

# Invasive plants capture plastic

**Water hyacinths in the Saigon River in Vietnam collect three quarters of the visible plastic waste in the river, shows a study by Louise Schreyers, a PhD student in the Hydrology and Quantitative Water Management chair group.**

Schreyers analysed field data and drone images of the Saigon River collected over a six-week period. The river flows through Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam's largest city, and has large patches of water hyacinths floating on it. This invasive plant blocks the city's canals and obstructs navigation of the river. But

it captures 78 per cent of the floating plastic debris in the river, show

**Water hyacinths capture 78 per cent of the visible plastic waste in the Saigon River**

Schreyers' calculations published in *Frontiers in Environmental Science*. Schreyers is now investigating where the hyacinths accumulate in the largest numbers. She seeks answers to two questions: where does the plastic enter

the river and how does it get stuck in the water plants? The size of the floating water hyacinth patches fluctuates greatly: sometimes they cover as much as 30 per cent of the Saigon River, sometimes not even one per cent. Schreyers is working with a German startup and Vietnamese officials to establish clean-up operations. Her research has relevance for other tropical rivers too. 'A lot of plastic waste in rivers never makes it to the sea because it gets trapped in plants or on the river-bed.' AS