

Vietnam's Rural-to-Urban Migrant Families:
Educational and Social Inequalities in a Transitional Society

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation explores the challenges, especially those relating to education and to social marginalization, that are being faced every day by underprivileged migrant families residing in Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam. It also reveals the coping mechanisms they must devise in order to stay afloat financially in a nation that is rapidly urbanizing and thereby changing at a dizzying speed. Drawing primarily upon my interviews with and observations of migrant families and associated community members, and secondarily upon scholarly and governmental research, this study shows how these families' survival strategies reveal those patterns of resource mobilization that are intimately linked to their social relations to, and ties with, others in the destination area.

In the wake of the economy's marketization that began in the mid-1980s, Vietnam has undergone massive social changes, including a vast upsurge in free migration, an increased bargaining power of cash, and rising levels of social segregation. On the one hand, the advent of the market-oriented economy and nominal relaxation of the state controls over population mobility have opened up new paths down which migrants can pursue economic opportunities in their urban destinations, and have given people on the move some room for negotiation with the state. On the other hand, their status as non-permanent residents of Hanoi has continued to hinder them from gaining access to public services and government-sponsored care, equal to that enjoyed by their permanent-resident counterparts. Perhaps the chief consequence of the latter adverse trend is that migrant children not meeting the financial and/or regulatory conditions that all students are expected to meet if they wish to enter mainstream, formal education are inclined to seek learning opportunities in the other sphere of alternative, informal education. Thus migrant families have essentially been trapped, socioeconomically, in the informal sector; they have little prospect of upward social mobility, and they are compelled to adopt a stance of self-reliance with respect to resource mobilization. Then too, the everyday and governmental discourses that too often

portray migrants as being disorderly at best and criminal at worst, and thus as constituting a deleterious social presence, have served not only to vindicate the state's ongoing adherence to the preexisting household-registration system but to disguise its ineffectiveness at managing rural-urban migration and its failure to redress Vietnam's ever-widening social inequalities and increasingly inequitable resource distribution. The permeation of such discourse among the city residents, and its internalization by the migrants themselves, have only served to exacerbate the stigmatization and peripheralizing of migrants.

Serving to at least somewhat counteract the latter negative trend is the migrants' resourcefulness in settling into the city and forming social safety-nets, mutual-aid arrangements often based on sharing the same village of origin. Unfortunately, the social solidarity of village-based relations often goes hand in hand with exclusivity and thus with discrimination against all those who fall outside the inner circles, thereby further distancing the migrants from the mainstream of city life. Ultimately the study points to the need for some structural transformations in the Vietnamese government, changes reflective of the fact that migrants are not mere "social evils" but to the contrary, part and parcel of the state's growth. Only when such steps have been taken will the discourse about migrants shift from vilification to praise or even concern, and will Vietnamese society no longer be "transitional" because it has become inclusive and cohesive.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED

<i>Bui Doi</i>	Dust of Life. The term is used to refer disparagingly not only to vagrants and roaming street-sellers but also to all of the rural migrant poor coming to work in Vietnam's cities. While a metaphorically alludes to their mobility and wanderings like "dust," it also insinuates that they are unwanted in society.
<i>Com Binh Dan</i>	Literally meaning "working-class rice" and thus "popular meals," <i>com binh dan</i> —inexpensive eateries that serve a variety of common local dishes, most of them consisting of rice, vegetables, soup, and a selection of meats.
COSA	The National Assembly's Social Affairs Committee
CPFC	Committee for Population, Family and Children
CPV	Communist Party of Vietnam
DOET	Department of Education and Training
<i>Doi Moi</i> Policy	Renovation Policy. Economic reforms initiated in Vietnam 1986, and marking its transition from a centralized command economy to a socialist-oriented market economy.
DOLISA	Department of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
<i>Giao Duc Thuong Xuyen</i>	Continuing Education
GSO	General Statistics Office of Vietnam
HEPR	Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction (Recently renamed National Target Programmes (NTP))
<i>Ho Khau</i>	Household Registration
ILO	International Labour Organization
<i>Lang Nau</i>	Brown Village
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
MOLISA	Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs
NEZs	New Economic Zones
<i>Nha Tro</i>	Lodging House
<i>Nha Que</i>	Country Bumpkins
NTP	National Target Programmes (Previously called Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction (HEPR))

OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SCUK	Save the Children U.K.
SEDS	Socio-Economic Development Strategy
<i>So Do</i>	Red Book (Land Use Certificate)
<i>So Ho Khau</i>	Household Registration Booklet
USD	U.S. Dollars
VLSS	Vietnam Living Standards Survey
VMS	Vietnam Migration Survey
VND	Vietnam Dong. At the time of my fieldwork in 2008-2010, the average exchange rate postulated that 1 USD was roughly equivalent to 17,000-19,000 VND. As of April 2014, 1 USD is equivalent of approximately 21,000 VND.
<i>Xe Om</i>	Motorcycle Taxi

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

This study explores how migrant families with school-age children, living in a low-income neighborhood of Hanoi, dynamically cope with their day-to-day and educational challenges within a set of constraints and opportunities established by market forces and governmental policies that affect migrants residing in urban destinations. Since it began to transition to a market economy in 1986 the Socialist Republic of Vietnam has undergone massive social changes, including a vast upsurge in free migration, increased bargaining power of cash, and rising levels of social segregation. Despite the expansion of opportunities in the city and increased population mobility as a result of marketization, the state's continued adherence to residence-based policies (which essentially bind one's permanent residence to the location of one's *ho khau* or household registration, and thereby one's entitlement to available public services in that locality) has largely trapped migrants within the informal sector. Within the education sector, the state's decision to introduce market-oriented incentives to education delivery and services, even in the sphere of compulsory primary and junior secondary education, along with the proliferation of private, supplementary lessons and monetary gifts to schoolteachers, has not only resulted in growing financial burdens for individual households; it also has undermined the state's professed commitment to universal access and equity in education. Consequently, migrant families are left with the choice of either paying extra fees for their children to receive mainstream, formal education or of settling for a non-formal, basic education, often provided outside the purview of state services. Moreover, the public discourse that often portrays migrants as a social burden, along with cultural presumptions underlying local residents' discriminatory attitudes toward rural migrants, has led to their stigmatization and marginalization in the city.

By looking at which economic, social, and cultural resources¹ are (and are not) accessible to migrant families, this study shows how migrant families use such resources to create a livelihood, survival strategies, and educational opportunities for their children, as well as the challenges that these families

¹ In this study, economic, social and cultural resources are defined as follows. The term *economic resources* refers to financial sources that may or may not be accessible to migrant populations, through either formal or informal channels, to help them cope with their economic struggles. While *social resources* can encompass rights and services that may or may not be granted to migrant populations within the domain of social policy, in this study special focus has been placed on the educational domain due to its emphasis on understanding the educational environment of children who were accompanied by their migrant parents to the city. *Cultural resources* refers to resources embedded in social relations and networks and thus deeply imbued with cultural values, ideas, and assumptions.

face. The study further attempts to show how the coping strategies of migrant families reveal the patterns of their social relations and ties with others in their urban destination: Hanoi. Drawing on ethnographic accounts of and interviews with both members of migrant families and associated community members including neighbors, school officials, nongovernmental organization workers, and local authorities, as well as on census data, reports, and research studies conducted by Vietnam-based organizations and scholars on the issues of internal migration, urban poverty, and education, this study seeks to understand the implications of the state's residence-based policies for disadvantaged migrants who often have been peripheralized in the city. It also considers what challenges Vietnam's transitional society is confronting, as it seeks to redress social inequity and to achieve better social integration of its migrants, plus what role education could play in opening up pathways of upward social mobility for migrant children over the long term.

This study builds upon the work done by Berry (1993), in the sense that it sees access to and use of resources as being shaped in a "mutually constitutive" way by economic, social and cultural dynamics. It goes on to suggest that understanding these three dimensions' interrelationships and the themes that permeate them, allows one to appreciate the processes of social differentiation and change. Based on these assumptions, the study looks specifically at three factors—the growing influence of market forces, the continuing practice of residence-based policies as exemplified in the state's adherence to the *ho khau* system, and migrant families' recourse to different social networks—all of which interact so as to form the social phenomena of rural-urban migration in Vietnam and thereby to peripheralize the migrant residents of Hanoi. By elucidating both the constraints upon, and the spaces created for the autonomy and negotiability, within its examination of the ways in which the three resources (economic, social, and cultural) are secured and used and how they reciprocally shape new forms of social division and inequality in the course of urbanization, the study seeks to fulfill the following two objectives: (i) to identify the factors fostering the marginalization and disintegration of migrants in the city, and (ii) to help pave the way forward an environment in which the city residents, regardless of their registration status or socioeconomic condition, could benefit more equally from living in the city, even in the face of Vietnam's transition to a socialist-oriented market economy.

State-society relations in Vietnam are and long have been undergoing substantial change, for the social and economic liberation policies of *Đổi mới* (renovation) have been taking effect since 1986. Via a series of liberalizing, pro-capitalist reforms the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV), which leads this one-party communist state, recently implemented its decennial Socio-Economic Development Strategy (SEDS). This socialist regime has made it clear that it aims to speed up industrialization and modernization so as to become a middle-income country by 2020 (CPV, 2010). While the new socialist-oriented market economy has, over the last two decades, opened up venues for Vietnam's economic growth and its integration into the global economy, accelerated rural-urban migration, as a corollary of the demise of the subsidy period and of collectivization, as well as of rising opportunities in the urban areas, has generated some stark social divisions within the urban centers. In the face of a dramatic influx of rural migrants into the cities, the continuing practice of residence-based policies as exemplified in the *ho khau* system, and a recent amendment designed to tighten the criteria for obtaining permanent residency in Hanoi seem to reflect a prevailing conception of migrants as constituting an impediment to the modernization of the city, a conception which itself serves to depreciate their role as a contributor to the city's ongoing development.

Since it was first introduced in 1955, the *ho khau* system has served as a mechanism of population management and of surveillance (keeping track of people's movements).² Essentially, people must live where they are registered as permanent residents; they are not allowed to relocate, either temporarily or permanently, without getting permission from the government. Both the degree of thoroughness in its enforcement and the nature of the consequences of not abiding by its regulations have changed over the years, as Vietnam has experienced political and economic transitions moving it from what the Vietnamese always refer to as "the American War" (1955-1975), through the national reunification and rationing period (1975-1986), to the time of economic liberation ensuing from the implementation of the *doi moi* reforms (1986 to present). During the initial phase, the primary objective of the *ho khau* system was to counteract the massive southward migration initiated by the exodus of anti-Communists, revolutionaries, and criminals as a result of the 1954 Communist victory over France (Hardy, 2001; Hoang, 2013). During the post-war rationing period the possession of *ho khau* was directly linked

² Further details on the development of the *ho khau* system in Vietnam will be provided in Chapter III.

to the allocation of daily necessities and jobs, as well as access to public services. The shift from a centralized, planned economy to a more market-oriented one reached a threshold with the termination of the subsidy phase with respect to population movement. A growing number of rural migrants, drawn to the urban centers in search of opportunities and having, or not having, formally acquired permission to relocate not only accelerated the trend of urban-ward migration but also undercut the function of the *ho khau* system as a population-control device.

And yet, despite some increased flexibility brought about by the relaxation of the system after the end of the subsidy period, *ho khau* continue to bind people to their place of permanent residence by retaining the tight link between one's registration status and one's access to rights and services in the registered location. Conversely, non-permanent residents—including temporary residents who are properly registered in the locality but for only a limited duration of stay and whose *ho khau* remains rural, as well as unregistered residents—do not have equal property rights or the same entitlement to access public schools and health services as do permanent residents. By the same token, non-permanent residents are charged higher fees for schools, medical services, and public utilities; they also largely are excluded from government subsidy programs for the poor, and debarred from utilizing formal credit sources.

While such exclusion of migrants from the economic and social benefits of city living have resulted from the urban growth taking place both across Asia (ODI, 2006) and globally, Vietnam is undergoing a particularly intense clash between free-market pressures and the socialist regime, with this not only triggering frustrations on the local administrative side but also heightening social tensions among city residents who have vastly unequal access to urban-sector services. In effect, the strict demarcation of residents based on their residential status and their places of origin seems to have fomented a pervasive distrust among the city's permanent residents, of their non-permanent migrant counterparts. Widespread perceptions of the latter as posing a threat to the social order leave them institutionally as well as culturally peripheralized.

When it comes to those migrant families who have been accompanied to Hanoi by school-age children, it can be unequivocally asserted that the educational environment of those children has been adversely affected by both the regulatory obstacles imposed by the government's ongoing implementation

of residence-based policies, and by the increased self-reliance and financial burdens resulting from the education reforms ushered in by *doi moi*. The state's withdrawal from its former role of sole and full-scale education service-provider, and its increasing tendency to rely heavily upon market-based education instruments, are showing up in the rise of private and semi-public schools, mounting school-related fees beyond just tuition, and the proliferation of "extra study": fee-charging supplementary, private class sessions provided by schoolteachers. The chief and sad consequence of all this is that migrant children too often are being left outside mainstream education.

At this juncture it seems wise to take a step back from the ongoing debates as to the efficacy of the residence-based policies in the post-*doi moi* period, at least long enough to reexamine the ideological underpinnings of the state's enduring endorsement of strategies for curbing rural-urban migration-flow. At a demographic level, despite the state's persistent attachment to the use of the *ho khau* system as a way of staving off urban-ward population mobility and thus staging a preemptive strike against overpopulation in the cities, the effort does not appear to be paying off. It is hard not to interpret thus the following finding: "According to the 2009 census, net migration from the countryside to the cities was 1.4 million people between 2004 and 2008. The figure was 770,000 people for the five years leading up to the 1999 census. This demographic shift is especially affecting Hanoi. Some 6.5 million people lived in the capital in 2009, compared with just 2.7 million a decade earlier—a 140 percent increase. During the same period, the total population of Vietnam rose by 12 percent." (Hoang, 2013). Among the new regulations included in the Capital Law that came into effect on July 1, 2013, is one that raises the bar of eligibility for permanent residency ("Ha Noi tightens residency criteria," 2013). Under the new rule, a migrant applying for permanent residency must prove that s/he has lived in Hanoi as a temporary resident for at least three consecutive years (as opposed to one year, as formerly prescribed), has a state job and/or a formal work contract, and owns a house or has settled in with relatives who already have a permanent residence in the city. If s/he lives in a rented accommodation, its average floor area must be at least 15 square meters per resident. The enforcement of the new scheme has stirred up controversy, with many critics questioning its feasibility. Their view is that the new policy will not help to stop the migration inflow but will merely make the lives of the migrant poor more difficult. As one critic has put it, "current shortcomings in migration are mainly due to poor management, not due to big migration" (Bao, 2012).

Notably absent from the current state discourse on migration is any mention of the fact that migrants have long been an important part of the city's economic growth, and any speculation as to how urban management could better be achieved in order to facilitate more equitable access to public services and a higher standard of living for both migrant and non-migrant residents. Instead the discourse is obsessively centered on the need to minimize inward migration, with the *idée fixe* being that migrants are to be blamed for placing excessive pressure on urban infrastructure, causing the deterioration of social order, and impeding the city's "beautification project" that is all about purveying an image of modernization and "middle-classness." One must ask, what is at the root of this lamentable lack of policy discussions within a socialist regime whose constitution professes the citizens equal rights in the political, economic, cultural, and social spheres. If we had a better understanding of what has caused the state to shy away from exploring ways to build an urban society whose members, regardless of their residential status, enjoy the benefits of urban living, have access to socioeconomic services, and gladly and without impediment participate in civil society, that would allow us to pinpoint the fundamental causes of a growing social segregation between, and an inequitable distribution of resources across, the city's residents.

Gaps in Existing Research

The existing research on the issue of urban-ward migration in Vietnam has two major streams. On the one hand, policy-oriented studies tend to highlight the vulnerability of migrants and their peripheral positions in the society (Le et al., 2011; Save the Children, U.K., 2006; UN Viet Nam, 2010a; 2010b; UNDP, 2010; UNFPA Viet Nam, 2007; UNICEF Viet Nam & MOLISA, 2009). In these studies the primary focus is on the regulatory obstacles imposed upon migrants, and on how the supposed need for them springs from the migrants' poor standard of living in the city (UN Viet Nam, 2010a). Thus they stress the need to revise the existing policies so as to better accommodate migrants, giving them improved access to government services and urban infrastructure. Non-policy-oriented studies, by contrast, are more inclined to illuminate how migrants strive to improve their livelihoods by making the most of their social networks throughout the migration process. These tend to emphasize those aspects of such networks that aid migrants' survival in the urban destination and help them to maintain their social ties (Agergaard & Thao, 2011; Hardy, 2001; 2003a; 2003b; Jensen et al., 2008). Both streams of work, however, are

successful in capturing what they set out to demonstrate: the socioeconomic marginalization of migrants constrained by permanent-resident-preferential policies, and the viability and resilience of migrants achieved through substantial recourse to social networks that provide them with valuable resources of information and support.

