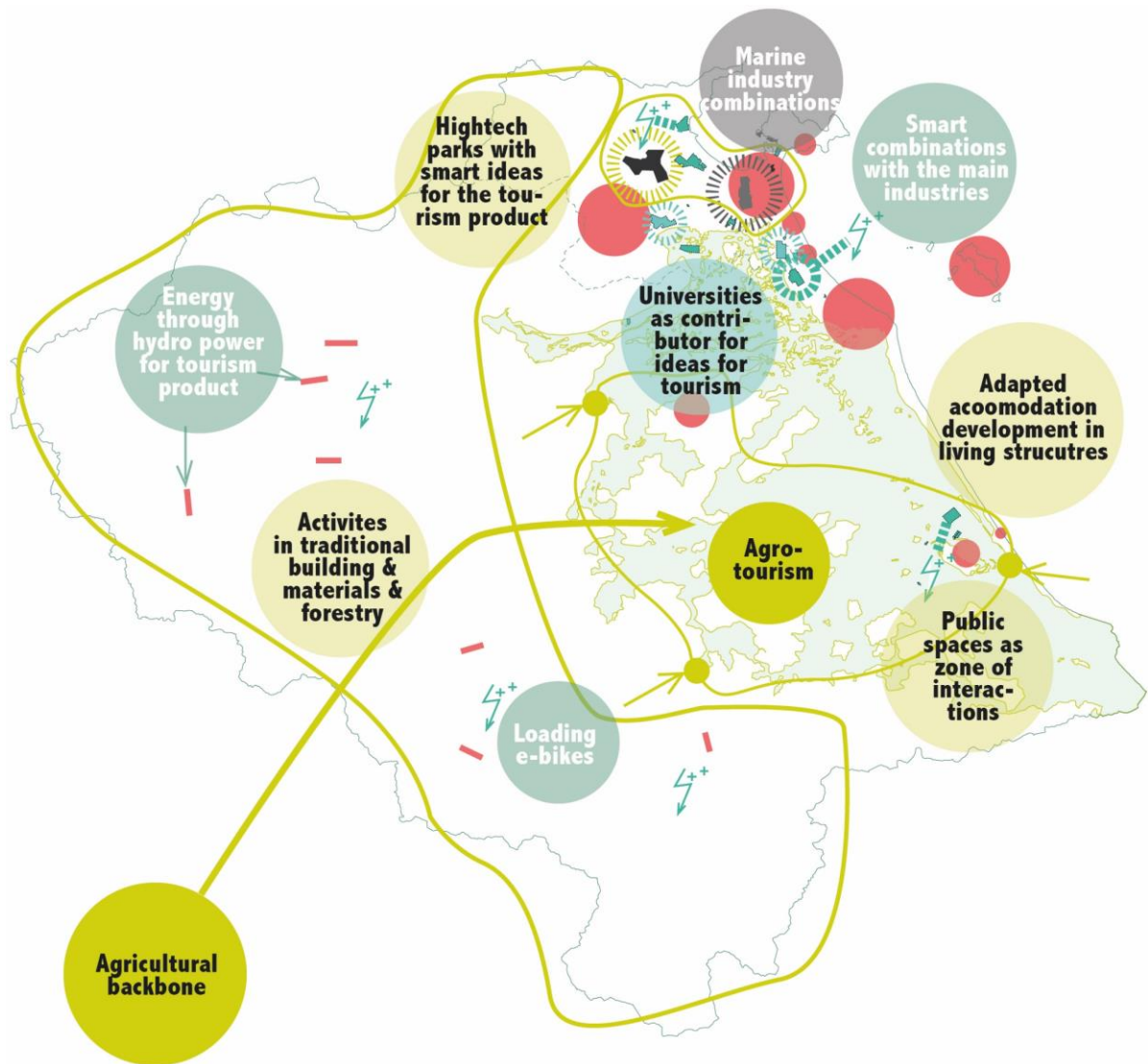


Figure 27: Strengths of Land-uses Associated with Tourism in Da Nang and Quang Nam. (Dopf, 2020)

In all, as the SWOT analysis showed, there are many investments along the coasts, in the cities and around the UNESCO World Heritage Sites. On the other hand, the local community in the region can hardly get any benefit. The planning and expansion of high-end tourism require contrasting development programs that invest in alternative forms of sustainable tourism. To maintain the balance with the region, it is necessary to work on the rural settings. It is especially important to preserve forests and natural resources and prevent the loss of local culture and identity.

5. Regional Network for Sustainable Tourism

In the definition phase, the emplement! Project attempted to conceptualise a vision, or a set of guidelines, for sustainable tourism in the region, with the focus on establishing a regional network of diverse touristic experiences highlighting the local culture and identity and linking the region's natural monuments with its rural and urban structures, all in close cooperation with the local partners and stakeholders.

In this context, research proposals for a regional network should be based on the reviewed theoretical frameworks and best practices in the fields of sustainable tourism and regional development as well as on the reported analysis of the existing conditions on the ground as well as on the identified concerns, potentials and capacities of the local communities. They should also help enhance the cooperation between the rural and urban areas of the region, enrich the diversity of the touristic offers and secure smooth and appropriate flows of tourists. Therefore, integrating the existing, underdeveloped and potential touristic destinations offers an entry point to the topic. To maintain growth, sustainable tourism should consider the socio-economic development of the local community and preserve the environment.

5.1. Proposed Goals for the Regional Network

The project produced a series of observation-based studies regarding the current conditions of the local communities in Da Nang and the Quang Nam region, along with more in-depth qualitative studies done by master students. In these studies, the isolation of the rural populations located outside the urban perimeter of the cities along the region's coast represents a major concern. This isolation is not only a spatial disconnection caused by the lack of transport modes to the settlements, but also a cultural and intangible disconnection between the communities which, in turn, increases their vulnerabilities.

To suggest a vision that copes with this concern and integrates the various aspects of regional development, the project sought to use tourism as an instrument to enhance the key principles of sustainability and help the entire region fulfil its social, environmental and economic responsibilities. On this basis, the project's proposed goals for a regional network are:

- To link the region's touristic corridors and territories together, on the local and regional scales
- To promote the unique values of local facilities across the region, maintain the existing tourism structures and expand the diverse experiences that can attract a variety of visitors
- To improve the living conditions, culture and traditions of the local communities and preserve environment
- To promote sustainable, green and multi-modal mobility and public transport across the region
- To share the profit with and increase the accessibility of the local communities through promoting tourism value chains that connects the region's attractions with the offers of the local communities
- To establish a virtual platform for exhibiting products, announcing regional tours, exchanging ideas and experiences and connecting stakeholders
- To promote environmental protection and education through responsible tourism and attention to vulnerable sites
- To invest in the potential synergies linking tourism with the other sectors in the region such as agriculture, industry and urban design
- To promote the region as a whole through proper branding highlighting the regional touristic qualities and the development of a regional touristic map

- To help create participatory processes throughout implementations and enhance dialogue between the local communities, touristic operators and global players

