

Lauren Quinn - Hanoi: Is It Possible To Grow A City Without Slums?



Photo: The Guardian

guardian.com. August 2014. To an outsider, Hanoi can seem like a city trying to consume itself. Jackhammers chatter and circular saws whine like cicadas. Sparks from welding shoot into oncoming traffic and exhaust fumes lace the air with a metallic twinge. Careening through the streets on the city's estimated 4m motorbikes, people drape mesh netting over their babies' faces to block dust from construction sites, while women in conical hats dig through the rubble of newly demolished lots for scrap metal. The intense humidity causes mould to sprout, paint to peel, wood to rot.

On a typical Hanoi wall, crisscrossing layers of plaster, paint and mildew, you will see a multitude of stencilled adverts, all with similar fonts and a string of numbers beginning with 09, and all including the letters KCBT. It's an abbreviation for *khoan cắt bê tông* - concrete cutting and drilling. These are illegal adverts for demolition services, and they tattoo the walls of the city, as if to say, "See this building? It could be gone tomorrow."

Read more: <http://www.theguardian.com/hanoi-slums>