What seems to be lacking from the current literature is an assessment of the ongoing interplay between these two structural and cultural dynamics. The former type of study that points up the institutional restraints often fails to acknowledge that there is a certain amount of room for negotiation—or to put this matter more bluntly, numerous ways to circumvent the regulations. Too often it also fails to address the ideological assumptions embedded within both the continuing implementation of the state's preferential policies for permanent residents and the prevailing public discourse, in which migrants are portrayed as an undesirable influence on social life and as putting an intolerable strain on urban infrastructure. Conversely, the latter sub-group within the literature, with its emphasis upon migrants' contextually relevant responses and collective adaptations to socioeconomic deprivation via the development and preservation of informal networks as a vital source of strength risks, despite its cogent arguments, overlooking the potential of said internal collectivity of migrants to further their social segregation and stigmatization. It seems there is still much room left for a more vigorous investigation of the implications that a sense of internal connectedness among migrants have for the social positioning and (dis)integration of migrants within Hanoi's urban society. Staying within this vein, it can be suggested that looking at how such structural and cultural dynamics play out in the context of rapid urbanization within Vietnam's transitional society could shed some needed light on precisely which factors are impeding the making of those fundamental changes needed to offset the increasing social differentiation and the imbalanced access to, and distribution of, resources among the city residents.

On a more topical level, the existing field-based qualitative studies of internal migrants in Vietnam's two great cities of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City are concerned primarily with the lives of (i) those seasonal migrants who come to work temporarily in the urban centers with or without a spouse, while leaving their children behind in the countryside with their grandparents (Agergaard & Thao, 2011; Jensen et al., 2008), and (ii) the migrant children who work as street children (Burr, 2006; Hong & Ohno, 2007). The themes worthy of discussion raised by these studies include, among others, the gender roles and

household dynamics surrounding their decisions to migrate and the mobile livelihoods of those so-called “circular migrants” who move back and forth between the city and their home villages. Few studies have examined the livelihoods and sociocultural practices of the migrant families that took their children along to the cities, or of those who intend to reside in their urban destinations not just on a seasonal or temporary basis but for a longer period of time, or even permanently. In effect, as Jensen et al. (2008) indicated in their longitudinal study of the female roving street-vendors of Hanoi, seasonal or temporary migrants who have come to work without their immediate family members are not seeking permanent jobs in the cities.

Similarly, qualitative studies on migrant working children often are concerned with the social worlds of these children and their surrounding urban environment. These studies have not only identified the existence of diversified groups of working children in Vietnam but have cautioned us as to the misleading nature of the term *street children*, owing to the fact that most of those so called are not literally living or sleeping *on* the street but have homes to return to, during both their migration in the city (shelters or lodging houses) and their post-migration life in their home village. Nevertheless, it seems that too little attention is being paid to how migrant children who accompany their parents to the urban destination forge relationships with their parents and/or guardians, peer groups, neighbors, and others who surround them in their daily urban lives. While several policy-oriented studies have pointed to the major constraint on school-age migrant children—that they are not granted automatic admission to the local public school, owing to their temporary or non-registered residential status—they have focused chiefly on those regulatory aspects of schooling that discourage migrant children from becoming a part of the community, as opposed to on how such institutional dimensions interact with those social blights of post-migration stigmatization and disintegration to which migrant children are exposed.

In the next section the conceptual framework that provides the organizing structure of this study is presented.

Conceptual Framework

In synthesizing her analysis of the collected data and her interpretation of the themes that have emerged from it, the author of this study was inspired by theoretical and empirical works that helped her to understand how social structure and culture interact to shape or even to transform a society. More

specifically, the conceptual framework of the study is based on a set of theoretical and cross-cultural comparative studies concerned with the process of social change, whereby people interact with one another within both corporate (or institutional, *de jure*, public, formal) and non-corporate (or non-institutional, *de facto*, private, substantive/informal) domains, in a constant work-in-progress mode of adjustment and negotiation.

In *The Study of Social Structure* (1998), M. G. Smith presented a comprehensive, synthesized conceptual framework of social structure, comprised of a diverse set of intricately interrelated social elements. In so doing he revisited and examined the ways in which social structure had been understood and theoretically conceptualized by earlier social philosophers and social scientists. Taking inspiration from, among others, Max Weber and Marion Levy—the influence of the former being evident both in Smith’s conception of society as “a historical structure continuously in process of change and development, due both to its internal dynamics and its need to adapt to external exigencies of differing kinds” (p. 13) and in his identification of social relations with the mutual orientations of actors (p. 51), and the influence of the latter showing itself in the idea that concrete as opposed to analytical structures are present within social processes and entities—Smith conceived of society as “a dynamic complex of processes, collectivities, units and relations,³ embedded in an empirical context that has material, cultural, and social dimensions” (p. 60). His approach to social structure, one that strove to understand the ongoingly dynamic processes of social reality and change within which individuals interact with one another at two levels or aspects of human society—the culture, and the social organization—attested to his conviction that society and culture are inseparable (L. Comitas, personal communication, October 18, 2005). While social structure is embodied as an empirical reality comprised of “the particular arrangements of their groupings and relations in society” (p. 58), culture is manifested as “the set of values, ideas, beliefs and assumptions by which each people creates meaning” (p. 58). Careful observation of the nature and manner of people’s interactions and relationships would thus allow

³ In broad terms, Smith’s theorization of society may be said to have consisted of two major analytic categories: social processes and entities (Smith, 1998, pp. 60-61). Social processes are subdivided into the institutional (“regulated and supported by collective sanctions”; p. 62) and the non-institutional, whereas social entities are further classified into collectivities (“social aggregates with unclear boundaries and membership”; p. 71) and units (social entities with clear boundaries and exclusive and determinate membership).

ethnographers to delineate how various social groupings construct their surrounding environments via their culturally imbued perceptions of them (p. 55).

Smith's problematization of systematic, structural, or functional accounts of social reality stemmed from his observation of the "plural societies"⁴ prevalent in European colonies, where the diverse ethnic, linguistic, economic, and cultural differences of peoples bring the ruled into continual engagement with the rulers, as both parties seek to negotiate their conflicting interests and needs (Smith 1998, p. 3). By applying the notions of corporation and membership and of public (*de jure* or by law) and private (*de facto* or by practice) domain---ideas originally developed by Meyer Fortes---Smith was able to analyze the ways in which the members of a *plural society* who are set apart, even within the bounds of the private domain, by such diacritics as race, ethnicity, religion, and language, are incorporated into the public domain (L. Comitas, personal communication, October 18, 2005). The chief such way is the public regulative force of those corporations that differentiate their statuses and roles.

The conceptualization of society elaborated by Smith (1998) has been an invaluable aid to the present writer as she has sought to discern how the social phenomenon of urban-ward migration in Hanoi is taking place both at the interface of the interactive and relational dynamics and within the economic, social, and cultural arenas where people engage in a broad range of activities, both individually and organizationally. Of special use to this study has been Smith's conception of people's participation in multiple entities as revealing two distinctive membership types—"social units," characterized by their exclusive membership and sense of corporate unity, and "collectivities" that have ambiguous boundaries of membership and are deficient in the solidarity-sense. This has allowed the present writer to elucidate migrant families' associations with and dissociations from groupings having varying degrees of exclusivity and unity, and to show how the migrants ascribe cultural meanings and assumptions to all of their relations.

Furthermore, Smith's emphasis on the need to identify discrepancies between the public (*de jure*) and private (*de facto*) domains has helped the author to direct the reader's attention to the process whereby migrants continually engage in the negotiation of their interests and needs, and to show how that

⁴ Smith's idea of "plural societies" was influenced by Furnivall's *ecological determinism*, in which he used the term *pluralism* to refer to "the conditions in which members of a given society are divided on grounds of race, religion,

negotiation process derives from the disjunction between the entitlement of rights and resources, as prescribed in the constitutional laws, and their actual, manifestly unfair allocation and unequal distribution. Within the context of urban-ward migration in Vietnam, such instances of inconsistencies between constitutional prescriptions and everyday practices include, among other things, equal rights to access social services and formal education, and charge-free public primary education. The enforcement and practice of the *ho khau* system, and its associated residence-based policies, presents an interesting case in this regard. Its recent slight, but real, relaxation of sanctions against those not abiding by the regulations (i.e., migrants relocating without having acquired formal permission) might seem to indicate that migrants are being incorporated more extensively into the private domain, even as they remain excluded from the public domain simply by dint of being non-permanent residents. The truth of the matter, however, is that these migrants increasingly are being pushed to the margins of society within both the public and private domains, subject as they clearly are to social differentiation conditioned by institutional regulations and prevailing social stigmatization.

Smith's call for attention to the processual aspects of social change, whereby the fluid contents or segments of social institutions can be transformed over time by endogenous or exogenous stimuli that induce changes even while retaining the same larger institutional structures, has helped the present writer to understand how Vietnam's integration into the global economy, and the growing urban-ward migration characteristic of the post-*doi moi* period, have not entailed substantial changes on the structural level. These trends have rather led to the diversification of social networks and to increasing social differentiation and inequity among Hanoi residents.

Most vital, it seems, in helping us to grasp precisely which factors are perpetuating both the socialist regime's ongoing endorsement of residence-based policies and the effects of those on people's lives is the gaining of a deeper understanding of the ideological assumptions behind policymaking and practice. Only then can we hope to explicate how people engage in the process of determining what the policies mean to them, in their lived experience and in relation to their cultural practices. In their theorization of the anthropology of policy, Shore and Wright (1997) questioned the instrumentalist view of policy, which has a propensity to objectify it as an ideologically neutral, technical, and rational tool that

language, culture, ethnicity, history, ecology and social organization, separately or together" (L. Comitas, personal

policymakers use to govern populations, solve problems, and effect change. They proposed instead that implemented policies be studied via explorations of the ideological and politicized complexity of their operation. Bond (2002) argued that the manifest advantage of anthropological approaches to policy lies in their capacity to elucidate how policies, in the course of their formulation and implementation, affect the everyday lives of individuals and communities. In relation to the setting of this study, a careful observation of how the residence-based policies affect both people's everyday lives and those power-relations that structure both the state discourses and the mundane narratives on rural-urban migrants could demonstrate that policies are not something hegemonic but rather capable of functioning as a device that serves to empower some people but not others. By implicitly asking "Whose voices prevail?" and 'How are their discourses made authoritative?' (Wright, 1995, p. 79, as cited in Shore & Wright, 1997, p. 15) in the context of the ways in which migrants are portrayed and narrated in both formal and informal public discourse, this study will be attempting to show how such power-dynamics have created an imbalanced discourse and have thereby served to stigmatize migrants and to marginalize them within the city.

The study also has been informed by Sara Berry's approach to analyzing societies undergoing economic and social transformations, one that views them through the three lenses of culture, power, and material resources (Berry, 1993). In her comparative study of agrarian change in Sub-Saharan Africa, Berry focuses on tracing and analyzing the constantly negotiated and contested social processes involved in the mobilization and exercise of power, with special attention being paid to the allocation and use of time and productive resources among African farmers across a wide range of times and places. By using data drawn from her own fieldwork, done chiefly in western Nigeria, as well as secondary ethnographic and archival materials on the cocoa-farming areas of southern Ghana and southwestern Nigeria, the settler economy in central Kenya, and a rural labor reserve in northeastern Zambia, she has been able to show how the changing patterns of resource-access and resource-use within various agrarian systems bespeak the continuing, and growing, significance of social networks in the wake of colonial rule, while also pointing to the high cultural variability and the localized nature of such patterns.

communication, October 18, 2005).

The increased commercialization and political centralization (e.g., national land legislation and reforms privatizing the right to own land and other properties) brought about by both colonial and independent national governments did not lead to these institutions becoming the only hegemonic, *de jure* and *de facto* institutions having definite power and control over resource mobilization, allocation, and use in agrarian economies. Rather, these economies' responses to the disruptions brought about by socioeconomic change came in the form of the diversification and proliferation of both preexisting and newly created fluid, non-corporate social networks, as well as unequal degrees of participation and a high degree of individual and resource mobility (Berry 1993). This flexible, dynamic, and increasingly individually oriented coping or survival strategy, while showing resilience in spite of the challenges of extreme regional variability in topography, climate, and economic insecurity, has in turn exacerbated socioeconomic inequalities and has heightened instability within social networks and groups ranging across descent groups, chiefs, headsmen and their subjects, families, and self-help groups. The end-result is a scarcity of land and capital, and farmers' increased reliance on their own or hired labor.

Despite the variance in regional focus (e.g., agrarian change in rural Sub-Saharan Africa as contrasted with migration and urban change in a Southeast Asian city), Berry's analytical lenses have immensely helped the writer of this study to understand transitional societies. One of those lenses in particular has been invaluable, for Berry's emphasis on the role played by non-corporate social networks in mobilizing resources so as to counter socioeconomic uncertainty, and on their continuing importance as coping strategies, has enabled me to see that rural migrant families in Hanoi turn to informal networks because these grant them access to productive resources and economic opportunities. Post-colonial African farmers' localized patterns of resource-acquisition and network-formation tell us that they cope with increasing economic and political instability by diversifying their income-seeking activities and by participating in both corporate networks (e.g., descent groups) and non-corporate areas (e.g., hired farm labor, self-help groups) (Berry, 1993). A similar trend has been observed in Vietnam, ever since the advent of the economic reforms. As will be further described in the ensuing chapters, rural migrant families in Hanoi do indeed strategize their livelihood strategies so as to secure resources, doing so primarily by forging bonds within multiple social networks. Such social connections include those of common origin, migrant neighbors, NGOs, and individual foreign benefactors. Thus, Berry's emphasis on

the increasing shift to more flexible and individually oriented coping mechanisms, brought on by unpredictable market conditions that have exacerbated socioeconomic inequalities, is one that the present study can only underscore yet again. In Vietnam, the state's transition toward a so-called "socialist-oriented market economy" has not only prompted greater self-reliance with respect to resource-mobilization; it also has heightened social differentiation and inequality across and within social networks, thereby socioeconomically marginalizing the unregistered migrants, who have only limited access to formal and informal networks.

Organization of the Study

This study is divided into eight chapters. Chapter I presents the objectives of and rationale for the study, assesses the existing studies on urban-ward migration in Vietnam while noting their research gaps, and describes the conceptual framework that structures and informs the study. Chapter II sets out the background to the study by tracing the course of internal migration in Vietnam through the pre- and post-war periods, and by taking note not only of the establishment and evolution of the *ho khai* system but of how its role is changing in response to the increased population mobility brought on by the economy's marketization. Chapter III introduces the context of the field site and the research setting. The chapter also explains how "migrants" are defined within the parameters of the Vietnamese official census and thereby reveals its failure to accurately depict the experiences of groups of people on the move, especially those of the temporary and the unregistered migrants. By illustrating the familial and living circumstances of the underprivileged residents in the study site, the chapter provides the reader with a snapshot of the livelihoods of two families who participated in the study. Chapter IV identifies the trends and patterns of migrants' mobilization in its relation to their quest to obtain economic resources. It underscores the migrants' limited access to economic resources via formal channels, and thus their propensity to turn to informal credit sources and, in some cases, to rely heavily upon their working children, in the informal sector, to be the breadwinners. Chapter V begins by giving an account of the historical development of school education in Vietnam prior to marketization, then points to the *de jure* and *de facto* discrepancy between most people's and migrants' access to social resources. The contrast it draws, after looking at the overall education system in Vietnam, between the legislatively stipulated right of access to education and those financial and regulatory conditions which constrain migrant children,

reveals how much harder it is for the latter, as opposed to their permanent-resident counterparts, to gain access to mainstream education. So as to exemplify a type of alternative education and its associated challenges, the chapter presents a case study of a “charity class,” a fee-free literacy class catering to socioeconomically disadvantaged and migrant children residing within Hanoi’s so-called the Thanh Ninh area.⁵ Chapter VI, which focuses on cultural resources, looks at migrant families’ attempts to build up social relations and networks within the destination area, and shows the wide variances with respect to amount of material, financial, and moral support and degree of social collectivity and interpersonal trust. In addition, the chapter reveals the existence, in the study site as well as in Hanoi’s wider society, of a multi-layer structure of inclusion, operative both between migrants and non-migrants and among the migrants themselves. It also explores how such inter- and intra-differentiation of residents serves—by working in tandem with the ascription of cultural traits to each differentiated group—not only to exacerbate the social stigmatization of underprivileged migrants but also to hamper their development of a sense of belonging to the local community. Building on the findings and discussions of Chapters IV, V, and VI, Chapter VII identifies the continuities and changes that characterize migrant families’ resource-mobilization and their coping strategies in the context of post-*doi moi* Vietnam. The chapter also examines the factors animating the state’s adherence to residence-based policies and its propagation of that discourse, both of which undermine the social position of migrants in the city. Chapter VIII summarizes the major findings and discussions of the study and offers some suggestions about its policy implications. The chapter culminates by presenting the limitations of the study and by pointing to some avenues that I may wish to go down when pursuing future research.

⁵ My pseudonym for this study’s research site, which is one of the popular destinations for rural migrants undertaking a short- or long-term migration to Hanoi.

CHAPTER II: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

This chapter's presentation of the background to the study has two basic thrusts. First, it shows how the patterns of internal migration in post-war Vietnam have been transformed, during both the post-reunification period (1975-1986) and the post-*doi moi* period (1986-present). Second, it reveals how the *ho khau* system, first established in 1955, has evolved over the years in parallel to increasing population mobility.