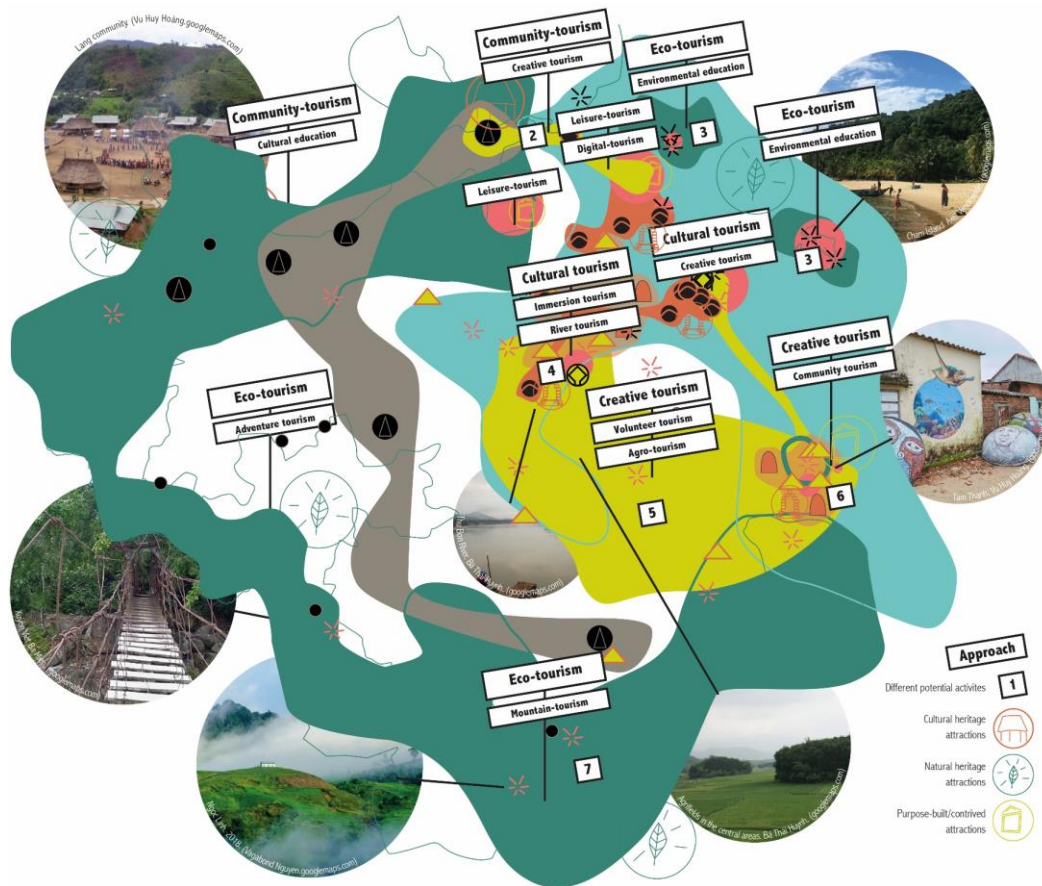


Figure 28: Potential Entry Projects for the Regional Network for Sustainable Tourism in Da Nang and Quang Nam. (Dopf, 2020)

5.2. Proposed Development Measures for the Regional Network

In the definition phase, the emplement! Project discusses the establishment of the regional network for sustainable tourism in Da Nang and the Quang Nam region from the regional and local perspectives. A proper consideration of both scales is certainly crucial to achieve the desired goals of the regional network. The first perspective is concerned with the regulation of potential touristic activities and development measures that can guide other practices and connect the rural and urban areas of the entire region. The local scale represents smaller concepts for important potential tourist locations are proposed focusing on sustainability and integrated development as well as on the scope of action that Da Nang and the Quang Nam region can adopt on a shorter term.

5.2.1. Proposed Development Measures at the Regional Level

Inspired by the strategic planning approach, the emplement! Project proposes an overall development strategy for the regional network for sustainable tourism comprising six sub-strategies or development components. The first component is to help the local partners build a think-tank of regional partners and stakeholders to serve as a basis for communication and innovation in pursuit of sustainable tourism practices. The Tourism Departments of Da Nang and the Quang Nam region, which are

subjects to the Vietnamese National Ministry of Tourism are the key players, also to gain the required political approvals and support. Engaging other stakeholders, especially local communities, academia and tourists is a significant success factor. The regional think-tank, in this regard, is to 1) ignite an innovative process and conceptualize creative proposals (e.g., public spaces, service centres and touristic routes) for the potential touristic spots, 2) enhance alternative and sustainable forms of tourism across the entire region and 3) make the regional touristic offers visible through digitalisation and online platforms. The think-tank’s proposal should ensure a sufficient margin for flexibility and adaptability to the dynamics on the grounds.

