

Accelerating the Energy Transition with Social Enterprises: An Engaged Economist's Perspective

From Nobel Laureate to Hanoi Think Tank

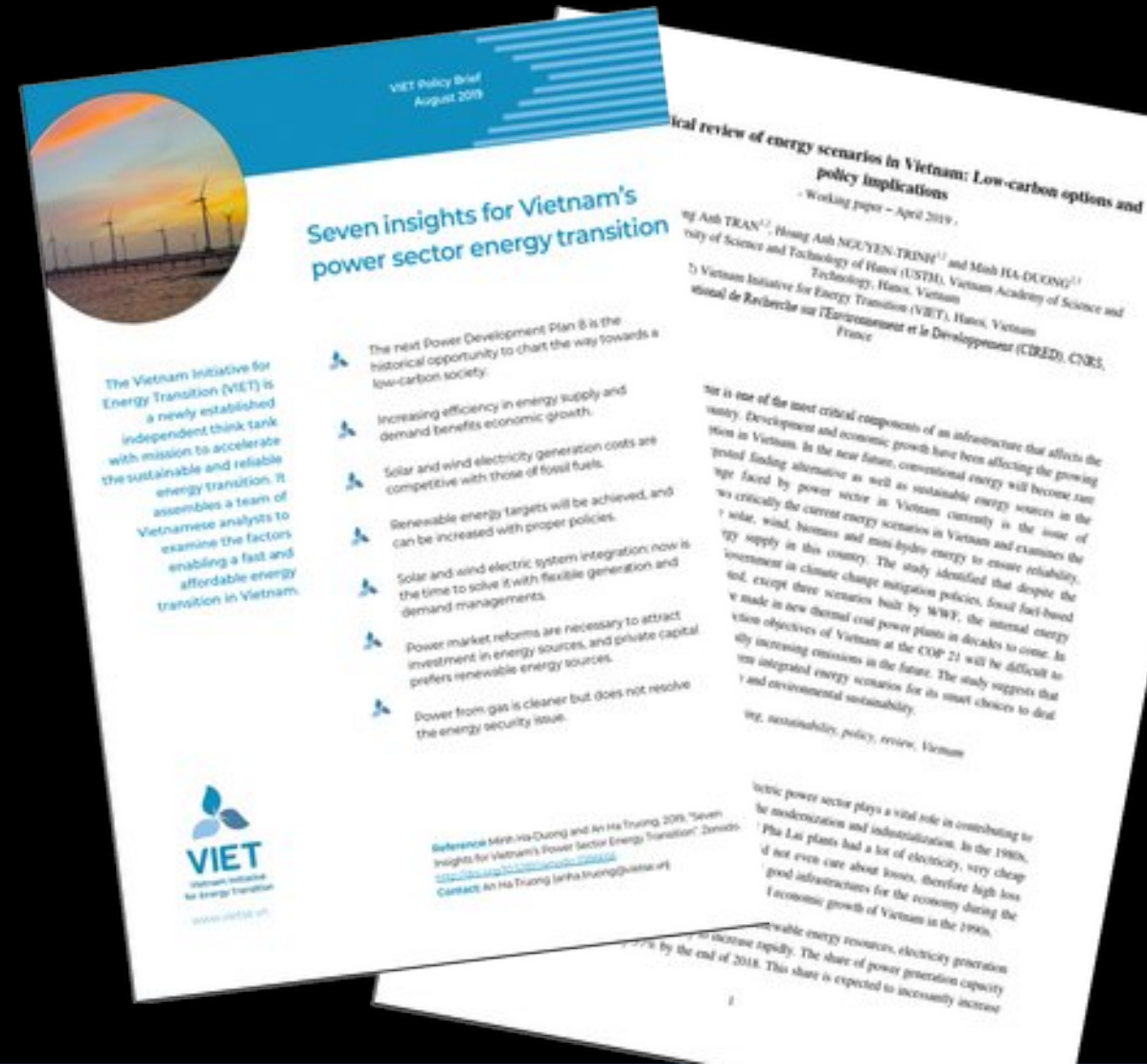
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UAM Azcapotzalco, Ciudad de México
March 3, 2025*

Typical Social Enterprise product



My Social Enterprise product



How I went to found the Vietnam Initiative for Energy Transition Social Enterprise ?