Internal Migration in Pre-War Vietnam

Internal migration in Vietnam has, throughout its modern history, been intimately linked with its political context. Historical evidence suggests that geographically, southward migration has been the more common practice owing to "the lack of agricultural lands in north Vietnam and the central coast's unsuitability for paddy rice cultivation" (Dang et al., 2003, p. 2). One exception in the north was the Red River Delta. With its abundance of natural resources rendering it conducive to agricultural production, the region has attracted migrant settlers from other areas. During the French colonial period (1858-1954), the chief pattern of domestic population-movement was that of circular migration: farmers moving between rural areas during the slack periods of the agricultural cycle (Thompson, 1968, as cited in Le & Khuat, 2008). Also, albeit to a lesser extent, this period saw some "rural to urban migration of landless people [and] low-cost labour movement between rural villages and the colonial plantation/mining zones" (Dang et al., 2003, p. 2). The movement to and from the colonial plantations and mining zones was characteristically a compulsory migration from northern villages (Le & Khuat, 2008, p. 31).

While internal migration in northern Vietnam during the colonial period was facilitated both by one's village networks and family relations and opportunities created by the colonial regime, out-migration from Red River Delta villages was relatively uncommon. Hardy (2003a) asserted that the colonial administration must be held responsible for the low rate of out-migration from the Red River Delta given the large number of landless in the region, people who might have achieved social and economic upward mobility if they had decided to leave their villages. Unfortunately, the colonial government imposed undue political control via administrative mechanisms that discouraged people from detaching themselves from their villages. These mechanisms included the reinforcement of the registration of male villagers for tax

collection,⁶ and the issuance, nominally, for security purposes,⁷ of tax receipts and identification cards “required for border crossing and administrative tasks” (Hardy, 2003a, p. 123). Hardy further argued that the popular discourse, suggesting that peasants have special psychological and social attachments to their home regions where their ancestors are buried and their kin live, helped to legitimize a French administration that aimed to bind people to their villages and yet has failed to explain why few landless people out-migrated during the colonial period.

The two-state period commencing in 1954, followed by the American War that lasted from 1956 to 1975, saw some greatly reshaped internal migration patterns with significant regional variations. Shortly after the French withdrew from Indochina after their defeat at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954, and the subsequent signing of the Geneva Accords in the same year, Vietnam was divided into the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the north, led by the Viet Minh, a communist national independence coalition, under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh, and the Republic of Vietnam in the south (Dang et al., 2003, p. 2). The breaching of the Accords, instigated by repeated refusals on the part of Ngo Dinh Diem (first president of the Republic of Vietnam) to hold national elections in 1956 to reunify the country, would result in full-blown war. Southern Vietnam saw rapid urban growth,⁸ owing to the increasing insecurity in its rural areas (Le & Khuat, 2008) and people’s natural desire to avoid contact with northern forces (Dang et al., 2003). This urban-bound migration, with rural migrants taking up street jobs in the cities (e.g., peddling, shoe-shining, street-vending), led to a burgeoning of that sidewalk economy in the informal sector.⁹ By the end of the war it was “the largest single source of non-farm civilian employment in South

⁶ In the wake of a series of administrative changes, all men over 18 were eventually forced to pay a head tax, whereas the “women were neither taxed nor identified” (Hardy, 2003a, p. 122).

⁷ Under French colonial rule anyone wanting to leave her/his village, even temporarily, had to seek the permission of the village head (Hardy, 2003a). Permission was contingent upon people’s proving that they had paid their tax by presenting their tax receipts and ID cards.

⁸ The urban population in the south reportedly expanded from 15 to 20 percent of the total population in the early 1960s to 47 percent by 1974 (Le & Khuat, 2008).

⁹ In this study I adopt the definition of *informal sector* developed by Cling et al. (2010): “all unregistered unincorporated enterprises (called informal household businesses)” (p. 49). Although it excludes farm activities (agriculture, forestry, and fisheries), this definition combines the descriptions of the informal sector formulated at both the international and the local levels: “broadly characterised as consisting of units engaged in the production of goods or services with the primary objective of generating employment and incomes to the persons concerned,” as defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO, 1993, para. 5.); and a “household business without business registration, primarily due to its income below the standard level, as conceptualized in business legislation in Vietnam” (Cling et al., 2010, pp. 48-49). According to the calculations done by Cling et al. (2010) of job distribution by institutional sector in Vietnam (based upon results of the 2007 Labor Force Survey), out of a Vietnamese workforce

Vietnam” (Kolko, 1985, as cited in Le & Khuat, 2008, p. 33). By contrast the north experienced much slower urban growth,¹⁰ due in part to the evacuation of city-dwellers to rural areas where they could avoid the U.S. bombing of cities and industrial bases (Dang et al., 2003; Le & Khuat, 2008). Playing an even bigger role, perhaps, was the initiation in 1961 of the New Economic Zones (NEZs; details on these follow in the next section). These sought to redistribute population more evenly geographically by encouraging people to migrate from lowland to upland and from urban to rural areas, and succeeded well enough to contribute to the decline of the urban population.

Internal Migration in Post-War Vietnam

Post-war Vietnam has witnessed massive population movements in two very different types of flow: organized migration and spontaneous migration. As the government policy in Vietnam recognizes it, organized migration occurs via government-sponsored resettlement programs and normally entails a permanent change of residence (Dang, et al., 2003). Spontaneous migration, on the other hand, signifies relocation of individuals who migrate at their own behest and their own cost. While organized migration has been supported and encouraged by the government so as to consolidate the State, redistribute population, and effect regional planning, spontaneous migration has been discouraged by raising fears of overpopulation in urban centers and unmanageability of population mobility. As will be illustrated below, in the mid-1980s the introduction of *doi moi* and its associated reforms, which prompted a huge upsurge of spontaneous migration from rural to urban areas, marked a turning-point in the dynamic of population movement.

estimated at 46.2 million people, close to 11 million cite jobs held in the informal sector as their main job. This number represents 23.5% of the total labor force and thus comes in second after agriculture (50%) (p. 74) and ahead of the public sector (10.7%), which ranks third. When one takes into account the common Vietnamese practice of multiple-job-holding, the informal sector share, comprised of both main and secondary jobs, makes up 22.7% of the total and represents 12.413 out of 52.636 million jobs (p. 75). Such figures are compelling but in a certain sense not compelling enough, for we must never forget that owing to its intrinsic nature, jobs in the informal sector often slip through the net of formal administrative regulations (Salemink, 2003, p. 48). The informal sector comprises all kinds of businesses and services that are conducted outside the formal employment sector, ranging from street-peddling and petty trading of food, drinks, souvenirs, sundry goods, clothes, and underwear to a variety of service offerings: motorcycle taxi, casual labor, domestic helper, prostitution, etc. Some less visible but nonetheless widely prevalent jobs include sorting through garbage to unearth recyclable goods and thereby reap a small profit and the provision of “extra study” (fee-charging supplementary, private classes after hours) by schoolteachers seeking to augment their minimal incomes.

¹⁰ The urban share of the northern population increased incrementally: “7.4 percent by 1955, 10.9 percent in 1965, and 12.2 percent in 1975” (Le & Khuat, 2008, p. 34).

Population Movements in the Post-Reunification Period (1975-1986)

While most people are aware that the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 marked a defining moment of history, both in Vietnam and globally, few realize that the reunification of Vietnam as a socialist state entailed a massive two-pronged population movement: a repatriation of southerners to their native villages, and the formation of those government-mandated resettlement areas known as the New Economic Zones (NEZs) (Dang et al., 2003). At the core of the State's post-reunification migration policy have been its efforts to redress an uneven distribution of population between north and south and between the Red River delta and the mountainous regions of the western frontier, as well as to prevent excessive urbanization of the big cities. To this end the large-scale migration and relocation of people, from urban to rural and from rural to rural areas, was planned and organized in conjunction with the development of NEZs, all of it serving the State's interest in promoting the industrialization of unexploited highlands. The southward resettlement of northern urban lowlanders to rural highlands not only implicitly endorsed the reunification of the new State, strategically inciting sentiments in favor of consolidation of north and south, but unwillingly promoted the sedentarization of ethnic minority groups (Hardy, 2003b; Save the Children, U.K., 2006).

While there can be no doubt that the policy of establishing NEZs has substantially boosted population movement to rural areas, it has had mixed results. On the one hand the State's direct intervention has not merely generated a large-scale urban-rural resettlement, involving as many as 3.92 million people who migrated to the targeted rural areas between 1976 and 1990 (Save the Children, U.K., 2006); it also has prompted the relocation of nearly 50,000 ethnic minority families (267,580 people) by 1982 to sedentarized settlements (Hardy, 2003b). On the other hand, the practice of pushing ahead with resettlement plans without first ensuring sufficient availability of cleared land, physical and social infrastructure, and health and food security has substantially slowed migration to the NEZs (Dang et al., 2003). According to Desbarats (as cited in Dang et al., 2003, p. 3), "[a]s many as half the migrants to NEZs have been reported to have moved again or to have returned home soon after arrival."

Migration Patterns and Trends in the Post-Doi Moi Period (1986-Present)

The introduction of the *doi moi* (renovation) policy in 1986, when taken in tandem with the largely failing results of the State-mandated migration policy as of the early 1990s, has led to a significant alteration in type of population-flow within Vietnam: a shift from urban-rural and rural-rural organized migration to rural-

urban spontaneous migration. The *doi moi* reforms represent Vietnam's shift from a centralized command economy to a more market-oriented one (UN Viet Nam, 2010a). Among the major *doi moi* reforms are the abandonment of the subsidy system that had been tightly linked to one's lawful residence through the *ho khau* system¹¹ and the decollectivization of agriculture via the introduction of the household contract system. The latter reform, which allowed contracting households to sell surplus (beyond the contractual production of a specified quota) grown on their redistributed cooperative land (Dang et al., 2003), led to the unintended emergence of a land market as farmers began to sell, transfer, or lease their lands (NCSSH, 2001; UN Viet Nam, 2010a). Thus the abandonment/relaxation of preexisting systems and the introduction of new regulations predicated on market-economy-facilitated conditions allowed people to move more freely and flexibly, the result of which has been a decline of the agricultural sector and a concomitant urbanward migration.

On the economic front, the *doi moi* reforms have ushered in a proliferation of foreign direct investment (FDI) and booming industrialization. Despite the attenuation of FDI in-flows in recent years,¹² the increasing dispersal of market forces driven by *doi moi* has fostered an FDI-attracting environment and thereby incentivized such export-oriented, labor-intensive manufacturing industries as textile and garments, footwear and furniture. While the *doi moi* reforms have to a great extent supported Vietnam's rapid economic growth and industrialization, the concentration of the industrial and manufacturing sectors in urban areas, and the upsurge of economic opportunities in the informal sector that has sprung up there, have unquestionably accelerated the out-migration of rural labor.

Not only has migration been a major contributor to urban growth but its high-rate contribution¹³ to the population growth of the country's two largest cities, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, suggests that the dynamic of internal migration has always been strongly linked to the urbanization produced by the flow of

¹¹ We will see in the next subsection how *ho khau* was introduced and how it has evolved in Vietnam.

¹² In the wake of the 2008-2009 global economic crisis, and after hitting a record high of 64 billion USD of registered FDI capital at the trend's peak in 2008, Vietnam has experienced a decrease of FDI in-flows (Nguyen, February 18, 2013). In 2012, the figure dropped to approximately 13 billion USD.

¹³ Between 1994 and 1999, over 50% of the population growth was attributed to migration to Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City (GSO & UNFPA Viet Nam, 2005). More recently some other regional cities have begun to attract migrants as their place of destination, such as "Can Tho City, Long Xuyen, Cau Mau in the Mekong Delta, as well as emerging economic centres such as Quang Ninh, Binh Duong and Dong Nai" (UN Viet Nam, 2010a, p. 26).

people to selected urban centers having higher levels of economic opportunity (GSO & UNFPA Viet Nam, 2005).

What characterizes migration in the post-*doi moi* period, in addition to its increased spontaneity and the change in the types of flow, is the diversification of migration patterns. Among the best-recognized patterns of migration movements are the seasonal, circular, temporary, and permanent ones. Seasonal migration usually takes place in accordance with agricultural cycles: people migrate during the slack seasons on the farm so as to engage in non-agricultural work and supplement their incomes, returning to farming at harvest time. While seasonal migration is not a particularly new social phenomenon in northern Vietnam, more, and more complex, market relations have been observed since the introduction of *doi moi*, as in the combination of agricultural production at harvest time and outward migration during the agricultural off-season (Hardy, 2003b). Circular migration occurs when migrants move back and forth between their place of destination and of origin; such trips range from daily or weekly commutes to virtual hejiras lasting for several months or even years (ODI, 2006). Seasonal and circular migration may be considered types of temporary migration, in the sense that both presume the migrant's intention of returning, but not all temporary migration can be classified as either seasonal or circular. At the opposite end of the spectrum from temporary migration is permanent migration; in this case people migrate to the destination area intending to resettle for good, as opposed to returning to their place of origin or relocating to another area in the future.

The variations in backgrounds of the populations constituting internal migrants¹⁴ should also be noted. These include but are not limited to age group, gender, and marital status (Save the Children, U.K., 2006). Even though the demographic snapshot of migrants provided by the 1999 Census¹⁵ indicated the dominance of single youths, more recent studies suggest a greater degree of both diversification and compartmentalization within Vietnam's internal migrant population. Some sectors, such as the textile garment and service areas, attract a large number of female migrants who work in factories or as domestic helpers (UN Viet Nam, 2010a).

¹⁴ Although the issue of international migration is beyond the scope of the present study, it is worth mentioning that a growing number of Vietnamese migrants are seeking opportunities, both short- and long-term, in overseas labour markets.

Within the informal sector, comprised of migrants working in cities, there is a notably increasing presence of female petty traders. Since the late 1980s many of the food stalls have been taken up by women who have turned their homemade delights such as *pho* (rice noodle soup) and *bun cha* (“mini kebabs on noodles” (Hayton, 2010, p. 51)) into street-vending staples (Hayton, 2010). The prevalence of food stalls in the cities has spawned, or at least been mirrored by an expansion of other informal enterprises undertaken predominantly by female migrants: roaming vendors hawking such products as fruit and vegetables, clothes, underwear, and sundry goods on a pole; and collectors of garbage and recyclable goods such as papers, cardboard, and glass and plastic bottles. Similarly, Agergaard and Thao (2011) report in their study of migrant porters working within Hanoi’s informal labor market that a significant gender difference exists with respect to the family situation of their respondents. Not only was the average age of female porters (40) notably higher than that of their male counterparts, but there was a great variance in their marriage status. “[A]ll except one of the female porters were married, while a third of the male porters were unmarried” (Agergaard & Thao, 2011, p. 626). Moreover, according to a study jointly conducted by GSO and UNFPA Viet Nam (as cited in UN Viet Nam 2010a, p. 23), nearly 38 percent of migrant respondents in the 2004 Vietnam Migration Survey (VMS) indicated that they moved along with their families, indicating an emerging trend of family, as opposed to single-male or single-female, migration.

Despite all of the variations identified within the demographics on internal migration, it is the economic factor that appears to be the foremost one driving migrants to move urbanward in the context of post-*doi moi* Vietnam. According to the 2004 VMS, 70 percent of internal migrants responded that they had migrated for economic reasons such as seeking employment opportunities and improving their living condition. The high under- and unemployment rates in rural areas, caused by both the shortage of farming and non-farm opportunities and the lack of stability in the agricultural sector, explain why rural migrants seek urban employment in the hope of garnering a higher income (Dang et al., 2003). The income disparity, between the major cities of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City and the nation’s rural areas, is reportedly on the order of five or even seven to one (Guest, 1998).

¹⁵ The 1999 Census figures and other currently available official statistics do not, however, include either unregistered migrants or most of the temporary migrants. This issue will be discussed in more depth later in the chapter.

Furthermore, economic motivations to migrate often spring from migrant families' strategies to cope with economic insecurity and to maximize their family incomes (Dang et al., 2003; UN Viet Nam, 2010a). As urbanization surges at a fast pace, a clash is emerging between it and the socialist State's migration policy, with its ongoing emphasis on discouraging urbanward migration and diminishing the massive inflows of rural migrants being driven by the new market-oriented economy (Save the Children, U.K., 2006). As outlined in this section, spontaneous migration had by the mid-1990s replaced the government-led planned migration as the predominant population movement; nonetheless, administrative concerns have arisen as to the capacity of the State to oversee the ever-shifting population dynamics (Hardy, 2003b). One is inevitably driven to wonder what lies at the root of this negative association of urbanization strictly with a high inflow of migrants to the cities. In order to further examine the growing tension between the new dynamic of population mobility and the felt need to impose upon it some administrative control, we must first take a closer look at the *ho khau* system, which has been the foundation of population management in Vietnam for over a half-century. The next section first provides the reader with an overview of *ho khau*, the focus being on how it was brought into Vietnam and how it has evolved ever since. It then points to emerging issues associated with *ho khau* that warrant attention here in the post-*doi moi* period.

The Ho Khau System: Its Origins and Evolution

The implementation in 1955 of *ho khau*, the household registration system, grew out of administrative concerns vis-à-vis security and population management, prompted by the massive southward migration of nearly 1 million people in the previous year (Save the Children, U.K., 2006). The year 1954 marked the signing of the Geneva Accords, which concluded the First Indochina War and formalized the military defeat and withdrawal of the French. And yet the division of Vietnam into North and South—a communist state led by Ho Chi Minh in the North and a new democratic state proclaimed by Ngo Dinh Diem in the South—had the unforeseen effect of negating the Accord's stipulation that nationwide elections be held in 1956 to reunify the country.