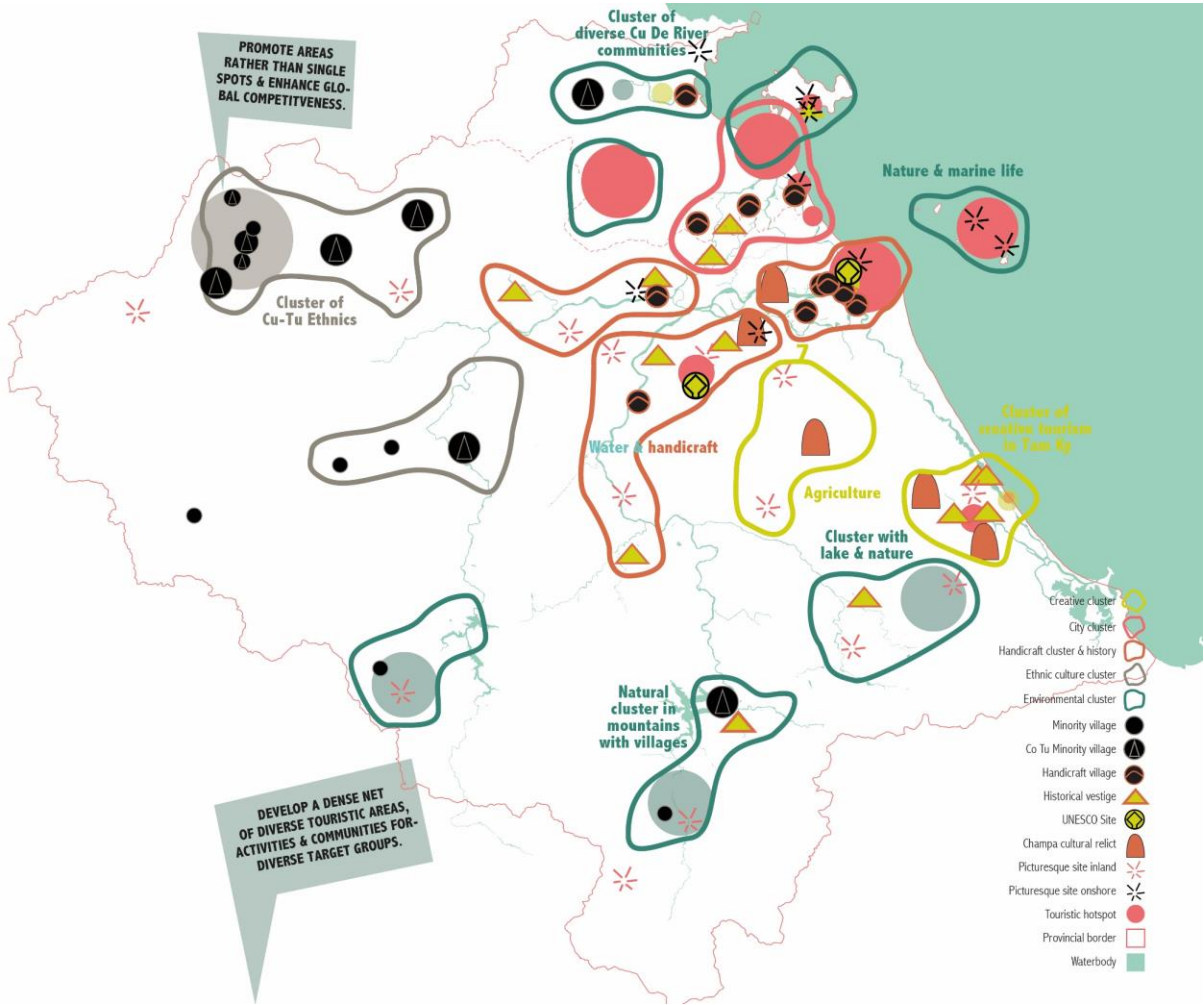


Figure 29: Potential Touristic Clusters in Da Nang and Quang Nam. (Dopf, 2020)

After the platform is set up, fusing the emerging regional partnerships and sustainable tourism clusters together comes as the second component. Incorporating neighbouring natural, cultural and historical attractions as well as local communities that share a physical connection, such as a river, lake, road or bridge, can combine their strengths and shape a set of spatial touristic clusters. These clusters can 1) consolidate chains of neighbouring touristic experiences in an area with an authentic brand representing the local culture and identity, 2) diversify the offers to the region’s visitors and maximise the benefits for its local communities and 3) distribute of the touristic flows among the combined attractions to increase the capacities of the local facilities and 4) optimise the delivery of essential services such as public transport and basic infrastructure. In this manner, each of the region’s clusters

should entail at least a local settlement providing accommodation and associated services to tourists, a focal point that is usually a physical attraction as well as a variety of touristic experiences. Linking the clusters together invites the involved communities to share and learn for each other’s experiences and help promote sustainable tourism in the region as a brand.

In the third component, the necessity of capacity building for sustainable tourism is discussed. In this regard, two target groups have been addressed in this component: the associated regional authorities, who oversee service provision and maintenance, and local communities, who are expected to get involved in the touristic operations. Therefore, two capacity building responses can be proposed: 1) regional program for tourism development that covers the planning and implementation aspects of the related infrastructure development and 2) community program for sustainable tourism and hospitality that covers hospitality management, gastronomy and tourism techniques as well as social education promoting health, environmental awareness, culture and languages.

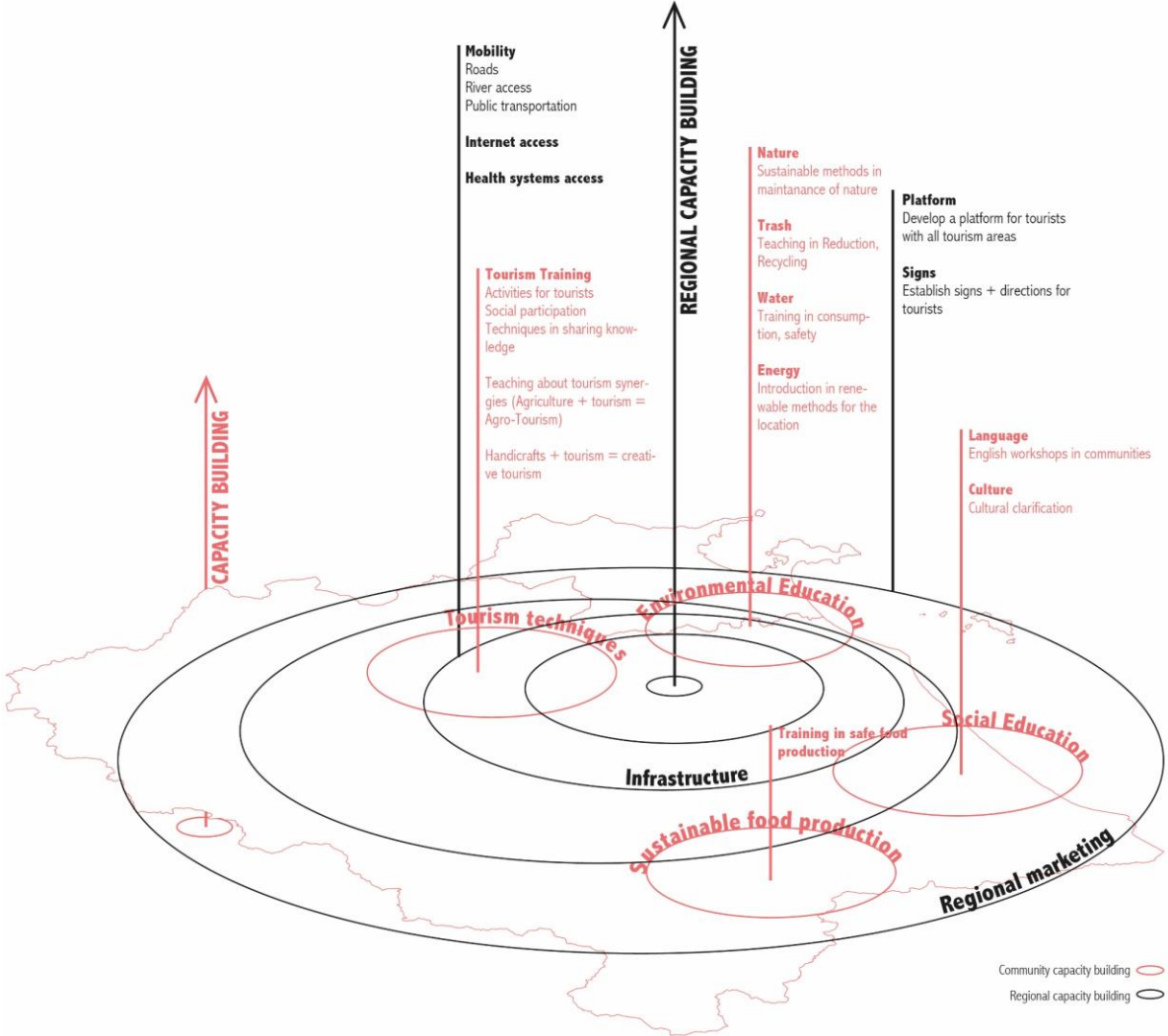


Figure 30: Proposed Regional Capacity Development in Da Nang and Quang Nam. (Dopf, 2020)