- 1969: Born in France, with Vietnamese values
- 1998: PhD, Join CNRS
- 2007: IPCC Nobel Peace Prize
- 2013: Move to Vietnam
- 2018: Founded VIETSE think tank
- 2025: Social Business Creation workshop

Outline

Lessons from my most meaningful professional adventure



1) Identify a Critical Gap

Find opportunities where sustainability needs aren't being met.

2) Design a Purpose-Driven Organization

Align structure and culture with your mission.

3) Cultivate Strategic Interdependence

Build relationships that create resilience and impact.

4) Measure Impact, Not Profit

Develop KPIs to capture social transformation beyond financial metrics.



1. THE CRITICAL GAP

Energy transition expertise in Vietnam



Slide 1 from VIETSE's *pitch deck*: Context

Climate change

Coal power plants: from 3 GW before 2010 to 30 GW by 2025...

Environmental burden: Vietnam faces increasing environmental pressure related to air quality, solid waste and water pollution...

Energy security:

Vietnam energy demand is forecast to double by 2035.

6 Domestic coal and gas reserves are not enough.

Energy transition needs expertise

- Germans paid electricity five times higher than VN
- Solar power curtailment rates in Xinjiang, China went from 39% to 10.6% in two years

An independent think tank to provide

1. Research
2. Expertise
3. Consultancy
4. Training



Vietnam Initiative for Energy Transition is an independent think tank, acting as a bridge between research and policy, with a mission to accelerate the transition of Vietnamese energy system in a sustainable and reliable manner.

VIET's institutional independence is rooted in the individual independence of its scholars. As a **Social Enterprise**, any profit created from our activities will be used to reinvest in research & education.

01 Research
Our research topics cover national energy policy, climate protection, economics, development, and governance.

03 Consultancy
We provide consultancy, analysis and prediction related to energy and climate protection.

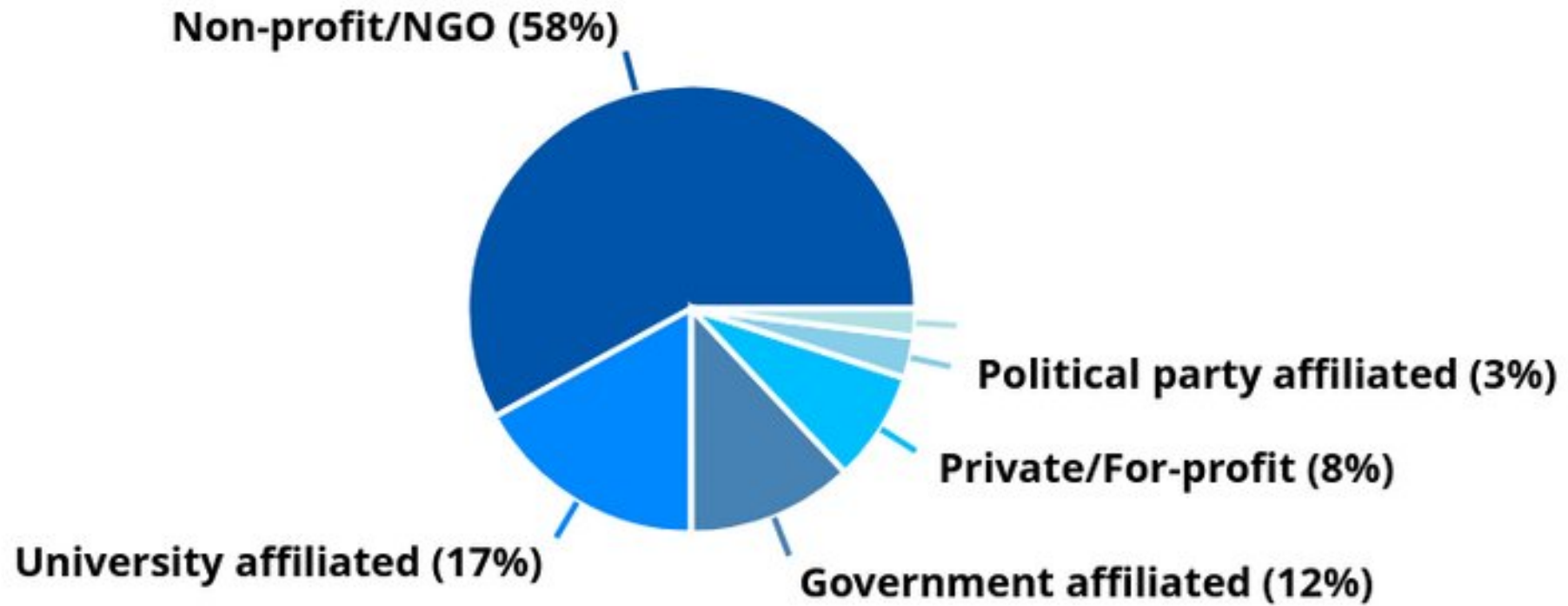
02 Expertise
VIET brings together leading experts in government and academia who provide quality research, policy recommendations and analysis.