Patterned upon a Chinese model of household registration known as *hukou*, the Vietnamese *ho khau* system became a tool used to control population mobility and curtail migration undertaken at the prompting of economic or political incentives (Hardy, 2003b). Initially, in 1955, *ho khau* was applied to

urban households, and beginning in 1960 it was spread throughout the countryside (Le et al., 2011). Under the system each household was (and continues to be) required to register its members with the local police, as well as to report any changes in the residents' living and residential status (e.g., births, deaths, and migrations) (Hardy, 2003b). The household registration booklet or *so ho khau* was to be used to record such information as "the names, sex, date of birth, marital status, occupation of all household members and their relationship with the household head" (Le et al., 2011, p. 5). Thus the nationwide implementation of *ho khau* not only allowed the government to impose tighter control over mobility but led to the formation of "local surveillance networks" (Hardy, 2003b, p. 109), designed to ensure that people maintain residences strictly in their registered locations. When taken in combination with *ly lich* (reports about one's political activities and family background) and *ho tich* (records of the births, deaths, marriages, ethnicity, religion, and occupation of every household member), the *ho khau* system has been seen as functioning as a surveillance mechanism, seeking to eradicate any budding subversive movement (Hardy, 2001; Save the Children, U.K., 2006).

The trend toward collectivization that commenced in 1958 and that placed more restrictions on spontaneous mobility further decreased people's incentives to migrate. Allocation of the economic and social benefits linked to one's membership in the cooperative was carried out via the *ho khau* system, with permission to undertake rural-urban migration being officially granted only to those who had landed state jobs or who were consolidating their families via such a transfer.

During the coupon-rationing period that came prior to *doi moi*, both the provision of such daily necessities as food and other commodities and access to such social services as education and health were contingent upon proper compliance with the *ho khau* system (Le et al., 2011). As Le et al. (2011) put it, "the *ho khau* was used not only as a system of identification, but also for controlling access to rights and services" (p. 5).

Subsequent to the reunification of Vietnam in 1975, *ho khau*, along with the newly established NEZs, served as the backbone of the centralized State's regional planning and population-redistribution programs (Hardy, 2001; Le et al., 2011). As previously noted, the government-led resettlement plans were designed to boost the economic productivity of those living in the uplands and other rural areas by directing lowland residents to resettle there permanently, even while restricting urbanization. In short,

during the subsidy period *ho khau* grew into an effective mechanism wielded by the State's central planning system to tighten the linkage between one's formally encoded identification and one's access to rights, services, and employment (Save the Children, U.K., 2006).

Vietnam's economic transition into the market system, ever since the initiation of the *doi moi* reforms and the decollectivization trend of the mid-1980s, has reached a threshold in the sense that *ho khau* has revealed itself to be the fundamental means of controlling population mobility and of doing regional planning. The plethora of employment opportunities in Vietnam's urban areas, occasioned by rapid economic development, has drawn a flood of rural migrants into the cities. The growth of non-state sectors, as seen in the development of private enterprises and the rise of the informal economy, has facilitated and accelerated urbanward migrations. The emergence of private enterprises has opened up a labor market for migrants without permanent residency, thereby breaking the link between one's residential status and access to employment (Save the Children, U.K., 2006). So too, thriving opportunities within the urban informal sector is luring more and more rural migrants into seeking ways of generating income outside of agricultural work. It seems one can conclude, therefore, based on the migrants' increased flexibility and mobility, that *ho khau*, as an institutional device intended to inhibit urbanization and manage population movement, has passed its heyday. At the very least it comes as no surprise, especially given the lackluster results of the government-led resettlement programs as exemplified by the NEZs of the early 1990s, that the efficacy of the *ho khau* system, as the supposed backbone of state regional planning, is being challenged. Economic expansion, facilitated by the transition from a centrally planned to a market economy, seems to have a mind of its own.

And yet, despite its decreased extent of control over people's mobility, *ho khau* continues to exert a powerful influence upon their lives via the link between one's registration status and one's access to rights and services in the registered location. Indeed we have seen that *so ho khau*, or the household registration book, is required for all sorts of administrative procedures, which include but are not limited to purchase and registration of such essential properties as housing, land, and motor vehicles; installation of phone lines; borrowing money from banks; registration of marriages and children's births; and access to formal schooling and subsidized medical care, water and electricity (Le et al., 2011; UN Viet Nam, 2010a). The State's rigid stance stipulating that population management and residency are to be confirmed strictly

through the *ho khau* system is summarized in the Decree No.51/CP dated 10 May, 1997, and the Circular 06/TT/BNV issued in the same year by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. In these legislative statements, *ho khau* is viewed as “a measure of administrative management of the State to determine the citizens’ place of residence, ensure the existence of their rights and obligations, enhance social management, and maintain political stability, social order and safety” (Le et al., 2011, p. 6). As the system of *ho khau* now stands therefore, entitlement to government services is restricted by one’s residential status (UN Viet Nam, 2010a): while permanent residents are granted a maximum level of privileged rights and social protection, those without permanent residency or proper registration are very much left out of the government’s schemes.

The socialist State’s persistent emphasis on population management, which discourages spontaneous urbanward migration in an attempt to restrict rapid urban population growth, has been a source of much frustration at the local administrative level. Massive inflows of migrants into urban centers, with the concomitant need for social infrastructure and administrative services, have imposed considerable pressures on city administrations (Save the Children, U.K., 2006). Yet without effective measures or regulatory guidelines that they could use to alleviate such free-market pressures, city authorities carrying out day-to-day administrative tasks related to inward migration understandably express concern and even resentment. Hardy (2003b), for instance, cites a remark made by an official from the Labor Department: “Nowadays, we do not yet have a policy for the administration of people registering to live in cities, but only the household registration management policy [i.e., the Decree No.51/CP, issued on 10 May, 1997]. . . . But in reality in the market system, management of the process of free migration to the city cannot escape influences from many directions, and lies in the realm of general urban administrative policy” (p. 132).

What is alarming about the continued reliance upon the *ho khau* system, even in the post-*doi moi* era, is that the State’s migration policy, with its emphasis on restricting urbanization via the formulation of administrative measures designed to diminish the flow of unmanaged inward migration to the cities, not only underestimates the role of non-permanent and unregistered migrants as a driving force of economic growth; it also heightens those migrants’ vulnerabilities and risks by hindering them from gaining full access to rights and services tied to *ho khau* and preferentially enjoyed by their permanent-resident

counterparts. Moreover, and as will be further illustrated in the ensuing chapters, the habit of undervaluing and excluding migrants through the institutional mechanism of *ho khau* has become intimately intertwined with social stigmatization of migrants as constituting a “shady existence” and thereby a threat to permanent city residents and to their urban environment. Such negative conceptualizations of migrants point to a risk of *ho khau* becoming a social device all too conducive to furthering social disparities (UN Viet Nam, 2010b) and thereby increasing the marginalization of migrants.

Under the *ho khau* system the Vietnamese population has been classified into categories according to their residential status, granting them only the explicitly associated rights. Prior to 2007 there were four categories of residents: KT1, those with permanent registration in the district of current residence; KT2, those without permanent registration in the district of current residence but registered at another district of the same province/city (i.e., intra-district migrants); KT3, those without permanent registration at the place of current residence but with a temporary residence permit of 6-12 months with possible extension; KT4,¹⁶ those without permanent registration at the place of current residence but with a temporary residence permit of less than six months. Apart from these four categories of residents, there were unregistered residents who resided in another district or province without registration while their permanent registration remained in their place of origin; these individuals were not captured statistically by official figures (UNDP, 2011). Among such unregistered residents were people who had lost their original registration records and thereby become undocumented.

In 2005, some legislative changes were made to *ho khau* with respect to changing residency. These included reforms implemented via the effectuation of Prime Minister Decree No. 108/2005/ND-CP issued on August 19, 2005, which moderately eased the conditions for migrants (mainly those in the KT3 category) to gain KT1 residential status by reducing the required duration of continual residency from five to three years and by eliminating the requirement of owning a house (Save the Children, U.K., 2006; UN Viet Nam, 2010a). Still, the renewed conditions to gain KT1 residency status, including residence in a

¹⁶ KT4 were distinct from KT1-KT3, in that they were registered as individuals without a family (UN Viet Nam 2010a). Seasonal workers and students residing temporarily in a province different from that of their permanent registration, generally fell into this category (UNDP, 2011).

“legal house”¹⁷ and having a stable job and continuous residence for years, remained hurdles too high for many prospective candidates to clear.

The enforcement of the new Law on Residence passed in 2007 reduced the number of residence categories to two: temporary and permanent (UN Viet Nam, 2010a). The legislative changes also brought a relaxation of the conditions for obtaining permanent residency in centrally administered cities. Temporary residents became eligible to switch to permanent residency if they could provide a proof of one year of uninterrupted employment and residence, instead of three years of continuous residence as previously had been required. Moreover, the old requirement of legal employment was dropped. Still, it has been reported that a certain amount of inconsistency exists in the application of the 2007 Law on Residence across the country. While local authorities in Hanoi appear to be more rigorous in using the new residential categories, those in Ho Chi Minh City allegedly still are applying the old four categories of KT1-KT4. This inconsistent application of the legislative changes seems to reflect both an absence of administrative guidance given to local authorities and a lack of consensus as to interpretation of the law across the various stakeholders.

Of more concern to temporary migrants is a returning trend toward tightening conditions for migrants to Vietnam's large cities. The initial draft of the Capital Law of 2010 included reforms that would have significantly raised the bar for permanent residency in Hanoi, making the minimum duration of continuous residence not one year but five years and requiring proofs of an earned salary of twice the minimum wage and of legality of employment (UN Viet Nam, 2010a). Even though the drafted reforms eventually were dropped prior to the consideration of the draft Capital Law by the National Assembly, the impulse that prompted their inclusion bespeaks the nation's ongoing skepticism as well as “political schism” (UN Viet Nam, 2010a, p. 19) with regard to the issue of temporary migration to urban cities. Three years after its initial drafting, the Capital Law came into effect on July 1, 2013, prescribing the required minimum duration of residence in the city in order to apply for permanent residency as three consecutive years, as opposed to one year as formerly stipulated (“Ha Noi tightens residency criteria,” 2013; “Hanoi to tighten immigration rules,” 2012; “Migration to Hanoi to be restricted from 2013,” 2012; Thao, 2012). The Law also stipulated that migrants must prove their continuous registration as temporary

¹⁷ “Legal house” here refers not only to legal ownership of a house but to a house-renting contract or some other such

residents if they wish to obtain contracts for state jobs or other types of formal employment or to have one of the specified and proper living arrangements: house ownership; living with relatives who are permanent residence-holders in the city; or renting an accommodation having an average floor area of at least 15 square meters per resident.

In what follows, the study will seek to determine how economic, social, and cultural resources have been accessed and used by migrants and what challenges their patterns of resource-mobilization present in the context of post-*doi moi* Vietnamese society. As will be illustrated in the next chapter, migrants' ability to gain access to economic resources through formal channels is rather limited, due to their having merely temporary or unregistered residential status in the city. In consequence, migrant families with limited ties to their home villages turn to off-the-books monetary sources in times of financial adversity, seeking to sustain themselves via unstable jobs within the informal sector.

form of written approval from a landlord.

CHAPTER III: FIELD SITE AND RESEARCH SETTING

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam: A Brief Overview

Vietnam, or as it is formally known the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, occupies the easternmost part of the Indochina Peninsula in Southeast Asia. With almost 90 million inhabitants (88.78 million, according to the 2012 census) living on approximately 330,000 square kilometers of ground, it is the thirteenth most populous country on the planet and has the third largest population in Southeast Asia after Indonesia and the Philippines. Vietnam is bordered by the South China Sea to the east, Cambodia to the southwest, Laos to the northwest, and China to the north (see Figure 1). The country has a surprising amount of climatic diversity, with four seasons in the north and in the south a subtropical climate that alternates between rainy and dry seasons. To its climatic and topographical diversity is added the ethnic sort, for Vietnam's diverse population is comprised of 54 officially recognized ethnic groups. The Kinh people, traditionally lowland wet-rice cultivators (Salemink, 2003), accounts for nearly 86 percent of the nation's overall population; the ethnic minorities, who represent only about 14 percent of the population and yet speak over a hundred languages, typically inhabit the upland, mountainous areas. Syncretism characterizes Vietnam's religious practices, for both major religions and a myriad of other belief systems have long held sway there (Salemink, 2003). Buddhism once was practiced as a major state doctrine "[d]uring the first centuries of Vietnam's independence from China" (Salemink, 2003, p. 35). Taoism and Confucianism, both of which originated in China, based their influence on moral and organizational principles and thrived from the early fifteenth century until the French occupation in the nineteenth century. In addition to these three long-established religions or belief systems, Christianity in its Catholic form was introduced into Vietnam during the sixteenth century but saw most of its growth in popularity only beginning in the nineteenth century. Mingled with these religious influences have always been a multitude of beliefs such as ancestor worship, animism, shamanism, spirit worship, and "superstitions" of all kinds.

Hanoi: Administrative and Sociological Space

As rapid urbanization and socioeconomic differentiation occurs among its residents, Hanoi, the capital city of Vietnam, is in the process of diversifying its space, both administratively and sociologically. Being the second largest city in the country after Ho Chi Minh City, its administrative area has been extended via



Figure 1. Map of Vietnam and bordering countries

Source: <https://www.google.com/maps/@16.68209,104.4738005,6z> (Google Maps, 2014)

expanded boundaries. According to Tien Phong Online (as cited in DiGregorio, 2011, p. 301), the Ministry of Construction announced in May 2008 “a long-term plan to merge 921 km² Hanoi province with

seven surrounding provinces to become a 'megacity' of nearly 13,436 square kilometres and 18 million people by 2050." Shortly after the promulgation of the plan in August 2008, Ha Tay province, one of the provinces formerly bordering Hanoi in the Red River Delta, became subsumed into Hanoi municipality, as did Vinh Phuc province's Me Linh district and Hoa Binh province's Dong Xuan, Tien Xuan, Yen Binh and Yen Trung communes (DiGregorio, 2011). This 2008 annexation doubled Hanoi's population and multiplied its municipal area by approximately 3.6 times; the merger also resulted in a rise of the city's population living in its rural areas from 35 percent in 2007 to 59 percent in 2008, thereby reversing the proportions of urban and rural population. As of 2012 the population of Hanoi stood at 6,844,100 and its area extended to 3,323.6 square kilometers (GSO, 2012a). Of the city's over 6.8 million people, 43 percent (2,931,300) are reported to live in urban areas and 57 percent (3,912,800) in rural areas (GSO, 2012b; GSO, 2012c).

Existing studies of the residential distribution in different parts of the city point to how its historical development during the colonial and post-colonial periods, and the urbanization processes that have transpired in more recent years, have shaped socially differentiated residential spaces within it (Kato & Nguyen, 2009; Nguyen, 2011). According to these studies, Hanoi is essentially comprised of five residential zones having very distinctive social characteristics: Old Quarter; French Colonial Quarter; urban residential areas that emerged during the subsidy period from the 1960s to the 1980s; new peri-urban residential areas developed after the 1990s; and the outer-dyke areas along the Hoa Hong River.

Situated in the heart of the city, the Old Quarter is believed to have come into existence with the 1010 relocation of the country's capital, by LyThai To under the rule of the Ly Dynasty, from Dai Viet to Thang Long (the current Hanoi). Alternatively called "Hanoi - 36 districts" (*Hà Nội - Ba mươi sáu phố phường*),¹⁸ the area historically has been a residential and commercial area comprised of streets that specialize in distinctive artifacts and products sold, such as *Pho Hang Bac* (silver street), *Pho Hang Gai* (silk street), *Pho Hang Ma* (paper-products street), and *Pho Hang Quat* (hand-crafted wooden seals street). Most of this area's residents are believed to be descendants of people who settled in before or during the French colonial period. Typically residing in cramped houses standing in longitudinal land-plots, these

¹⁸ According to a widely held explanation, use of the number 36 in this context is derived from the number of guild locations that existed in the area way back in the 15th century.

residents continue to rely heavily on manufacturing and/or merchandising crafts and other products they sell (Kato & Nguyen, 2009; Nguyen, 2011).

The French Quarter that surrounds the Old Quarter has long been the site of political and administrative headquarters (Kato & Nguyen, 2009). After the withdrawal of the French colonial government, villas, detached houses, and buildings of colonial architecture were taken over by the revolutionary government, which turned some of them into government offices and converted others into residential houses and apartments to be dwelt in by powerful government officials.

During the subsidy period, a new set of residential areas was built under the centrally planned economy. Heavily influenced by the former Soviet Union's multi-story uniform apartment blocks, these new apartment buildings were built as state-subsidized housing and used mainly by government employees (Nguyen, 2011). Each apartment was designed to have a compact area of just 20-40 square meters on average.

After the country's turn toward an open-market economy in the mid-1980s, the city began to expand its residential neighborhoods into the peri-urban areas. Starting in the 1990s high-rise apartment buildings and condominiums have increasingly been built, along with hotels and other commercial buildings and facilities. The buyers and tenants of these buildings are mostly newcomers, plus emerging middle-class residents who are reaping the benefits of the market economy. Meanwhile farmers, the former occupants of the land that these newly developed suburban areas are being built upon, are finding they have little choice other than to move out of their old, and often well-loved, localities. Given the ongoing expansion of Hanoi's municipal borders, this trend is likely to continue to affect villagers who suddenly find themselves residing in an urban area.