The fourth component is essential as it represents the backbone of the suggested regional network. Promoting a green, multi-modal and integrated mobility and public transport to connect the coastal cities with their regional depths as well as to tie the regional clusters together can also regulate the touristic flows within the entire region and reduce the associated emissions significantly. Hopping on

and off to the region utilising public transport as an alternative to private modes represents a valid choice that makes use of the existing railway and bus stations as a starting point towards a sustainable grid of regional mobility and public transport for locals and tourists. This grid should be regulated around consolidated and legible hubs, where switching between the regional modes (e.g., trains and buses) and local ones (e.g., micro-buses, electric and non-motorised vehicles) is possible. It is also important to facilitate safety and navigation along the regional roads and routes through sufficient provision of signs and information. On this basis, this component promotes the development of a rural shuttle bus routes operating less-frequent small busses to extend the connection of the coastal cities with the rural hinterlands, on the one hand, and between the interior settlements of the region extending the existing national roads, on the other. It also promotes a combination of road and river mobility, where and when possible, especially along the Truong Giang River for faster modes and the Thu Bon and Vu Gia rivers for slower ones. Mobility in this sense can be much more efficient due to the spreading river systems across the region connecting many of its attractions and to the reduced noise and polluting emissions. Other creative ideas are also promoted in this context, such as the possible usage of e-mobility and solar infrastructure and applications as well as ticketing and promotions.

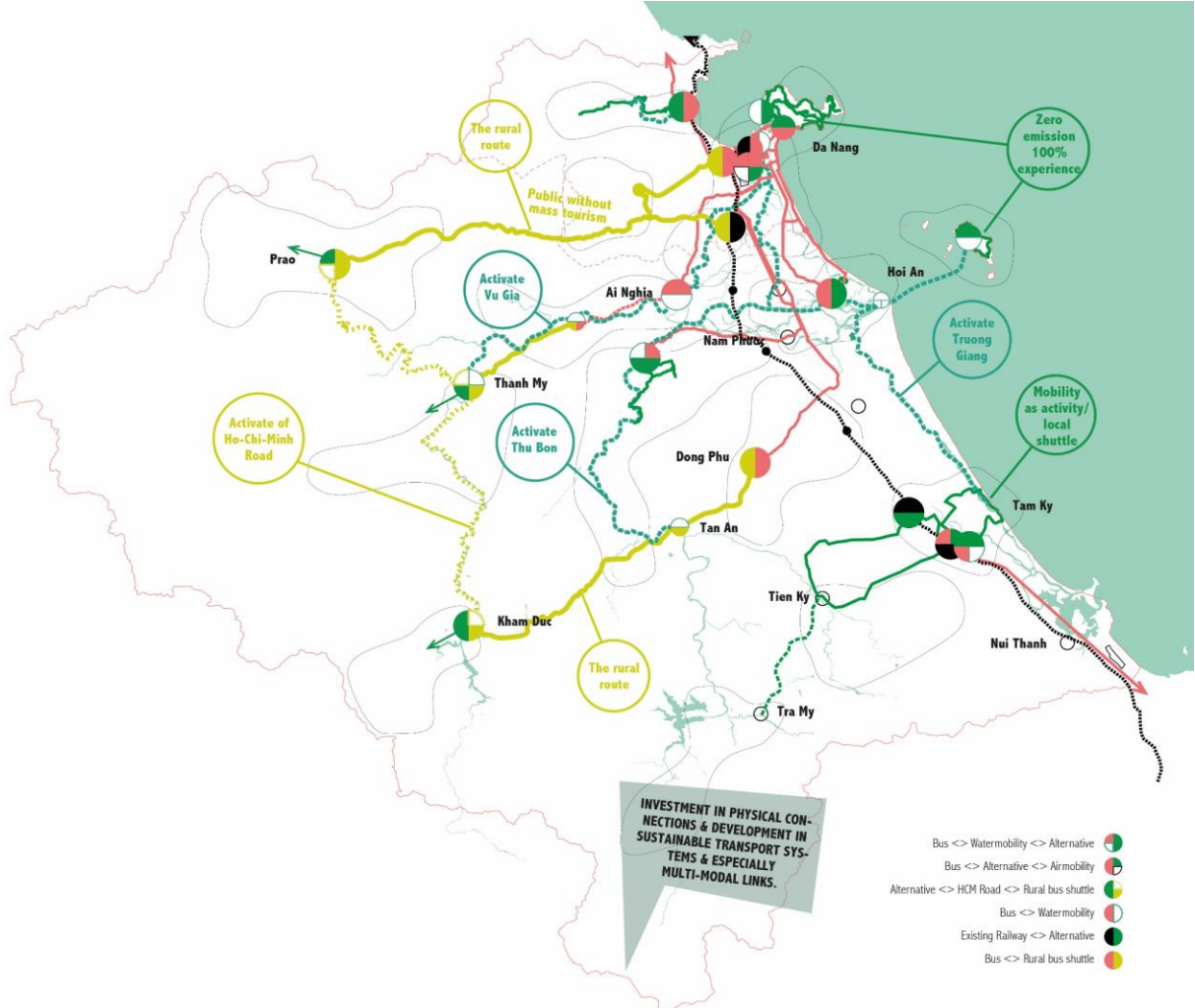


Figure 31: Proposed Regional Public Transport in Da Nang and Quang Nam. (Dopf, 2020)

In principle, regional tourism requires basic infrastructure but also takes a huge benefit from the availability of diverse touristic activities and experiences. The fifth component, therefore, addresses the establishment of various regional tours and tracks connecting the coastal cities with the identified touristic hot- and potential-spots within the region, on the one hand, and connect each spot with its surrounding communities and enrich the visitors' experiences, on the other. As a manifestation of the regional network on the ground, the proposed tours should connect well with the proposed regional mobility and public transport models as well as with each other forming a regional grid of tours and tracks that connects all points of interest. Also, they should ensure safety and eligibility, through appropriate signage and landscaping, and satisfy the interests of a wide range of tourists. On this basis, regional and longer-term tours may entail biking and kayaking to connect the proposed touristic clusters from the beaches to the hinterlands. Local and shorter-term tours may entail more walking and hiking, show local culture and traditions and exhibit the products made in the adjacent settlements. Advertising the proposed tours and tracks can be done online, but also on-site at the regional major attractions and hubs. It can also provide guidelines for responsible tourism that respects the place and environment.