04 Training
We receive interns and PhD students on energy and climate protection subjects.

2. DESIGNING A PURPOSE-DRIVEN ORGANISATION



Think Tank Types Globally



Most think tanks operate as traditional non-profits or are affiliated with institutions. Social enterprises represent an innovative hybrid approach.

VIETSE's Theory of change

Inputs



Activities



Outputs



Outcomes

People

...

Ressources

...

Know-how

...

Influence

...

Policy dialogue strategy

Convening dialogue ...



More active energy transition community
Influence key decision makers

Knowledge production strategy

...



Technical reports
....

Knowledge translation strategy

...



....

2020 objectives

The think-tank is recognized as an important institution contributing to the energy transition in Vietnam.

...

2030 goals

...

2050 ultimate outcome

....

Positive external enablers assumptions

Success to attract co-funding
Can attract and retain high-level spokesperson and other staff

External risks assumptions

Government clamps foreign funding
External influence on research choices and diffusion of results
Disclosure and diffusion of energy issues becomes sensitive

Tools to create a self-managing culture

Annual retreat

Vision: Vietnam at the frontline to protect climate.

Mission: Accelerate the transition to a carbon neutral Vietnam.

The advice process

Before any decision, seek advice from 1) experts, and 2) those meaningfully affected

Accountability weekly meetings

Everybody shares 1/ what I have done, 2/ what I intend to do, 3/ where I need help.

A Social Enterprise Values and Code of Conduct

Responsibility

Deliver on time what is expected.

Sign all our productions with our name.

...

Excellence

Verify and peer review our ideas and publications.

Disclose in transparency in our methods, data, and sources.

...

Happiness

Maintain a family friendly work culture.

Celebrate monthly – at least – team achievements.

Beautify our office, including flowers and art...

Interdependence...

Credibility...

3. CULTIVATING STRATEGIC INTERDEPENDENCE



NETWORK OF ASEAN-CHINA THINK TANKS (NACT)
MEETING OF THE NACT WORKING GROUP ON
REGIONAL COOPERATION FOR SUSTAINABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT
Hanoi, 19 April 2019

II. KIỂM KÊ QUỐC GIA KHÍ NHÀ KINH

- Cho đến nay Việt Nam chỉ TN&DT và
tập đoàn mới và các công ty nhỏ của
KCN, phục vụ chủ yếu cho công
nghiệp chế biến gỗ và các ngành
liên quan.
- Chỉ được
KCN
1995.

LỄ TRAO GIẢI CUỘC THI
HÀNG HO NGÔI NHÀ XANH
&
TỌA ĐÀM VỀ
CÔNG NGHỆ, KINH DOANH
MÔI TRƯỜNG
Ngày 02 tháng 2

Stakeholders ecosystem

Energy policy decision-makers in Vietnam

High level officials

in National Assembly / Party / Government committees on energy / industry / economy

Civil servants

in central or provincial ministries in charge of energy, green growth, finance

High level executives

in energy using or producing companies

International partners

Private philanthropy

NGOs (GreenID, WWF, Oxfam...)

Development agencies and climate diplomacy (Germany's GIZ, Danish's DEA...)

Multilateral organizations

(UN, ADB, World Bank...)