Lastly, neighborhoods in the outer-dyke areas (within which the Thanh Ninh area is situated) have attracted illegal squatters. Some of the present residents initially came to occupy the area as far back as the 1950s (Kato & Nguyen, 2009). Overall, the residents in these neighborhoods are comprised of a mixed group of people, from self-employed workers making a living from small trading and daily employment to a smaller groups of employees of government offices and enterprises and of farmers. These areas contain migrants from impoverished rural villages plus other low-income residents; some middle-class newcomers also began to settle in after the liberalization of the housing sector in the early

1990s, building houses with or without obtaining the so-called *so do* or “red books” (land-use certificates). The spread of “illegal housing,” often nothing more than shanties slapped together on a temporary basis, has put the residents in these areas at the constant risk of flooding and thus led to revised estimates of the river’s flood-level.

To sum up: This section has illustrated how Hanoi’s very diverse residential areas have been re-shaped in the course of its historical and administrative transformations. Increased urbanization and the expansion of its municipal localities in recent years have served to intensify the already very high degree of diversification of residents, with respect to both socioeconomic backgrounds and livelihoods. The following section will provide the reader with a closer look at the study site, the so-called Thanh Ninh area.

Thanh Ninh Area: Demographic and Socio-Cultural Contexts

Situated about two kilometers from the center of the city, the Thanh Ninh area is one of the popular destinations for rural migrants undertaking a short- or long-term migration to Hanoi. Running north-south along the Hoa Hong River, the area attracts migrants from such surrounding Northern provinces as Bắc Giang, Hưng Yên, Nam Định, Ninh Bình, and Thanh Hóa. These migrants turn to casual laboring and small trading as their primary sources of employment and income-generation (Save the Children, U.K., 2006). While Hanoi itself retains its “semi-rural nature” (Li, 1996, p. 15) largely just because its historical development is attributed to generations of people coming to it from the countryside’s neighboring provinces, the Thanh Ninh area has become known, ever since the early 1990s, as a popular destination for flocks of spontaneous migrants coming into the city. Following the promulgation of *Doi Moi* in 1986, the number of *nha tro*¹⁹ or lodging houses has boomed. This is understandable, for *nha tro* accommodate migrants requiring temporary residence for a modest price during their migration in Hanoi (Li, 1996). It also is worth noting that the rise of spontaneous migrants coincided with the opening of a wholesale agricultural market in the center of the Thanh Ninh area in mid-1992 (Agergaard & Thao, 2011). This market continues to provide opportunities for many seasonal migrants, who work there as porters and in other capacities.

¹⁹ Generally speaking, a *nha tro* is a room rented out by a live-in landlord. The dimensions and facilities of such rooms vary, but typically a room consists of a mere sleeping space on the floor for up to ten, and sometimes even dozens, of people. While a kitchen facility often is provided and is shared by some of the tenants, especially the women, all of the tenants share a bathroom, which usually is nothing more than a pit toilet plus a hut used for bathing. Some *nha tro* are rented out on a nightly, others on a monthly, basis. Generally, rooms are assigned to one gender

Prior to the surge of material and population flows brought about by the advent of the *doi moi* reforms and the subsequent opening of the wholesale market, the Thanh Ninh area had been a piece of state-owned land having few settlements, just some government offices and state-owned apartments for the use of government employees (ward official, personal communication, September 21, 2013). Dotted with several lagoons, the area once served as a food-supply base where *rau muong* (water morning glory)—once a staple vegetable of the poor, and even today an essential culinary ingredient in Vietnam—was grown to feed Hanoi’s citizens. The government recruited farmers from northern provincial villages to cultivate and harvest crops. The hydroponically cultivated vegetables, chiefly *rau muong*, would be handpicked by farmers moving around by boat. Repeated floods and breakage of dykes, however, eventually compelled the government to fill in the lagoons and to continually heighten the dykes.

In the wake of the *doi moi* reforms, the part of the land that had been used for farming was allotted to farmers and their families. The allocation system worked thus: the larger the household, the larger the piece of land provided. The convergence of a rising number of spontaneous rural migrants with the government’s disinclination to hunt for illegal squatters occasioned the encroachment of people settling into the Thanh Ninh area and building alleys, shops, and houses without obtaining authorization from the government. Subsequently, meaning in the 1990s, real neighborhoods began to take shape between the dykes and the river (Koh, 2006). A woman who moved to the area in 1992 with her husband and her mother-in-law, after they had bought a piece of land there, told me that some people would encroach upon an open space, build a house here, and self-claim their ownership to the land. Others who did not have enough money to build houses would squat in an empty lot, setting up shacks made of found materials, though in the early 1990s some of these shacks were demolished by the government when the construction of the wholesale market began on a site where one of the lagoons previously had existed. The migrants continued, however, to demand places to settle in, and this outcry led some of the families of the former farmers to rent out spaces they were not using; others even turned sandbanks adjoining the river into a complex of shelters for the use of low-income unregistered migrants, doing so behind the government’s back in order to cash in on the newly lucrative situation. The completion of the

or the other, and each room is occupied by a group of migrants from the same village, mostly acquaintances or friends, who are engaged in the same occupational activity during their migration in Hanoi.

wholesale market in 1992, which as we have seen attracted a large number of migrants ready and willing to work as porters, etc., further accelerated this trend.

Moreover, after the liberalization of the housing sector began in 1991, the modest land prices in the Thanh Ninh area, as compared to those in other central locations of Hanoi, started to attract a new set of residents: outsiders who could afford to buy land. Pundits trying to come up with a logical reason for such modest land prices, in particular in some of the most migrant-concentrated sections of the area, have pointed to the constant risk of demolition by the government, unstable soil conditions produced by multiple landfills, and the proliferation of “illegal construction.”²⁰ The latter, however, is by no means a problem unique to the Thanh Ninh area; to the contrary it is widespread across Hanoi, for construction projects that often involve drilling and pile-driving along the dykes can weaken a dyke or even completely undermine its foundation (Koh, 2006). In 2005, a massive redevelopment project along the Hoa Hong River was announced via the release of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), co-signed by the then mayors of Seoul and Hanoi at the World Mayor Forum (Ngoc, 2005). The project set out to enhance flood-control and to create an urban parkland and multi-complexes for industrial, residential, and touristic purposes along both sides of the Hoa Hong River. It began to take shape, in the wake of the 2007 development proposal put forward by the Seoul Metropolitan Government, at an estimated cost of US\$7 billion (Moffat, 2011). According to the plan an estimated 90,000 homes were to be provided for 318,180 people, but the downside was huge: all the current residents living along the river—estimated at 170,000 (39,100 households) as of 2008, and with both figures sure to go higher—would have to be relocated (Lamarcam, 2011; Minh, 2008). As of now the development plan has been placed on hold, due to expressed concerns with respect to both a foreseen difficulty in the relocation of households and possible adverse effects of high-density development on the ecosystem, perhaps leading to more flooding (Moffat, 2011). The project's halt has been a great relief to Thanh Ninh residents, especially to those without

²⁰ In Vietnam, activities that involve either “build[ing] a house or other dwelling from scratch, or any extension or renovation to either the interior or exterior of a house or a flat . . . without official licenses or permits” (Koh, 2006, p. 205) are considered “illegal construction.” At the root of the problem is a severe shortage of housing in Hanoi, a holdover from the socialist housing regime. Back then, a mere 10% of houses in Hanoi had non-state ownership, and all houses having more than one room were nationalized. The original inhabitants of the nationalized houses were allocated just one room and were required to rent out the remaining rooms to other families (Koh, 2006; Hayton, 2010). People’s rising expectations for higher housing quality and their felt need for privacy, as those factors combined with a considerable growth in the number and size of families, intensified the housing shortage in Hanoi and thereby spurred some to get on with “illegal construction.” It was not until after the advent of *doi moi* in the late

formal ownership of their houses or land,²¹ and all the more so to the *lan nau* residents who live in houseboats on the river. Uncertainty remains, however, as to whether occupants without legal ownership will be provided with compensation for their relocation; a rumor has widely been circulating among the Thanh Ninh residents that the inhabitants of “illegal housing” will not be eligible for such compensation.

At the center of the Thanh Ninh area stands the large-scale agricultural wholesale market. One will find there all in-season fruits and vegetables, being sold in bunches. The market not only draws merchants but also serves as a major source of employment for internal migrants coming to work as the porters and laborers who load, unload, and make deliveries (Save the Children, U.K., 2006). While the merchants who are registered to sell and trade their products at the market are mostly non-migrant Hanoi residents (Thanh Ninh Market Manager, personal communication, August 24, 2010), porters and laborers almost always are migrants with or without papers. Although the market is open on a round-the-clock basis, its “rush hours” come in the wee hours from 2 to 5 a.m., at which time transactions involving large volumes of fruits and vegetables take place between wholesalers and retailers (Agergaard & Thao, 2011). Two of the busiest market “days,” aside from *Tet* (Lunar New Year) and other special holidays, are the nights before the first and fifteenth days of each lunar month. On those days people go to pagodas to honor ancestors, and there is a great demand for fruit and flowers as offerings.

Aside from its market, the Thanh Ninh area also exerts a magnetic attraction upon migrants because, as we have seen, it is a place where they can engage in small trading, street-selling, and motorbike taxi- driving. Further adding to its convenience in the eyes of migrants coming from nearby

1980s that some liberalizing changes were brought into the arena of housing, followed by the state’s formal recognition in 1991 of “the right of private ownership and participation in the housing sector” (Koh, 2006, p.220).

²¹ In Vietnam, formal land/house ownership is notarized via a *so do*, a land-use certificate called a “red book.” A significant gap between the number of home/land buyers and the provision of red books by localities has been reported in a recent news article (“Red book grants suffer lengthy delays,” 2013). On top of the lengthy administrative procedures for obtaining a red book, home/land buyers need to pay a high price for its issuance based on the square-footage of their property. For instance, in 2001 a couple in the Thanh Ninh area purchased for 200 million VND a piece of land (55.1 square meters) having an abandoned house without drainage; then in 2009 they demolished the old house and constructed a new four-storied one of 220.4 square meters. The couple was not even aware of the requirement to obtain a red book, or of the danger that existed until 2010 of having their house demolished by the government, without compensation, if they were found to be without a red book. In order to minimize that risk they filed for a red book in 2010 and paid 100 million VND to the people’s committee in their locality. Out of that 100 million VND, 25 million VND went to the issuance fee and the rest (75 million VND) to the middleman who had helped the couple with the registration process. It took them over three months to have their red book granted. Residents who are unwilling to pay, or simply incapable of paying, such high processing fees often opt not to obtain a red book. They are all too likely to receive no compensation if their homes are slated for demolition.

northern provinces are the bus service that connects the Thanh Ninh area to Hanoi's neighboring provincial towns and villages and a variety of low-budget rental accommodations such as the *nha tro*.

Both existing studies and anecdotal evidence drawn from my interviews with local authorities point to a high incidence of non-permanent residents, be they temporarily registered or unregistered migrants, in the Thanh Ninh area. For instance, the migration study done by Save the Children U.K. (2006) cited a large number of seasonal migrants at certain times of the year. Local authorities remarked that the percentage of registered temporary migrants, in the ward we happened to be discussing, fluctuated and increased at certain times of the year by 5 to 6 percent. According to a ward official in the Thanh Ninh area, in some of the migrant-concentrated segments of the area the number of migrant residents exceeds that of permanent residents (ward official, personal communication, September 21, 2013). While the number of permanent residents in the area continues to rise every year, so does the number of migrant residents. In one section of a migrant-concentrated ward that holds about 1,400 residents, permanent residents are estimated to make up only about 30 percent of the total. It is speculated that among the migrant residents, only 2-3 percent are holders of temporary residency permits; the rest of the migrants are unregistered. With respect to the entire migrant population residing in the area, the largest proportion is considered to be engaged in unskilled work in the informal sector, with typical jobs being porter, *xe om* (motorcycle taxi) driver, petty trader, roving street-vendor, tea-seller and recycle/garbage-collector.

While the public image of the Thanh Ninh area as a low-income residential neighborhood seems to derive largely from the visible presence of migrants working and living in the area, and to a somewhat lesser extent from the high concentration of *nha tro* and other low-cost housing catering to migrants and impoverished residents, a closer look at the area reveals it to be slightly more multi-layered in its social structure. Not all the neighborhoods in the area strike one as being seedy or deprived, and many are simply thriving and therefore cheerful.

For instance, both the entrance to the market and the streets surrounding it bustle with truckers, motorbike riders, and porters, all of them laden with fruits and vegetables, as well as with people coming in and out of the area. To the south of the wholesale market lie streets that are lined with a variety of

small shops, among them being cafés, *com binh dan*,²² and other unpretentious eateries serving such quotidian repasts as *pho* (Vietnamese rice noodles), plus karaoke bars and beauty salons. Most of the *nha tro* where single migrants live (those who have come to Hanoi to work without bringing their families, regardless of their marital status) are located on this southern side of the market. To the north extend more middle-class residential neighborhoods, mixed with sparse shops along the streets. The closer the neighborhoods are to the dykes that divide the Thanh Ninh area from the main road the more sturdy-looking the houses appear, many of them indeed being built with cement and iron and having their own entrances.



Figure 2. Back street of the Thanh Ninh area

²² Literally meaning “working-class rice” and thus “popular meals,” *com binh dan* are inexpensive eateries that serve a variety of common local dishes normally consisting of rice, vegetable, soup, and a selection of meat dishes. Customers typically order, à la carte, dishes of their choice that range from 3,000 to 10,000 VND.

As one moves away from the main road and the dykes so as to follow small alleys leading toward the river, neighborhoods come into sight that contain smaller and shabbier-looking houses and informal settlements subdivided into tiny shacks. Constructed of corrugated metal roofs and bare cement walls, these settlements are all that many impoverished migrant families have to call home. The alleys are dotted with tiny shops only about 10 square meters in size, although the minute one steps inside, one will be astonished to see that they are packed with groceries (e.g., milk, eggs, rice, snacks, cooking oil, rehydratable noodles, candies) and daily essentials (e.g., bathroom tissues, Kleenex, toothbrushes, detergents, shampoos, body soaps, diapers). The alleys are unpaved, and so narrow that no cars can get in; motorbikes or bicycles do just fine, however, thereby causing pedestrians to cling closely to the edge of the alley to avoid being knocked down (see Figure 2).

As one reaches the eastern edge of the Thanh Ninh area, the Hoa Hong River and a midstream island come into view. Adjacent to the island are informal settlements on the river: a few dozen dilapidated houseboats (see Figure 3). Called *Lang Nau* or brown village,²³ this houseboat community is composed largely of people who have come to Hanoi from different places of origin. While the farmland on the island is not owned by the settlers in *Lang Nau*, some landowners now allow *Lang Nau* residents to tend their vegetable patches.

²³ More extensive descriptions of the brown village and those of its residents who participated in this study are provided in Chapter VI.

Inter-class division can be seen cropping up all across the social geography of Hanoi, as noted earlier, and the Thanh Ninh area is no exception in this regard given its mixture of middle- and lower-class residents. A moment ago I alluded to the alleys in the riverfront area, and it is just as well to make clear at this juncture that in Vietnamese *duong* and *pho* are roads or streets and thus relatively big and wide, *ngo* and *ngach* small and narrow back streets and alleys. The discrepancy can be significant, because in addition to geographical location and residential neighborhood, the road, street, or alley that a person's home is located on can be an additional indication of her/his social status. Owning a house can lend one a certain social status or upward mobility, but the precise location of the house matters as well. The assumption is that the bigger the street on which the house stands, the wealthier its owner must be. Conversely, if the property is located on a small, narrow alley in a section of low land values, its owner is not likely to be perceived as being of a high social class, no matter how big the house may be.



Figure 3. Houseboats in brown village

The resettlement patterns in Thanh Ninh area also speak to this issue of the perceived parallel between the precise location of the resident and her or his social class. As noted earlier, the residential neighborhoods that extend to the north of the market have more free-standing houses, made of cement and iron and with their own entrances, than do the rest of Thanh Ninh's neighborhoods. Then too, most of the front streets in these neighborhoods are paved, and wide enough to permit two-way automobile traffic. While the residents comprise the usual mix of rental tenants and house-owners, they are conceived to be relatively better off as compared to the denizens of other neighborhoods. When it comes to the neighborhood to the south of the market, on the other hand, although both the front and back streets have more traffic, they are not well paved and thus rough in spots. The streets and alleys are packed with *nha tro* catering to temporary migrants, as well as small, inexpensive eateries such as the *com binh dan* and rice-noodle shops. What the reader who has seen neither of these Thanh Ninh neighborhoods should realize is that as one moves east in either the northern or the southern neighborhood so as to get to the river (or more specifically, to the dyke that separates the Thanh Ninh area from Hanoi's main road), the narrower the street gets and the more seedy become the complexes and shelters inhabited chiefly by low-income residents. And as we have seen, beyond the edge of these neighborhoods is the river, with its midstream island and houseboats. To sum up: social differentiation and segregation within the Thanh Ninh area, to the extent that these are revealed by dwelling-place, are manifested by the physical location of a person's house, the exterior house materials, and the geographical location of Hanoi's residential neighborhoods.

Who Are Migrants?

The purpose of this section is twofold. First, it seeks to explain the way the term *migrants* is defined in the context of Vietnam's official census, to reveal that definition's limitations, and to clarify how the term is used in this study. Second, it attempts to give the reader a more vivid sense of the livelihoods and social circumstances of the migrants who participated in this study. To that end, the section features two migrant families.