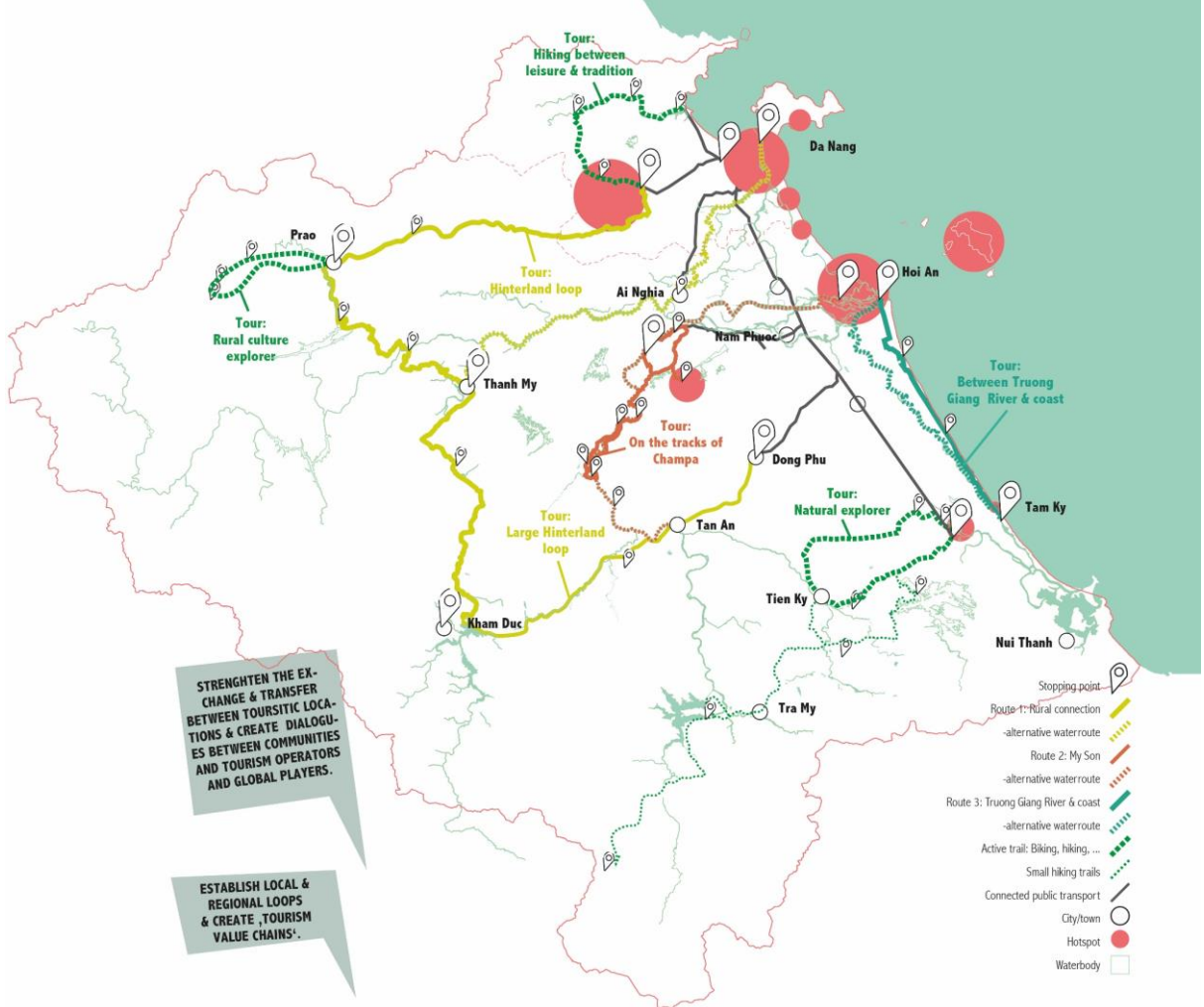


Figure 32: Proposed Tours and Tracks in Da Nang and Quang Nam. (Dopf, 2020)

The sixth component addresses the necessity of connecting the region digitally through a proper utilisation of the Vietnam’s decent Wi-Fi and mobile network infrastructure in place. Providing an app or a website can enable interested tourists to explore all offers of the region’s hinterlands that would otherwise remain invisible and draw their attention to upcoming events. Such a development measure can integrate the public transport planned trips and facilitate the regulation of the ongoing touristic activities and flows throughout the region.

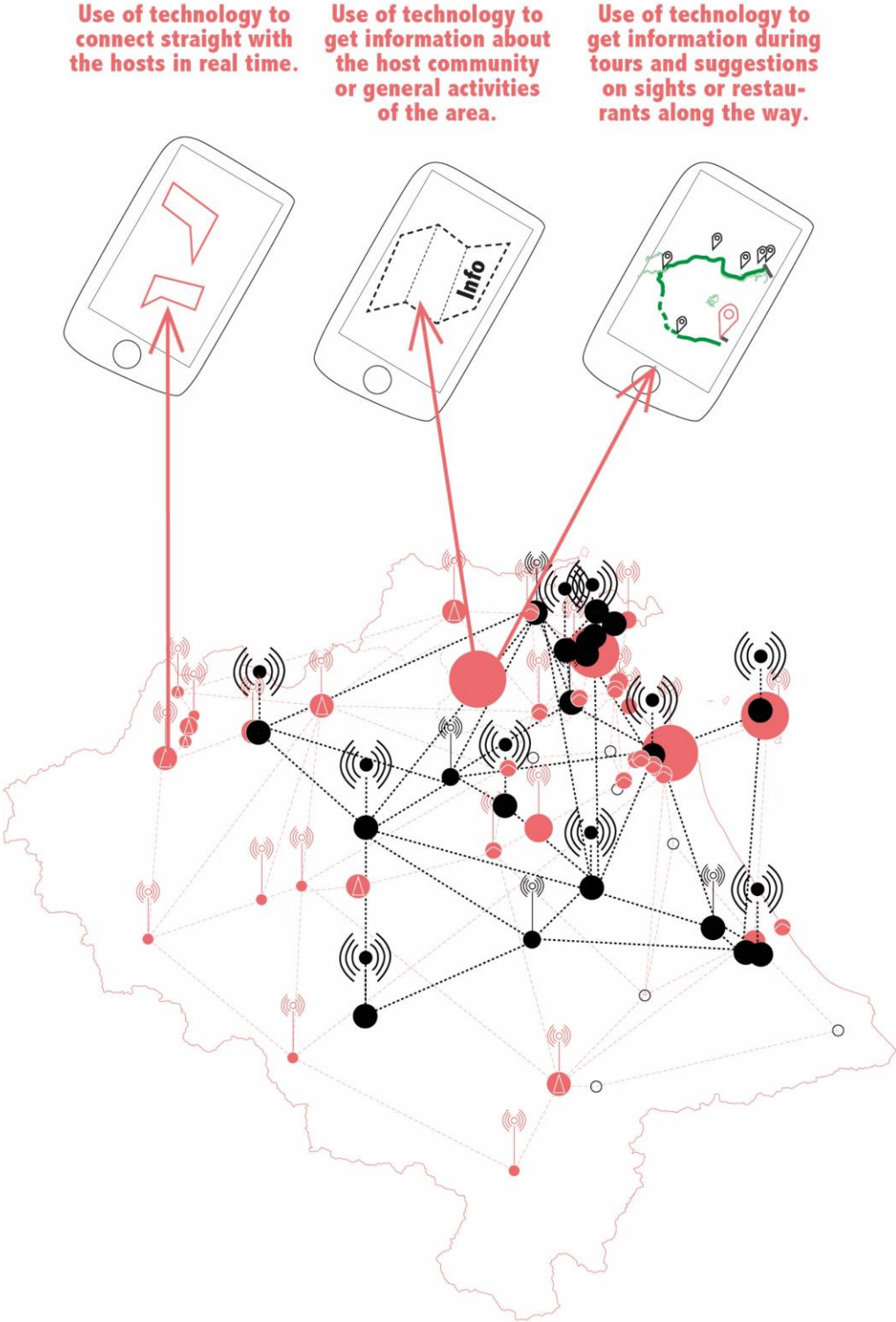


Figure 33: Proposed Digital Infrastructure in Da Nang and Quang Nam. (Dopf, 2020)

5.2.2. Proposed Development Measures at the local Level

In order to develop a regional network for sustainable tourism, measures on a smaller scale are also required. In this regard, the implementation Project articulates a set of local-scale projects that have a strong potential for tourism development in the region and can exemplify an integrated approach of regional development. Building on the status quo of the region, as presented in the first chapter, four areas were selected to accommodate the suggested local development measures (in the fields of mobility and public transport, environmental conditions, local culture and identity and associated land-uses) and represent the development settings of the region in terms of location, population, size, available infrastructure and potentials. All proposed local projects aim to represent the local elements of the suggested regional network, promote alternative forms of tourism that maintain the original charm and identity of the place and at the same time strengthen the local communities.