Renewable energy multinationals

Talented potential collaborators

Students, academics, intellectuals

in Vietnam and abroad, from all fields of expertise

Peer organizations

International Network of Energy Transition Think Tanks

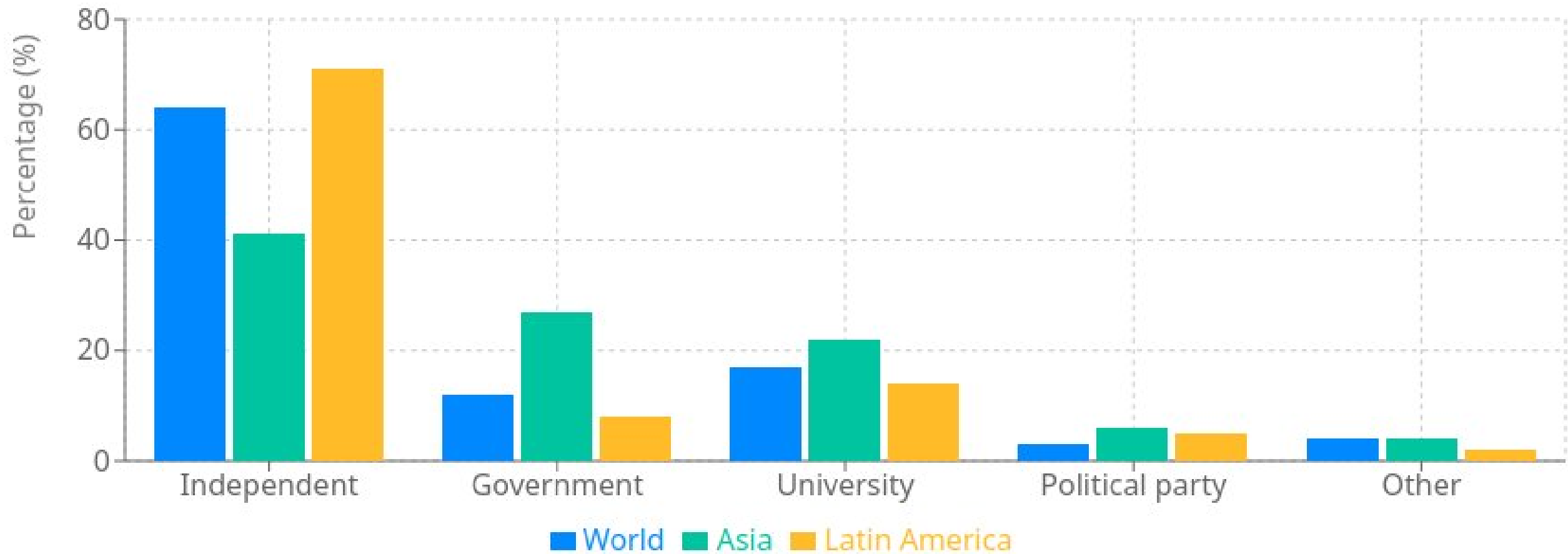


The balance between connection and independence

- Close to but not part of the government
- Works with the industry but following a social and environmental mission
- Internationally funded but Vietnamese expertise

Think Tank Affiliations by Region

Government affiliation is 3× higher in Asian think tanks



Data source: Open Think Tank Directory

4. MEASURING TRANSFORMATION, NOT PROFIT\$



Năng lượng bền vững - Đỗ Hiếu Liêm

VIETSE's Key Contributions (2018-2023)

Research & Knowledge Creation

- Published 5 peer-reviewed international articles and 24 technical reports
- Pioneered studies on Vietnam's offshore wind, energy security, hydrogen strategy, electricity pricing reform...

Policy advice

- Helped shape Power Development Plan 8 with reduced coal dependency
- Contributed technical analysis for Vietnam's Just Energy Transition Partnership
- Advanced offshore wind energy development strategies

Legacy: capacity building

- Organized 23 major events with over 1,000 participants
- Fostered dialog between government, development partners, industry, academia
- Nurtured returning post-docs, graduate and undergraduate students
- Demonstrated quasi-independent think tank in challenging policy environment

Conclusion

Founding a social enterprise is my most meaningful professional adventure,
and now...

**The world needs your expertise to bridge critical gaps.
What transition will you accelerate?**

Start today at this SBC conference:

1. Identify your gap – Where can you help with SDGs and beyond?
2. Design with purpose – Join social business creation workshops
3. Cultivate strategic relationships – Connect with potential partners in this room

Sources

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