Definition of Migrants

How are migrants defined officially, within the context of Vietnam's national census? In the nation's decennial Population and Housing Censuses and their associated monographs, migrants are defined as

“people [who are aged 5 or older and] whose place of residence 5 years prior to the time of the census is different from their current place of residence” (GSO, 2011, p. 19). Non-migrants, in turn, are “people whose place of residence 5 years prior to the time of the census is their current place of residence” (GSO, 2011, p. 19). Thus this definition of migrants leaves out both long-term migrants—those who migrated more than five years prior to the census date—and return migrants: those whose migration took place within the five-year period but who had already returned to their place of origin before the time of the census. Consequently temporary, seasonal, and circular migrants not only are hard to identify due to their shorter periods of stay but often are “mixed in with non-migrant or migrant populations” (GSO, 2011, p. 19). Moreover, given that one’s place of residence in the census context is based on her/his *de jure* place of registration (Dang et al., 2003), inevitably not captured are those who migrated without going through the temporary registration procedures; that is, unregistered migrants. The limitations of this definition and the deficiencies of this mode of identification of migrants have been acknowledged by Vietnam-based organizations and scholars alike (Dang et al., 2003; GSO & UNFPA Viet Nam, 2005; Le et al., 2011; Save the Children, U.K., 2006; UN Viet Nam, 2010a; 2010b), and even by the GSO (2011) itself. All those in the field point to how the official figures on internal migrants, as recorded by the census, are underrepresenting temporary migrants, including seasonal and circular migrants, not to mention non-registered migrants.

Meanwhile, the number of unregistered migrants is reported to be on the rise. In his research on population and urbanization in Ho Chi Minh City, Thanh (as cited in GSO & UNFPA Viet Nam, 2005) was able, by comparing the data compiled in 1998 and in 2000, to identify a growing presence of unregistered migrants across all the districts of Ho Chi Minh City. The percentage of unregistered migrants increased by approximately 2 percent; this means that this group went from making up around 13 percent of the population of Ho Chi Minh City in 1998 to over 15 percent in 2000, in 20 out of 22 districts. Similarly, according to the estimate of the share of unregistered migrants arrived at by Koesveld (as cited in Le et al., 2011), over the next ten years we will see an increase of about 45 percent of their share of overall urban population.

Aside from the methodological difficulty inherent to the formal identification of migrants, there is the problem of pinpointing the underlying causes prompting migrants to fail to register in the first place.

Under the *ho khau* system people are required on each occasion to notify the local police in their place of origin of their upcoming migration to a city (or elsewhere), and to re-register upon arrival at their places of destination.²⁴ This means that with the exception of those people who have just very short-term lengths of stay, such as circular migrants engaged in daily or weekly commutes, most migrants to Hanoi should, in principle, be registered for long- or short-term temporary residence even if their household registration books remain in their places of origin. One clear reason explaining why so many migrants opt out of obtaining temporary registration as either KT3 or KT4 is their desire to steer clear of the onerous administrative procedures involved in the process. In order to be granted KT4 registration one needs to be equipped with a proof of secure employment at the destination area, as well as letters from local authorities endorsing her/his release from the place of origin (UN Viet Nam, 2010a). Little wonder that a good many people migrate unregistered, given that they have no formal employment contract and could only guess the likely length of their stay. And of course many others simply are not aware that they are bypassing the lengthy administrative process entailed in applying for temporary residency. Then too, some migrants decide not to renew their temporary residence permits after their initial registration as KT4 has expired. Or other circumstances may have changed, and made it hard for them to have their papers renewed. And of course while many migrants decide to move to a new destination in the hope of finding new and better opportunities and/or to improve their living conditions, in the case of many others, getting renewal was not their choice to begin with. Although opting out of temporary registration is not lawful in a strict sense, the relaxation of *ho khau* as the backbone of centralized population control has given people on the move at least some “wiggle room” for negotiation.

The fact remains, however, that the shift from temporary to permanent residence status is the biggest hurdle many migrants continue to face. The results of the 2004 VMS revealed that as many as 46 percent of those surveyed had responded that they remained temporary residents at the current residence because they believed their application for permanent registration would not be accepted (GSO & UNFPA Viet Nam, 2005). While the number of respondents who went unregistered after their temporary residency had expired is unknown, the survey results suggest that the chance of being granted permanent residency is, for the majority of spontaneous migrants, fairly low. Among the respondents who

²⁴ The current Law on Residence specifies that “anyone living in a location other than their permanent residence for

expressed their disbelief in the likelihood of their obtaining permanent residence status, 53 percent migrated in search of a job and 47 percent moved to improve their living conditions—those indeed being the two major reasons for spontaneous migration.

The migrant families who participated in this study²⁵ represent that a segment of migrants whose existence is not captured in the census owing to their status of “without papers” or to the long-term, semi-permanent nature of their migration. Thus, migrants are herein defined as those who reside in their current place of residence without permanent-residency status, regardless of either possession of temporary permit or length of stay. Of the migrant families interviewed, only one had obtained a temporary permit; the rest of the interviewees had not done so. All of the participants were non-seasonal migrants (i.e., migrants intending to stay in the city for an indefinite period) residing in the city with their families, with the exception of one seasonal female migrant who comes to work in the city without her family for only short periods of time (two weeks to a month) during the slack seasons on the family farm.²⁶ All migrant participants except one²⁷ originated from provinces in northern Vietnam: Bac Giang, Hai Duong, Hung Yen, Lang Son, Nam Dinh, Ninh Binh, Thai Binh or Thanh Hoa (see Figure 4).

Minh: Single Mother in Brown Village

Minh is a single mother and a widow, in her thirties. She lives in a brown village with her two children. My first encounter with her was coincidental. The day we first met, Huyen,²⁸ my research assistant, and I were going to visit one of the charity-class students who lives in the brown village. This was the first time that Huyen and I had ever visited the village, which is accessible only from the midpoint of the nearby bridge because it is located on a midstream island. As soon as we set foot there we noted a drastic change of scenery, from urban to more rural: land covered with grass, weeds, and some vegetable fields; unpaved paths leading to the village settlement, essentially made up of scattered houseboats floating on

30 days or more must register their temporary status with the police” (UN Viet Nam, 2010a, p. 18).

²⁵ The study’s research sample, including both migrant and non-migrant participants, is provided in Appendix A, Research Methodology.

²⁶ In keeping with the purpose of this study as set out in Chapter I, the study’s target group is migrant families with an intention to stay in the destination area on more than just a short-term basis; the study’s one seasonal migrant was contacted with a view to observing firsthand the living conditions in *nha tro*.

²⁷ One participant was born in Hanoi, but she later lost her permanent-resident status in the city due first to the loss of her precious *ho khau* in a flood and subsequently to her vagrant life in search of work.

the river, toward both ends of the island; no streetlights; and entirely free of the hustle and bustle of the city. Not knowing in which direction we should be heading, we inquired of a boy and a girl, both of them being about primary school age, who were walking right in front of us. They turned out to know the student to whom we were paying a visit, and agreed to take us to where he and his family live. As we followed the children for 10 to 15 minutes toward the edge of the island, we saw a woman, whom I would later learn is named Minh, walking ahead of us, pushing a bicycle laden with plastic bags full of plastic bottled beverages and bags of chips. When she reached a houseboat she started to unload them, a task that appeared to be too much for her to handle on her own. Since we were not in a hurry we decided to lend her a hand, helping her to carry the beverages into her houseboat. After thanking the children who had led us there, we approached the entrance to the houseboat. Minh, who was sitting on the living-room floor sorting her bottles into several different plastic baskets, looked up at us. She then looked straight at Huyen and spoke to her in a friendly manner: "I know you! You used to work in the Hang Dau area, didn't you?" As it turned out, Minh was an old acquaintance of Huyen's from her street-working days; they had not seen each other since the late 1990s. Although Huyen did not remember Minh's face well, Minh said that she had quickly recognized Huyen's face, and noted that she had not changed much since she was younger. After we had finished carrying in all the bottles, Minh invited us both in for drinks.

Minh's houseboat, like others in the brown village, was shabby looking. It was covered with a thin wooden shingle held in place by ill-fitting wooden beams, and had plastic sheets on its sides for weather protection. Just two narrow wooden boards connected the shore and the house. The house itself was divided into two sections—living room with attached kitchen space, and sleeping room—partitioned by a thin bamboo board. The living room looked bare but it had a household altar; underneath the altar was a wooden desk, atop which were a photograph of a deceased person (I later learned it was her late husband) and offerings to the altar: a bunch of lychee, tobacco, and a small cup of alcohol. Given that there was no running water in the house, Minh's family, like their neighbors, would use water drawn from a feed-pump in the village to cook and wash their clothes.

Minh was born in 1979 in the Thanh Ninh area, as the oldest daughter of the family. Still very young when her parents divorced, she grew up with her mother and two other siblings, one of whom has

²⁸ Extensive descriptions of Huyen—how we met, her background, our working arrangements, the opportunities and

since passed away. Her mother has had a gambling problem as long as Minh can remember; when she was in primary school, her family lost their house because of it. Her family then moved from one place to another. She went to school through the second grade, but in order to support her family she started to work in the Hang Dau lake area, which is a hub for street-children and peddlers. In the beginning she was working alongside her mother as a tea-seller. As she became a teenager she started to engage in what she euphemistically dubbed “social evil.” After inhabiting a series of temporary dwellings, the family had just gotten settled in Thanh Ninh area when a massive typhoon hit the city; their house was flooded and their *ho khau* went missing. Owing to their financial hardship the family never was able to have its *ho khau* reinstated²⁹; thus they lost their permanent residency and became unregistered in the end. Minh’s encounter with her late husband, who was a migrant worker from Bac Kan province (situated to the north of Hanoi in the Northeast region), was a life-changing event that brought at least a brief break from her life filled with distress. The young couple soon fell in love, but his parents opposed their marriage. Eventually they eloped without getting legally married and had two children. The family moved to the brown village in 2007. There they bought a houseboat for 6 million VND³⁰ in the hope of starting a new life. Their financially pressured yet happy concubinage did not last long, however. In 2009, two years after their move to the brown village, Minh’s husband died and left her with an 11-year-old son and a 6-year-old daughter to raise all on her own.

Since 2008, Minh has been working as a tea-seller on the bridge that connects the midstream island to the mainland. Along with three of her neighbors she serves drinks to customers who stop by for a drink on the bridge. Their setup is very simple: a sheet or two of straw matting, and a box that contains the bottles, ice, and glasses (see Figure 5). During the day, most of the customers are farmers who cultivate plots on the island beneath the bridge; in the evening, the women’s stalls attract a greater number of young couples and others who come to have drinks and enjoy the night view of the city. The tea-sellers work long hours, normally from noon to midnight, although sometimes they cut their work short when there are few customers. On good days they can make as much as 150,000 to 200,000 VND; on

challenges of working with an interpreter—are provided later in this chapter.

²⁹ To have it reinstated would, according to Minh, cost 10 to 15 million VND, paid to the local police as essentially a bribe.

bad days they barely make 50,000 VND. The average monthly income Minh can derive from tea-selling is around 1.5 million VND, but “average” is a misleading term since her income is fairly unstable. The women’s sales are directly dependent upon the weather as well, for when it rains, there is no business. And even the good news is bad news in a sense, for as the bridge has become a hot spot for young people over the last few years it has started to draw an increasing number of competitors as well as customers. When Minh and her village neighbors first began their tea-selling business, in 2008, there were only four of them; nowadays more than 20 sellers occupy the bridge during the nighttime. As a result the average amount of Minh et al.’s sales has not changed, or even worsened.

³⁰ At the time of my fieldwork in 2008-2010, the average exchange rate postulated that 1 USD was roughly equivalent to 17,000-19,000 VND. As of April 2014, 1 USD is equivalent of approximately 21,000 VND.



Figure 4. Map of Hanoi and neighboring provinces

Source: <https://www.google.com/maps/@20.7803649,106.0462187,9z> (Google Maps, 2014)

Currently both Minh's son and her daughter attend a local public school, with the administrative and financial support of NGOs. In the past they attended a literacy class (similar to a charity class) that was provided by one of the NGOs operating in the area, with the instruction coming from college volunteers. Prior to his entering the literacy class her son gained admittance to a public school through a social connection Minh had at the time, despite his lack of both birth certificate and *ho khau* as a result of his parents' common-law marriage and Minh's estranged relationships with her in-laws. After the contact

person, the school principal, left the school, however, when Minh's son was in the third grade, he was made to quit school owing to his lack of a birth certificate and thus was left with no choice but to seek an informal education. This trying experience led Minh to negotiate with her late husband's parents in person, in Bac Kan, begging them to have her children registered under their *ho khau*. They were reluctant at first but eventually her tenacious appeal, reminding them how important it was that their blood-related grandchildren have unimpeded access to formal schooling and thereby a brighter future, won their hearts and they agreed to follow up.

Minh acknowledged frankly to me that she could not, or at least would not, trust anyone except her own children. Although she has some old friends in the Thanh Ninh neighborhood where she used to live, and they see each other every once in a while, she told me she would not consult with any of them, not even in times of difficulty. "I have been through a number of disappointments and betrayals from my own family. Five, six years ago, my younger brother asked me to lend him money so he could start a new business, but then he disappeared without repaying the money. More recently, my mother begged me for the same thing. I had to raid my savings to lend her money, but I never heard back from her again. Later I found out that she spent all the money on gambling! I mean, how can you trust someone unrelated to you, when you can't even trust your own [family] (*nguai nha con khong tin duoc nua la nguoi dung ngoai*)?!" she exclaimed.



Figure 5. Tea-seller on the Thanh Ninh bridge

Thu and Her Peddling Family

Thu was one of the few girls with whom Huyen and I had contact outside the charity class, and without having forged any previous social connection. When we first met, she and her youngest brother Khanh were “working” at a local pagoda, begging for mercy.³¹ Originating in Nam Dinh province, Thu’s family typifies how a migrant family makes a living in the informal sector. The family moved to Hanoi in 2004 to find better opportunities in the city, outside of farming. In the early days of their migration the parents would peddle all day while their three children (Khanh, the youngest boy, was not yet born at that time)

stayed home and took care of each other. Her mother, Hien, would work as a roving street-vendor, carrying fruit on a pole; her father, Ngoc, was the attendant of a motorcycle parking lot at a coffee shop. After 2006 the parents and Thu, the eldest daughter of the family, began to work on the same street corner, near one of the international chain hotels located in the city center. While Hien and Thu were peddling side-by-side small touristic items such as postcards, folding fans, and logoed caps, Ngoc was working as an *xe om* or motorcycle driver.

Thu's family's house, where they lived until 2012, was located on a tiny quiet alley at the northern edge of the Thanh Ninh area. Unlike the cluster housing in the central part of the Thanh Ninh area, near the wholesale market where multiple households of low-income migrant residents inhabit each complex, their house was a solitary one of two stories.³² The first floor had a living room about 12 square meters in size, a small kitchen, and a bathroom in the back; the second floor was made up of a sleeping room for the whole family. Like many other migrant families living in a limited space with multiple household members, they too, a family of six, shared a queen-sized bed. They had an old TV and a portable electric fan in the house but it lacked basic furniture, such as a dining table or desk. When eating they would use an aluminum tray to serve meals, so that they would not have to put their bowls and plates on the floor.

Thu dropped out of school when the family migrated to Hanoi; she was a second-grader. Her younger sister, Hoa, and her brother, Van, were lucky enough to secure, by the time they had reached school age, financial support from an NGO to attend a public primary school in the Thanh Ninh area. Because of Thu's older age and long periods of being out of school, it was not as easy for her to get admitted to a public school in Hanoi. Although she had a strong desire to go back to school as soon as possible, it was her parents' (and the NGO's) opinion that she should wait until the new school year started and transfer to a public school, instead of attending an informal literacy class such as the charity class. "They tell me that it's no use going to a class like that," Thu told me, "because they only teach basic education and it won't help you to have a better future." A major concern the family had, however, was the condition set by the NGO: in exchange for receiving financial assistance, children were not

³¹ My first encounter with Thu and her brother is described in detail in Chapter VI.

³² In terms of rent, those complexes close to the market were slighter cheaper (2 million VND in average), whereas the monthly rental fee of Thu's family's house was 2.4 million VND. Due to the increasing financial burden comprised

allowed to work on the street. If they were caught doing so, support would be terminated. Because Huyen and I knew that Hoa would be joining her mother and sister to do street-sell on the weekends and during her school breaks, Thu begged us not to tell the NGO so that Hoa could stay in school.

Thu's family, like so many other low-income, unskilled migrant families, has been in financial distress, and they continue to seek out better ways to cope with it. Since their relocation to the city the family has moved three times and has tried out different jobs (all in the informal sector) at various locations so as to improve their income security. As of 2010, the year in which I did my intensive research, Thu and Khanh were going to a pagoda to beg on the first and fifteenth days of each lunar month. Hien and Ngoc, the parents, tried to sell drinks during the night hours, because their combined revenues from street-selling and Ngoc's *xe om* business were not sufficient to provide for the family. When I returned to Hanoi in 2013 for a follow-up study I found that the parents were embarking on a new business: peddling items that were name-brand imitations (e.g., T-shirts, wallets, and clutch bags) across the city and indeed all the way to Bac Ninh City,³³ where there were fewer street-sellers. Thus they were constantly making an effort to increase their financial security, both by diversifying their activities that might generate income and by trying to find a niche market relatively devoid of competition. They were still struggling to make ends meet, however, owing to their being unskilled labor and non-permanent residents in the city—two devastatingly interacting factors that have essentially trapped them in the informal sector without any prospect of upward mobility. While the family no longer held land or property in their home village in Nam Dinh, they were registered under the *ho khau* of Ngoc's widowed mother, who lives with his two younger unmarried brothers.