The first local development area is the Cham Islands focusing on the improvement and preservation of the natural conditions. The islands are already a part of a formally articulated biosphere reserve, which provides a chance to work closely with the associated experts in the field. In this regard, the project discusses the development of touristic eco-trails that revolves around the marine life as well as the daily routines of the islands' farmers and fishermen. In all cases, the eco-trails aim at attracting responsible tourism that promotes environmental awareness, waste reduction and zero-emission mobility solutions. In this manner, the suggested tourism activities on the Cham Islands can balance the gentrified and high-class tourism on the opposite shores between Da Nang and Hoi An and thus add to the region's diversity.

The second area stretching from Tam Ky to Tam Thanh provides an ideal ground to work on an interdisciplinary project. Due to the towns' location, population and size representing the urban side of the Quang Nam region, the project considers the multiple aspects of mobility and public transport, local culture and identity as well as the agricultural land-uses within the area to be essential development fields that require attention. In this regard, the project proposes sustainable forms of mobility to connect the touristic spots and provide memorable journeys that can as well attract tourists on their own. Further ideas for integrated community tourism were discussed, such as initiating home-and farm-stays near the agricultural routines of the area in addition to organising public events. Such measures can increase the interaction between the locals and the visitors, especially in Tam Thanh, the mural village that is also known for its community paintings. This is in addition to the improvements of the area's connection with the surrounding railway stations and bus terminals to encourage the touristic flows, especially from Da Nang and Hoi An. Also, serving the Water-Lilly Lake, known as the Bay Say Song Dam Lake, to improve the boat tours that exist can extend the connection to the surrounding villages and add more points of interest to enhance recreation and natural protection around this spot.

Since Prao is a settlement that is located deep in the hinterlands of the region and accommodates a large population of the Co Tu ethnic minority, it represents a unique opportunity to work on the preservation and promotion of the local culture and identity in the third area of the proposed project's local development measures. The project envisages the village to become a cultural hub for the entire range of ethnic villages in the proximity. With the help of the standing community centre, a range of touristic activities were considered to promote the population's traditions and products as well as to instrumentalise the potential tourism to raise the locals' income and help improve their public space

and facilities. Enhancing economic growth of the local community, in this case as well as in similar instances, should engage the local cultural traditions, protect and promote the local identity and facilitate social equity by reinforcing an inclusive environment for all. Local communities, in this regard, are seen to participate in all work stages from the definition to the implementation of the proposed touristic and development practices.

In the fourth area, the project focuses on the Hoa Bac community, which is allocated within a range of villages along the Cu De River Valley and mostly engaged in agriculture. The Valley’s proximity to Da Nang qualifies it to act a gateway from Da Nang to the region, where tourists can expect to extend their journeys into more natural and authentic experiences.

All four project are conceived to embody the regional network on the ground, provide a guiding example for the other parts of the region and coin a unique brand of sustainable tourism in Da Nang and the Quang Nam region.

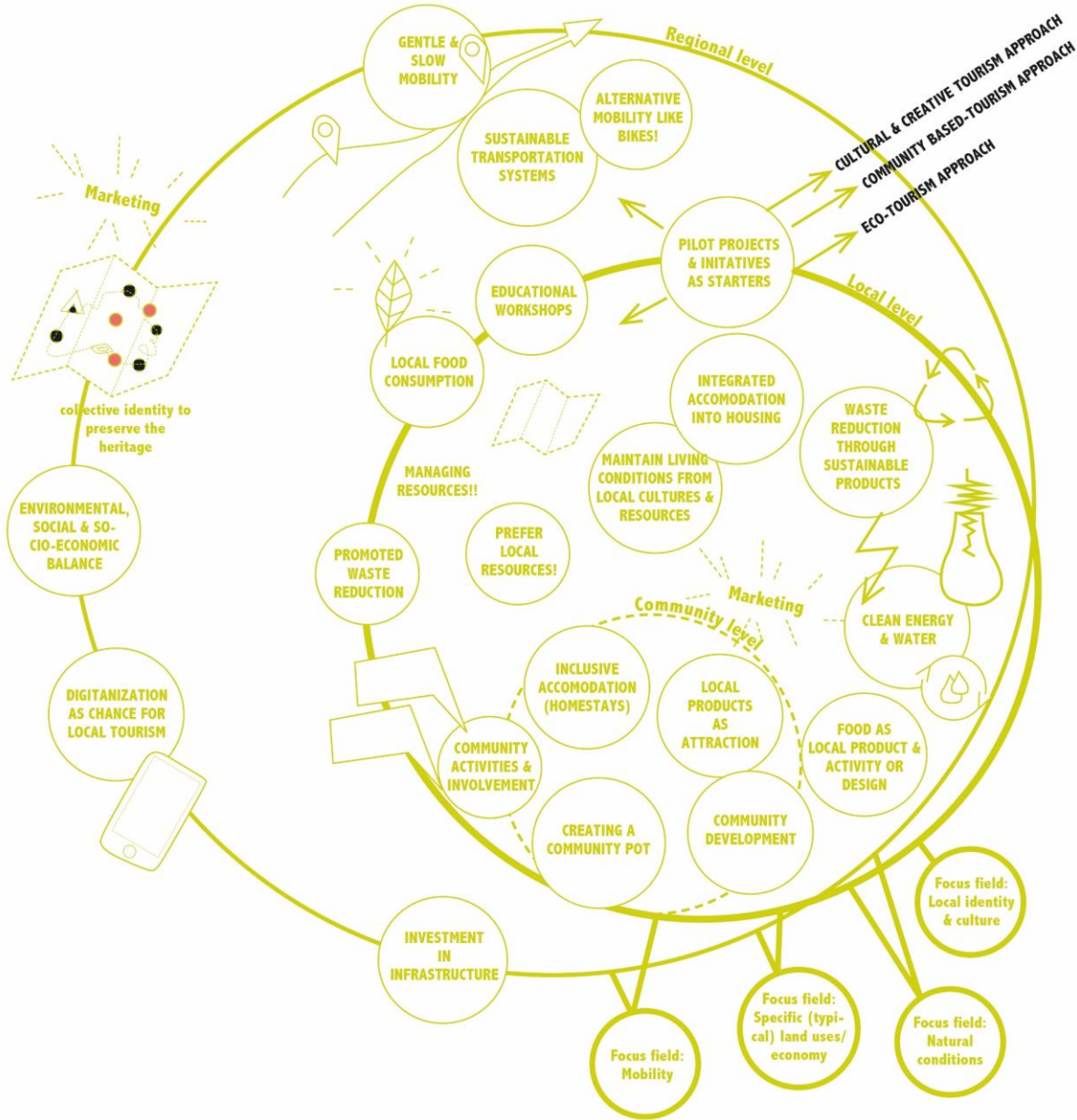


Figure 34: Framework for the Regional Network for Sustainable Tourism. (Dopf, 2020)