To my and Huyen's surprise, when we visited Thu's family again in 2013 we found that Thu had left for Hai Phong,³⁴ where her uncle on her mother's side lives, to work. As it turned out the NGO's support had abruptly been terminated in 2011, due to its own mismanagement. Thus the parents decided to move out of their old two-storied house and into the current one in another part of the Thanh Ninh area

of living expenses and the children's school fees, as well as the NGO's precarious financial support, the family decided in 2012 to relocate to a deserted house whose rental fee was less expensive.

³³ Bac Ninh City, the capital of Bac Ninh Province, is situated about 36 km east of the central part of Hanoi.

—a one-story deserted house situated in a patch of waste land and requiring their own refurbishment. That way they could save on rent,³⁵ and keep Hoa and Van in school with their own finances. At the time of my return visit in 2012 Thu had just resumed her schooling after years of waiting but she soon quit it, feeling ashamed to be going there when her school fees were no longer being paid by the NGO. Khanh, the youngest boy, was supposed to attend a kindergarten with the NGO's sponsorship, but without its support he had no choice but to stay home for two consecutive years. The situation changed when their foreign benefactor, he whose donation to the NGO as a "child sponsor" had been used to pay Thu and her siblings' school fees, contacted the family through a Vietnamese friend in early 2013. He was trying to find out why the NGO had stopped sending him letters informing about Thu's family whom he was sponsoring. After he had discovered that his financial support was not reaching the family as it should have been, he visited the family in person, along with his local friend; he agreed to send the money directly to the family on the condition that they would give him the school bills so that he could be sure the amount of money the family was asking for was within a reasonable range. Given this man's renewed financial support, Thu was expecting to return to Hanoi to attend a secondary school as a ninth-grader, a year behind her cohort, in the fall of 2013. The last time we met, Hoa and Van were continuing their studies at a public school as an eighth- and a fifth-grader, respectively, while Khanh was set to begin his primary schooling as a first-grader in the fall.

Orientation of Field Research

Field Entry, and Gaining Access to the Study Site

The field research component of the study consisted of a two-year, exploratory-fieldwork period that spanned from September 2008 to August 2010 and of a month-long follow-up study done in September 2013. The first half of the long term fieldwork period was devoted to solidifying my language skills and trying to identify and gain access to potential research sites, with the second half being devoted to more intensive field observations and the conducting of interviews.

³⁴ Hai Phong, one of the three major cities of Vietnam, along with Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi, is located 120 km east of Hanoi.

³⁵ The monthly rent of the old house was 2.4 million VND whereas that for the new one was 1.8 million VND.

Initially interested in conducting school ethnography that explores the educational circumstances of underprivileged migrant children in the Thanh Ninh area, I spent my preliminary research phase visiting several public and private schools serving children in the Thanh Ninh area. My hope was that by gaining access to educational institutions that provide formal and/or informal education to children in the area, I would be able to make an initial connection and thereby perhaps obtain permission to conduct participant observations and interviews with children and school personnel. Having regular access to educational institutions seemed to be the ideal way for me to find out about the educational opportunities and challenges presented to disadvantaged children in the area. I also had anticipated that gaining access to schools would enable me to investigate how the cultural dynamics of underprivileged children, and the groups of people who surround them such as their classmates, schoolteachers, and other school personnel, play out in school settings.

Contrary to my wishful thinking, however, just gaining such authorization proved to be extremely difficult; it seemed I must forget entirely about my plan of nosing around the school site, and even the seemingly innocent act of making appointments with school personnel for interviews proved to be a daunting task. With each visit I would introduce myself and explain that I was interested in discovering what educational opportunities the school provides to its students residing in the Thanh Ninh area, including those of underprivileged backgrounds. Occasionally some school staff member I met on the school site, and/or a local acquaintance, would give me the contact information of a school principal so that I could get in touch with her or him in person. When asked for some form of identification I would identify myself as a graduate student currently doing research in Vietnam, then present a letter of introduction from the local research institute I was affiliated with and my student business card from Columbia.³⁶ And yet despite all my conscientious efforts to make arrangements with the contact persons and to follow the customary “self-identification” protocol for a foreign researcher, more often than not I found myself being turned away at the door. Typically no clear explanation was given, as to why my

³⁶ In Vietnam, it is customary for foreign researchers visiting formal institutions to identify themselves by presenting letters of introduction from their local affiliated institution. Normally such letters specify the purpose of the research and its expected duration in Vietnam, while the signature of an authority at the affiliated institution, and its stamp, prove its endorsement of the research. The letter is valid only for a certain period of time, needing be renewed on a regular basis.

request had been turned down; I would be fobbed off with some mumbled words to the effect that the contact person was busy, or unavailable to meet with me in person.

After months of searching for an educational institution that would grant me admittance as a researcher, I finally was referred to an NGO that runs a charity class³⁷ for impoverished children residing in the Thanh Ninh area. In collaboration with a local state school, the class offers educational and nutritional support to children who have no access to formal schooling. Students are taught basic literacy and arithmetic skills at the primary-education level by certified teachers. Students also are offered either breakfast or lunch, depending upon the class session they have been assigned to.

Luckily Nhung, the lady in charge of the program on the side of the NGO, accommodated my request to visit the class. Understanding my research interest of exploring the educational and familial circumstances of the children whom they support, she gave me and Huyen permission to come to the class twice a week, on the condition that we interact with the students only during their fifteen-minute class breaks. We were not allowed to enter any class while it was in session, because the teachers were not comfortable with the idea of having visitors observing their class on a regular basis³⁸. This was a major disappointment at the beginning, for it meant we would not have the opportunity to see firsthand how the class was conducted or to observe the classroom interactions between students and teachers. Without classroom observation, would I ever be able to form a full picture of the educational opportunities and challenges of these children? The situation was what it was, however, and thus I had no choice but to re-strategize my research plan about how to elucidate the children's educational circumstances.

Our initial mood of disappointment receded somewhat as Huyen began to get better acquainted with the children. At first they were shy, disinclined to initiate conversations with us; as we became frequent visitors, however, they appeared to be more relaxed and even curious, asking who we were and what had brought us to the class.

A further benefit of having regular access to the students was that we were also able to come into contact with some of their families. NGO staff members and class teachers would occasionally pay

³⁷ A fuller description of this particular charity class, including how it was founded and its organizational structures and activities, is provided in Chapter V.

visits to the students' homes, to check up on how they were doing there and to see if they were having any domestic issues. Those individuals told us, however, that the checkups of students' families were not happening as once they had been because they were short-staffed. Thus I volunteered to make home visits to find out about the students' families' current circumstances and also their views about the charity-class education the children were receiving. I further proposed that I would share with them, as a token of my appreciation for their having granted us access to the class and connected us with the students' families, my research findings once the research had been completed, which might prove to be of some use for their future programming. They accepted my proposal, giving us the green light to visit the students' homes and interview their parents and/or guardians, if the latter agreed to participate.

Follow-up Study

During the follow-up study done in 2013, I revisited the research sites and reconnected with the people who had participated in my research during my initial fieldwork, my goal being to ascertain how the life-conditions of the migrant families had or had not changed since I had left in 2010. The research also was intended to provide complementary data for my dissertation, either supporting or complicating its analyses and discussions. During this period of follow-up research I conducted interviews with my previous migrant participants, in order to learn how they were dealing with both the continuing and the new challenges in their daily lives. My questions ranged from how they build social relations in the city, how and indeed whether they maintain ties with their extended families in their home villages, and how they cope with challenges in times of difficulty. I also made a return visit to the charity class. At that time I gathered information on the enrolment status and familial circumstances of the continuing and newly admitted students, as well as received some updates on those students who had graduated or dropped out.

Working with Research Assistant

One of the biggest challenges in the early stages of my fieldwork was language. I already had some familiarity with the Vietnamese language, at the time I arrived in Hanoi to begin my dissertation fieldwork.

³⁸ Eventually, at a later stage of the field research, Huyen and I were allowed to observe one class session. Unfortunately, on the day of our observation the regular teacher was out sick, and thus a substitute teacher was teaching the class.

I had completed the beginning-Vietnamese course and audited the intermediate-Vietnamese course offered by the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures at Columbia University in the year 2006-2007. I also had spent two months doing an internship with an NGO in Ho Chi Minh City in the summer of 2007, at which time I had made my own arrangements for tutors and language exchanges. My acquisition of intermediate communication skills in the language made my entry into the field at least feasible, but my language proficiency was by no means sufficient for me to conduct interviews on my own. In the hope of improving my language skills as quickly as possible, I focused almost exclusively on my language training during the first six months. I took language lessons every day at The Institute of Vietnamese Studies and Development Sciences (IVIDES), National University of Hanoi, the institution that sponsored my visit to Vietnam and facilitated the issuing of my student visa. So as to build upon the language lessons I seized every opportunity to practice the language with the locals, whether that meant staff members working at the accommodation where I stayed, women selling noodles in front of it, waiters and waitresses working at the coffee shop where I sometimes whiled away an afternoon, or Vietnamese friends and acquaintances I hung out with, trying to get the hang of the language and especially to familiarize myself with its colloquialisms.

Despite my ongoing and indeed rather relentless efforts to improve my Vietnamese, things did not go as smoothly as I had expected them to. My language training really had facilitated my conversational fluency, but nonetheless my anxiety began to build as I wondered how, if at all, I was going to be able to complete my fieldwork all on my own. It would be a real disappointment to find that I had come to Vietnam just to do language studies, while taking just a half-hearted stab at my intended research. As I struggled to get the latter moving, I came to learn from other foreign researchers and graduate students based in Hanoi that working with an interpreter or a research assistant is a rather common practice in research settings in Vietnam. They said that working with such a person can help one not only to gain access to some local resources one might not be able to pry open otherwise but also, if the person in question had good negotiation skills and could act as a facilitator, to smooth out lines of communication with local authorities. At first I was a little hesitant about working with a research assistant, but eventually I decided to give it a try and see how it went.

Fortuitously, just as I was beginning my quest for a research assistant, I met a 26-year-old woman named Huyen. We were introduced to each other by a Japanese professor who has been involved in research and consulting work with the Vietnamese government, on industrial development, ever since the mid-1990s. During the early years of his sojourn in Vietnam he often spent free time strolling around the Hang Dau lake, located in the central part of Hanoi and within easy walking distance of the Central Square. The streets of the latter are lined with the stalls of artisans and merchants specializing in particular products such as silk, musical instruments, jewelry, and hardware, along with food specialties and a wide range of accommodations catering to both local and foreign tourists. The lake area tends to be thronged with street-sellers who sell a wide variety of tourist items such as postcards, T-shirts, caps, bilingual dictionaries, and folding fans made of bamboo. There are also “tea-sellers” who offer many kinds of drinks, as well as sweets and tobaccos. Back in the 1990s there was a far greater number of street children around the lake than one sees there today. While sitting on a bench near the lake the professor would be approached by street kids, trying to sell their things or offering to shine his shoes. Although initially annoyed by the children, he gradually opened up and interacted with them. As he came to know that some of those children were eager to study and go back to school, he started to lend them a hand by making it financially possible for them to attend English-language schools and local public schools. His one condition was that they must inform him about their learning situations on a regular basis.

Huyen and her younger sister were among the children assisted by the professor. She first migrated to Hanoi in 1994, her sister following her a year later. At that time they were primary students in Hung Yen province, but they decided to drop out of school so that they could earn money to help their financially struggling family stay afloat. The financial assistance provided by the professor allowed them to re-enroll in school after a few years of absence. They both worked very hard to reach their goal of gaining college degrees. Huyen was granted her Bachelor’s Degree by an Interpreter Training Program, while her younger sister studied Finance abroad in Singapore.

Fortuitously indeed, Huyen was herself seeking an opportunity to work with migrant and socioeconomically marginalized children as a way of drawing upon her own experience and of giving back to the community. She had a high hope of finding social work that would allow her, someone who knew

the life of a migrant working child from the inside out, to work closely with underprivileged children who were going through situations highly similar to those she had once experienced. And yet despite the intensity of her desire, it proved to be no easy matter for her to find jobs in the sphere of welfare work. Being fresh out of college, with limited social connections and no working experience of the social-service sector, she was going nowhere in her search until her frustrated desire and my anxious expectation met, and we delightedly discovered that our contact served to cancel out the frustration and the anxiety.

Huyen's personal experience as a street-seller from a rural village, and her extensive living experience in the Thanh Ninh area since her early years of migration, have combined to give her an insider's view of how migrants live in Hanoi and more specifically in the Thanh Ninh area. She related with passion and sensitivity to the study's participants who are living in the very same socioeconomically disadvantaged environment she knows so well. Very quickly she became my reliable research companion, and one of my key informants. Her migrant network also enabled me to approach certain groups within the migrant population more easily, in particular in the Hang Dau lake area (her old workplace), where some of her old friends and acquaintances were still working on the street.

In the initial stage of what had become our joint venture, we tried to work out how we could best conduct research. I gave Huyen a copy of the terms of reference, which describe the objective of my study and set out the expected work-responsibilities. I not only explained to her the vital need to protect the privacy of the participants but made it clear that we were to consider them knowledgeable persons from whom we had much to learn—hence the importance of building rapport throughout the research process. As a married woman and the mother of a three-year-old daughter, Huyen had to strike a difficult balance between maintaining her home life and working with me, but we managed to come up with ways to accommodate her schedule.

Our research participants had all been rendered unlawful residents in their current place of residence by the simple fact that their migration status was undocumented. In the course of the interviews certain subjects that they clearly felt chary about discussing would come up, such as their unlawful residential status and their police records. Thus, in order not to further exacerbate their already quite considerable wariness, we decided not to tape-record the interviews with the migrant participants—a decision that of course prevented me from having a full transcription of the interviews to come back to

again and again, mulling the implications of this statement and that. As a way of mitigating this disadvantage, I developed a system of recording in writing as much as possible of the information obtained from the interviews. During an interview I would pay close attention to the words and phrases used by Huyen and the interviewees. Then I would check up on the contextual uses and implications of those that had caught my attention, not only with Huyen but also with my Vietnamese language teachers and other local acquaintances. This exercise not only allowed me to see if anything had fallen between the gaps, so to speak, that is, between questions I had posed to the interviewees and the way they were translated; it also enabled me to better understand the subtle differences in the meanings assigned to closely related words.

Furthermore, Huyen and I would go over each interview to ensure that no piece of information was missing or had been misinterpreted. We used our post-interview review sessions to discuss anything and everything I was unclear about after we had reread my notes based on her on-site translations. Huyen would remember remarkably well both the flow of each interview and its details, but at times she would jog her memory to make it regurgitate the exact phrase the participant had used in the interview. I later learned that her memory skills had come to her via her unusual living and studying conditions during her college days. Living in a shared accommodation with other migrants, she would study until late at night without any light on, because her migrant roommates had to go to work early in the morning; once the shared light had been switched off, she had no choice but to mentally survey her textbooks and the notes she had taken in class. This experience, she told me, had done wonders to improve her memory-retention!

One of the challenges we faced came in the form of the exaggerated expectations of monetary assistance held by some of the low-income migrant families we observed and interviewed. They would never ask me directly to give or lend them money, but several migrant parents would pointedly note, accompanied by an appealing look and repeatedly using the the word *nghèo* (poor), that their family was suffering financially. Given that these families have (or previously had) received monetary support from international NGOs and foreign benefactors, it is possible that they saw me as a potential new sponsor. Huyen would take the brunt of the blame when we politely explained that we could not accommodate their monetary needs as much as we wanted to, because I was a student researcher working on a limited

budget. She once expressed to me her discomfort with having to deal with the “financial talk.” On another occasion she told me how one migrant grandparent whom we had interviewed later leveled the false accusation, to her sister-in-law who runs a small variety shop in the neighborhood, that Huyen had gotten in the way and refused to help the family when the grandparent had asked me to help pay the family’s rent. Perhaps most difficult of all was the time when a migrant mother showed up on Huyen’s doorstep in the middle of the night, with her newborn baby in her arms and tears in her eyes. She begged Huyen for help, telling her that her son had gotten sick and that she had no one else she could borrow the needed money from. Such sad anecdotes make it clear that even though we tried to explain frankly to the participants what we had set out to accomplish, what we wanted to learn from them, and what we could and could not do for them, the mere fact of our being on the scene, visiting with and interviewing these migrant families, misleadingly generated expectations that it was beyond our ability to control. Although we restrained ourselves from giving away money too easily, doing so only when there was some hugely compelling reason to make an exception to our rule, at the time of our home visit we usually would bring some food and/or household essential that the migrant families invariably were in need of. I also sometimes would buy goods from migrant parents, when we interviewed them for long periods of time while they were working on the street.

In what follows the study will explore how economic, social, and cultural resources are being accessed and used by migrants , and will seek to determine what challenges their patterns of resource-mobilization present in the context of post-*doi moi* Vietnamese society. As will be illustrated in the next chapter, migrants’ access to economic resources through formal channels is rather limited, due to their temporary or unregistered residential status in the city. As a consequence, migrant families having only limited ties to their home villages turn to informal monetary sources in times of financial adversity, while eking out a meager living from unstable jobs within the informal sector.