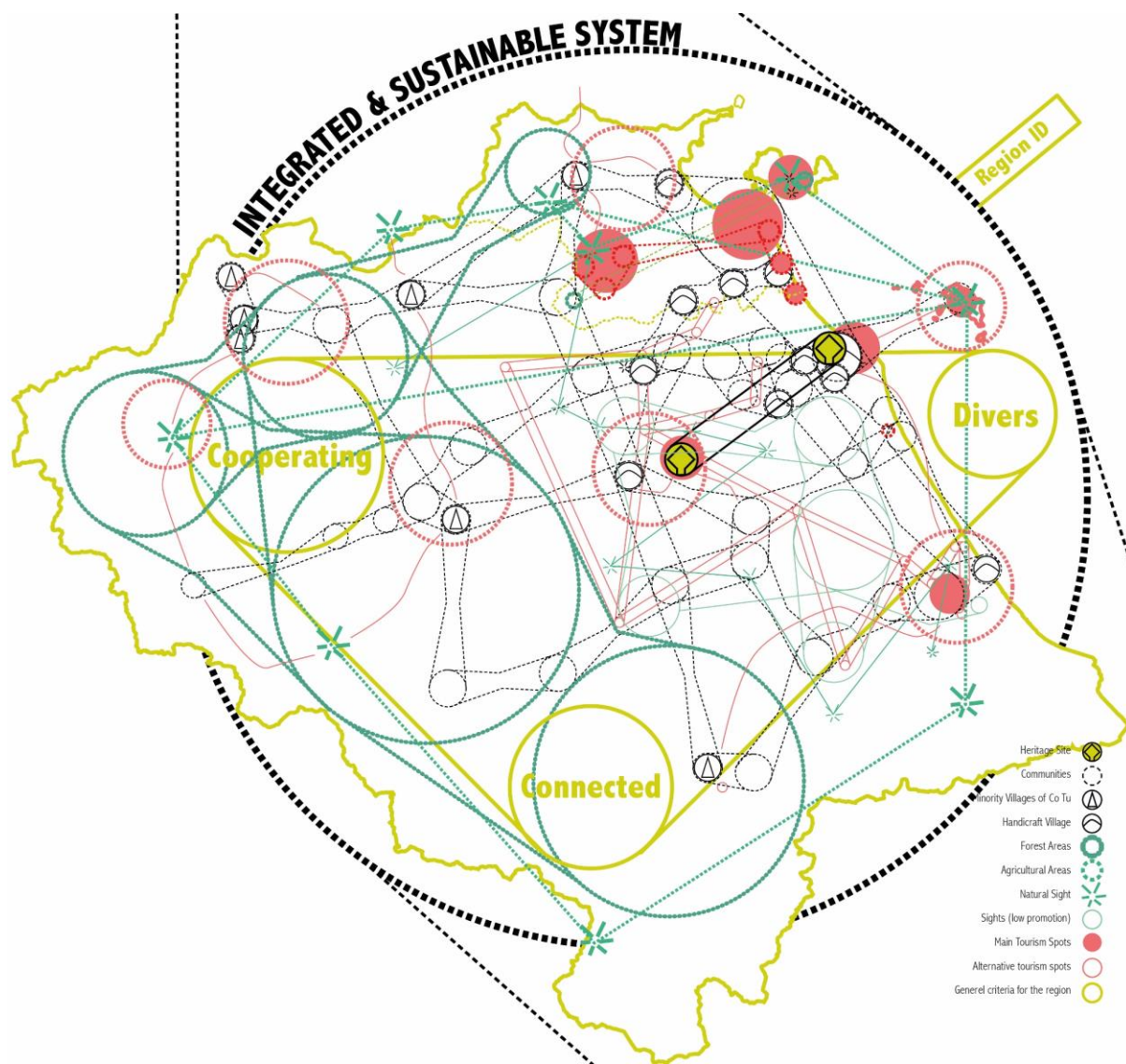


Figure 35: Overall Vision for the Regional Network for Sustainable Tourism in Da Nang and Quang Nam. (Dopf, 2020)

5.3. Proposed Strategies for Implementation

The implement! Project addresses a set of possible pilot projects under the suggested development measure to guide the realisation of the proposed regional network. Following the focus fields of the aforementioned SWOT analysis, the fields of public transport and mobility, environmental conditions, local culture and identity as well as associated land-uses are also considered to be the potential intervention fields of the project to initiate the regional network. Therefore, in each selected spot at the regional and local levels of the proposed network, one or more entry projects are considered to deal at least with one of the focus fields and drive the development on the ground.

As evident in the regional components and local projects of the suggested development measures, the implement! Project proposes the strategic planning approach to be the basis for implementation on the ground. On this basis, in each suggested development area, it is important to work closely with the local partners and stakeholders to 1) mobilise the required capacities and resources to initiate action, 2) acquire or, if necessary, generate the data required for the analysis, mapping and visualisation of

the targeted areas, 3) assess the current development conditions, concerning the focus field and scale of implementation, 4) conceptualise the desired development of the areas, connect them to the region's overall vision integrating the four focus fields and identify the projects' objectives on the short-, medium- and long-terms, 5) prioritise among the suggested projects starting with the ones that can bring the much-needed support to enhance the life quality of the hinterland settlements and the poorer communities, 6) formulate clear, visible and realistic action plans that can take advantage of the region's current capacities and infrastructure as well as potentials and serving as pilot projects to encourage other spots of the region to self-initiate similar practices and 7) upon implementation, to take a step back, analyse and assess the implemented projects and discuss the required adjustments for the further development and implementation of the current as well as the future projects.

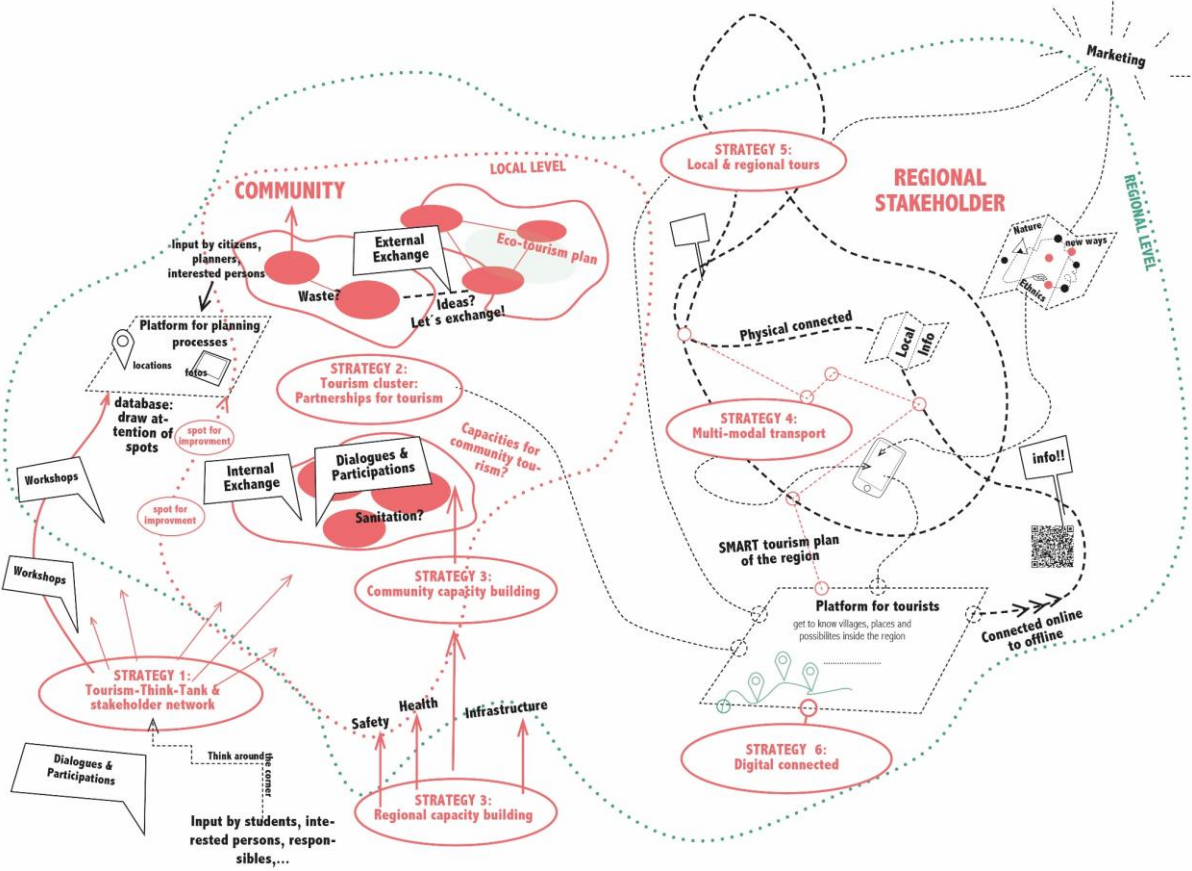


Figure 36: Proposed Strategic-based Implementation Process in Da Nang and Quang Nam. (Dopf, 2020)

6. Conclusion

As urban development continues to grow in an unprecedented pace, new economic growth mechanics especially in the fields of industry and services leave remarkable impacts on the socio-economics characteristics of urbanising societies. Since most of the jobs and vital social services are concentrated in bigger urban centres, population of the urban fringes and the rural hinterlands are often left with low accessibility to jobs and services and conventional working practices, mostly in agriculture, to earn their living costs. Consequently, a considerable gap of urban as well as socio-economic development continues to exist between the urban centres and their less developed hinterlands, especially in the developing countries. In this regard, the implement! Project sought in its definition phase to formulate

a set of guidelines for a possible regional network that utilised sustainable tourism as a catalyst to drive a socio-economic enhancement, while promoting environment and environmental practices as well as the local culture and identity.

To achieve this purpose, the research needed to establish a theoretical framework including the social, economic, environmental and cultural aspects of the intended development. In this framework, the project considers the intended network to be based on an integrated basis incorporating the concepts of sustainable tourism and integrated regional development in the first place and relates the topic to the urban-rural development, all from a strategic perspective that links all intended processes closely with active forms of stakeholder engagement and local participation. After establishing a solid basis of theoretical understanding, the project examines the targeted region, Da Nang and Quang Nam, closely to stand on the existing development conditions from a social, economic, environmental and cultural perspectives. Then it dives in the existing conditions of tourism in the entire region, revealing the types and characteristics of touristic practices, offers and attractions as well as the entailed risks and potentials. To make the analysis more efficient, the project focused on four fields in particular: transport and mobility, environment, local culture and identity and land-uses.

Afterwards, together with the local partners, the implementation! Project formulates two sets of guidelines at the regional and local levels of implementation. All recommendations are based on the established theoretical framework, reviewed development conditions and analysis of existing tourism in the entire region. At the regional level, the project stresses the need for establishing a regional tourism think-tank to mobilise the associated stakeholders and required assets. It then proposes a consolidation process of the conceived touristic clusters to help infuse all touristic spots, especially the excluded, throughout the region in visible structures to facilitate linking them together by the regional network in the later stages. As the development stakeholders as well as the touristic clusters are defined, the project indicates the need for proper capacity development measure to support the planning, implementation and organisation of the public administration as well as the operational skills of the local businesses and entrepreneurs. Since physical regional connections are illustrated by mobility and public transport, the project stresses the essential role of this sector in the development of a functioning regional network. The project recommends an extended utilisation of the green and ecological mobility and transport concepts within the region. As a rule of thumb, strengthening, connecting and extending the current modes of public transport to cover the hinterlands come as a priority. Then, it is favourable to introduce a range of alternatives, such as e-bikes and non-motorised vehicles, or even to think creatively introducing boat and kayak trips, to help the region achieve a much-advised multi-modal mobility and transport system that can reduce the polluting noise and emissions, connect the main hubs and invite the tourists to take memorable journeys throughout the region. Then, the suggested regional development measures to enforce the region's environmental conditions rely heavily on introducing eco-tours and trails involving various activities to connect the tourists with the diverse natural, historical and traditional scenes of the region while promoting environmental awareness and interaction with the local communities. Improving the public space in both rural and urban spheres, improving the accommodation facilities and initiating public events are also seen essential to invite the tourists to stay more in the region's hinterlands and experience the local traditions. Finally, the project suggests keeping all sustainable touristic offers, information and events online to increase the interested tourists' accessibility to the region and to connect the sustainable tourism service providers.

At the local level, the implementation Project suggests four pilot-project areas for implementation: the Cham Islands focusing on the improvement and preservation of the natural conditions, the area stretching from Tam Ky to Tam Thanh focusing on urban-rural linkages, Prao settlement in the hinterlands focusing on the Co Tu community and the Cu De River Valley focusing on the Hoa Bac range of connected villages along the river. Each suggested pilot project focuses on one or more of the four focus fields employed in the analysis of the existing tourism.

In all, the suggested development measures in the framework of a regional network for sustainable tourism can promote and preserve the local culture and identity and, through recycling the added value generated from tourism, further investments can be made to improve the life quality of the inhabitants. The project attempts to allow the common agricultural land-uses within the region to generate a touristic value that can help the farmers sell more products and increase their income through the provision of touristic activities associated with the farming and fishing practices in the region. In this regard, sustainable tourism as a tool for an integrated regional development should not be understood as a multi-sectoral venture, but rather as a comprehensive integrated planning perspective that can address the basic needs of rural communities, improving their living quality while protecting the condition of the environment.

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