CHAPTER IV: MIGRANTS' DIFFICULT QUEST TO ACCESS ECONOMIC RESOURCES

With its relaxation of state control over population mobility, the post-*doi moi* period has opened up new paths migrants can use to pursue economic opportunities in destinations outside of their place of origin. It makes sense, given the state's transition from a centrally planned economy to a market-oriented one under the "open-door" policy, that the motivations compelling migrants to move have been predominantly economic. The 2004 Vietnam Migration Survey (VMS) reported that approximately 70 percent of the respondents had migrated either in search of employment or to improve their living condition (GSO & UNFPA Viet Nam, 2005; UNFPA Viet Nam, 2007). Given that the ratio of the average urban income to one derived from farming is said to be as much as five or even to seven to one (Guest, 1998), one cannot be surprised to find, at the root of urbanward migration, people's strong attraction to economic opportunities. The 2004 VMS further revealed that migration did, in fact, lead to an income-increase: over 80 percent of the surveyed migrants stated that their post-migration incomes were higher, or much higher, than their pre-migration incomes (GSO & UNFPA Viet Nam, 2005; UNFPA Viet Nam, 2007).

While economic incentives undoubtedly are at the base of many migrants' decisions to move, existing studies on migration in Vietnam rightly point out that motivating factors often are multi-layered (Dang, N.A. et al., 2003; Save the Children, U.K., 2006; UN Viet Nam, 2010a). Economic reasons often are comprised of varied sets of determinants, such as finding ways to generate and increase the source and amount of income as well as to achieve economic security. Moreover, migrants' decisions to move to new destination areas are not a mere manifestation of individual needs or wants. Rather their decisions often are closely linked to the coping and survival strategies devised by each household, as well as to family and kinship ties (Dang, N.A. et al., 2003). Among the migrants surveyed in the 2004 VMS, "about two-thirds of male migrants and 80[%] of female migrants" acknowledged the involvement of other family members in their decision to migrate (UNFPA Viet Nam, 2007, p.13).

The instance of female single migration to Hanoi can help us to see how household strategy plays its significant role within the decision-making process as to a family member's attempted migration. Jensen et al. (2008), by taking a household-strategies approach sees that migration as being driven "by intra-household hierarchies of power and [...] wider socio-cultural expectations of gender" (Chant & Radcliffe, 1992, p. 23), as well as by economic necessity, were able to convincingly argue that rural

women's decision to migrate to Hanoi and become roving street-vendors was structured by both intra-household dynamics and a set of village norms. These researchers found that despite their reluctance to spend time away from their families and especially from their children, village women migrated without much choice—often under family pressure, and heavily influenced by village norms that designate women as migrants—so as to earn extra income outside of farming labour. By contrast, men normally remain at home but have the choice to migrate if they decide to do so.

The practice of remittances—stated most simply, sending money back home—is another widely recognized example of how migration contributes to the preservation of family and kinship ties in the migrants' home villages, as well as to the improvement of their living conditions. The remittances are used to cover a broad range of expenditures, from debt-repayment to healthcare and education fees, and from daily necessities to expenses incurred via ceremonial rituals and family emergencies (Save the Children, U.K., 2006). According to the 2004 VMS, 48 percent of male migrants and 54 percent of female migrants had sent money home during the twelve months prior to the survey, with the amount of their remittances making up 10 percent of the total income of male migrants and 17 percent of that of their female counterparts, on average (UNFPA Viet Nam, 2007). Remittances thus seem to have a twofold function: they serve as an emotional lifeline for the migrants by tightening their connections to their home villages, and they are a vehicle for the amelioration of the standard of living in the rural areas.

The practice of spending remittances varies widely, along with the socioeconomic circumstances of each migrant family and the degree of intensity of its ties to the home village. Anecdotal evidence that emerged from my interviews with unregistered, longtime migrant families revealed that the poor state of their finances almost never allowed them to send remittances to their extended families; their hands were simply too full providing for the immediate family member in the city. The attenuation of village ties over the years, as a result of longtime migration to the city, also explains the infrequency of remittances; as does, in some cases, the loss of land or permanent residency in the place of origin. Even those migrant families I interviewed who maintain village connections indicated that they return to their home village only once or twice a year, at most; on such occasions, perhaps timed to coincide with a festival like *Tet*, they may give some money to their aged parents. Such merely occasional sendings of remittances stand in stark contrast to the norm we perceived to exist among those migrant parents who

had left their children back in the village; these exceptions to our above-stated rule would regularly send money back to the guardians of their children (normally, the parents on the father's side) to pay for their children's education fees plus other daily essentials.³⁹

In short, the post-*doi moi* era has provided rural migrants with increased mobility and more economic opportunities. In the urban centers in particular, the rapid growth of the informal economy has helped unskilled and low-skilled migrants to augment their economic resources by taking on small trading and service-related jobs. In response to the socioeconomic changes brought about by the state's policy reforms, people are strategizing ways to improve their economic security by pooling and sharing family incomes (Dang, N.A. et al., 2003). One should remember, however, that neither the practice nor the nature of sending remittances is not uniform among the migrants. Remittances can play a major role in the maintenance and improvement of living conditions in the rural homes of some migrants, such as seasonal migrants and non-seasonal migrants whose immediate family members remain in the village, but this is not necessarily the case with those migrants who reside in the city with their immediate families and no longer retain close ties to their home village.

Limited Access to Formal Economic Resources

Migrant networks, usually comprised of relatives and friends who share a place of origin, provide a vital information resource, a way of unearthing economic opportunities in the destination area. The importance of such informal networks in easing new-fledged migrants' urban entry can scarcely be overstated (Dang, N.A. et al., 2003). According to the 2004 VMS (as cited in UNFPA Viet Nam, 2007), "three in four migrants already knew someone" (p. 14) in their destination area.

Conversely, migrants almost never enter the formal channels in their search for employment opportunities in the destination areas. A mere 1 percent of the same survey respondents said they made use of information provided by government or private employment agencies (UNFPA Viet Nam, 2007). This finding attests not just to people's traditional distrust of "the establishment" but also to the fact that

³⁹ A migrant mother from Hung Yen Province told us that she sent remittances on a regular basis to cover the fees of her children attending the primary school in the village. Although in this case *send* is the wrong word, for whenever she had earned a good round sum such as 1 to 3 million VND, she returns to her village and hand-delivers the money to her own mother, her children's guardian.

even within the localities where migrants have their permanent household registration, labor-market information pertaining to areas others than their own often is not available for them to access via the local authorities responsible for labor issues (Le et al., 2011). Neither formal institutional bodies at the provincial and ministerial levels nor the *Trung tam gioi thieu viec lam* (Centers for Employment Introduction), administered by DOLISA in the larger cities, serve well as information-providers for job-seekers, primarily owing to their lack of coordination and their limited employment information.

Existing social policies and support programs seeking to alleviate the hardships of the poor are often bound up with the *ho khau* system (Le et al., 2011). This means that most temporary as well as non-registered migrants are not eligible to benefit from government schemes targeted at the urban poor, among them being the National Target Programmes (NTP) (previously called Hunger Eradication and Poverty Reduction, or HEPR) and the Social Policy Bank. “Credits from hunger eradication and poverty reduction programmes, school fee reduction or exemption, free medical care booklets, etc. explicitly exclude migrants from being qualified recipients” (Le et al., 2011, p. 11).

The Bank for Social Policy was launched in 2003, replacing its predecessor known as the Bank for the Poor. It is an official credit program that provides loans through a small-group system (Save the Children, U.K., 2006). Borrowers are allowed to apply for loans of up to “VND 7 million for a 1-5 year period at an interest rate of 1.5%” (p. 96). “The migrants living in cities or towns without KT3 family registration, a house or a stable job, cannot access this programme” (p. 96). Another of the formal credit sources available in the localities is the Women’s Unions, deemed more flexible because providing credit even to some non-permanent resident migrants (Save the Children, U.K., 2006). Still, credit gained through the Women’s Unions is out of reach for the majority of residents having temporary permits (those previously categorized as KT3 and KT4); only a lucky few gain admittance via a close contact with an official of the credit program.

When it comes to other formal credit-providers, such as commercial banks, the situation is essentially the same as that found at the government credit programs: access is for the most part restricted to those who have permanent household registration. Essentially the permanent-residency document “serves as basic collateral in securing bank loans” (“Urban poor undetected by Vietnam,” 2010). Migrants holding only temporary permits, and non-registered migrants, are thus not qualified to obtain

bank-loan services.

Existing studies and survey results both point to the existence of a significant gap between migrants' needs and their access to credit. In the 2004 VMS, the respondents ranked access to credit first, among the types of difficulties faced by migrants as a result of not possessing permanent residency in the area of current residence. Within the 42 percent of those who stated that they had faced difficulties due to their non-permanent residential status, nearly 46 percent pointed to their inability to gain access to loans as constituting a major difficulty (GSO & UNFPA Viet Nam, 2005; UNFPA Viet Nam, 2007). Such a result clearly bespeaks the migrants' crying need for easier access to loans, as does the very same survey's finding that "only 22% of the migrants had received loans from formal credit channels, such as commercial banks and government bodies, whereas 46 percent of non-migrants had accessed loans from formal sources of capital" (UNFPA Viet Nam, 2007, p. 20).

Money-Borrowing

Given the migrants' lack of either a formal support system or access to formal credit sources, one can't help but wonder what they do when they are in need of immediate financial assistance. One major available option is to get loans from private lenders. Unfortunately these lenders of "hot loans" charge extremely high interest rates, often ranging from 15 to 20 percent per month. As will be described further in Chapter VI, receiving and providing assistance in non-monetary forms is fairly common among migrants. Indeed the 2004 VMS (GSO & UNFPA Viet Nam, 2005) revealed that migrants receive non-monetary forms of help more frequently, as opposed to monetary assistance, after their arrival at their destinations. Among the different types of assistance, moral encouragement was most often provided (71.3 percent women, 67 percent men), followed by help with housing (59.5 percent women, 56.8 percent men), finding a job (43.9 percent women, 39.3 percent men) and material help such as food, clothing and other basic necessities (35.8 percent women, 31.1 percent men); monetary help (27.3 percent women, 21.7 percent men) fared poorly in comparison with most of the other non-monetary forms of assistance. Little wonder, then, that a study conducted by Save the Children U.K. (2006) called for increased attention to the soaring rates of indebtedness among migrants, its dual causes being dependency on hot loans at places of destination and lack of access to formal credit. Both practices clearly are hindering migrant families' efforts to improve their economic circumstances.

Interviews with the migrants participating in this study confirmed their propensity to borrow money from loan sharks at usurious rates of interest. While a handful of families are lucky enough to find an NGO and/or a foreign individual who is willing to provide them with financial support, most of them have no such alternative to turn to. Instead they invariably pawn their possessions⁴⁰ or borrow money from private lenders, thereby only ensuring a slide into increased indebtedness and downward mobility⁴¹.

Interestingly, when referring to the private lenders, some of the participants used the term *bạn* (friends). Among the loan sharks there are not only professional lenders for whom money-lending is their primary occupation but also neighbors and migrant “friends” or—at the very least colleagues, in the sense of fellow migrants holding precisely the same sort of unskilled low-skilled jobs as their borrowers do—who lend money at high interest rates only when they are asked to do so.

While the consensus shared by migrants and non-migrants alike is that relatives are the first people to ask for support in times of financial crisis, the fact remains that migrants without dependable relatives or access to formal credit sources or individual/NGO-based assistance networks have no other option than to borrow money from private lenders. Lending money to such migrants who have only the most limited of financial assets or collateral is a high risk for the lender. Because borrowers may delay repayment or never repay at all, lenders charge them at extremely high interest rates, even if the parties to the deal are acquaintances or friends.

As she was telling me how she sometimes asks her “friends” to lend her money, a mother in her forties, who, along with her 10 year-old daughter, sells foreigners touristic products such as postcards, bamboo fans, and baseball caps around the Hang Dau lake looked over my shoulder at her fellow street-sellers from whom she would borrow money when she had to. When I asked if she ever asked family members or relatives in her home village to lend her money, she replied “My parents are already dead. My three older brothers are still living in Thanh Huyen, which is my home village, but I hardly see them and have very little contact with them.”

⁴⁰ A *xe om* driver and father of four children told me he had pawned his motorbike several times when his family needed a large amount of money. Pawnbrokers assess the amount of a loan based on the market value of the particular item. In this case the man was once allowed to borrow 6 million VND; during the two-week loan period he was charged 20,000 VND per day and he ended up paying 400,000 VND in total. There also was an incident in which the motorbike he had pawned was resold without his consent after just a week.

Similarly, a widowed mother of two children in her mid-thirties said this:

When I'm having difficulty, financially or otherwise, I don't consult with anyone. I do, however, ask my friends in the Thanh Ninh area every once in a while to lend me some money, and they will lend the money with high-interest rates, often as much as 15 to 20 percent.

This issue of an absence of relatives to whom one can turn to in times of crisis emerges also from the comment made by another mother of three children in her forties:

When our family is having financial problems, my husband and I sometimes ask our neighbors for help. Some neighbors will lend us money so we can pay our bills, but we need to pay them back with interest. . . . Neither my parents nor my husband's parents are alive, and there are no relatives who can lend us money.

Reluctance to ask one's own siblings for financial help was shared by a woman who resides with her husband and two daughters in the "brown village":

My father passed away when I was still young, and my mother single-handedly raised all of us. . . . Even though I have several brothers living in Hanoi, I feel reluctant to ask them for money. So instead of seeking their help, I usually go to friends who are doing similar business to what I do, like tea-selling. When I borrow money from them, I have to pay them back with high rates of interest.

It would be hasty to conclude, however, that the rare practice among these migrants of borrowing money from their relatives, as it stands in contrast to their heavy reliance on informal loan-providers/friends, bespeaks a weakening of social ties within and between migrant families. Members of some migrant families did admit to me that the frequency of their visits to their home villages has decreased over the years; so too, many of the children do not accompany their parents when the latter return to the countryside, with the sole exception to this rule being made for *Tet*. Still, and as illustrated in existing studies, it is a by no means uncommon practice for migrant families to maintain ties with their home villages by sending back remittances. It is reasonable to assume that the rural relatives do not lend a financial hand to their migrant relatives in the city for the simple reason that keeping themselves alive is all they can manage to do.

Some migrant parents receive financial assistance from their grownup children. A divorced mother of three children told me that although she was hesitant to ask her own children for financial help, her grownup son and daughter had offered to support both their mother and their younger sister, who

⁴¹ During my follow-up study in 2013, several migrants who had turned to loan sharks in the past indicated that nowadays some private lenders are reluctant to offer loans, owing to the large number of migrants who repudiate their debt or simply are incapable of repaying their loans.

lives and works with the mother on the street, by paying their bills as needed. In the case of another migrant family working on the street, the daughters would give all the money they earned from street-selling, on average 40,000-50,000 VND per day, to their mother, who handles the family budget.

The relative rarity of borrowing and lending money among family members appears to extend beyond the city so as to include the rural areas as well. In her study of the changing living conditions of rural families in the Mekong Delta, Shibuya (2000) observed that offerings of monetary help between parents and children, or among siblings, were infrequent except in a time of emergency such as someone's hospitalization. In such cases family members pool the amount of money needed to pay the bills. The prevalence of indebtedness among the village residents, brought on by borrowing money from private lenders charging high rates of interest, shows that family members generally are in no position to lend money to support other members, even if they want to.

Some of the migrant families whose members I interviewed were lucky enough to have established contacts with NGOs and foreign individuals who agreed to support them financially. As of 2010 there were at least four NGOs operating in the Thanh Ninh area that provided assistance to migrant families in both financial and material forms. Although varied in terms of budget, size of staffing, and services⁴² provided, all of these NGOs' primary target is children who have no formal schooling and come from socioeconomically disadvantaged families. One of these NGOs has been kept in operation based primarily on the personal funding of an American family that has adopted a daughter from Vietnam, and secondarily by other individual donations. Employing local social workers, this NGO helps children to attend state schools. It pays for tuition and other school-related fees on the condition that the children study full-time and do not work outside the home. In addition to school fees, supported families are offered cash to cover their living expenses such as housing-rental fees. While one of the NGOs recruits children both within and outside of Hanoi, the other three are working with children and their families strictly in Hanoi, and chiefly in the Thanh Ninh area. Even though their areas of support somewhat overlap, few coordination efforts have been made. On the end of the recipients, children and their

⁴² The range of supportive measures includes shelters and recreation centers for children, health services, vocational training, educational support (school placement, tuition support, informal education classes), and financial and material support for families.

families, some take advantage of having access to multiples sources of aid by indeed receiving support from more than one NGO.

Apart from the NGOs, a handful of migrant families whose members I interviewed have received financial support from foreigners from Japan and the United States. These individual “supporters” or “patrons” occasionally give money to the families for varying purposes, be it children’s school fees, living expenses for the families, or some other specific need. One of these helpers is an American man who has been living in Vietnam for more than twenty years. Extensively working in the NGO sector, he first got to know some families in the early 1990s when there was, as noted earlier, a greater number of street children working around the Hang Dau lake; this man’s NGO tried to recruit some of the migrant children for its vocational training project. Since then the NGO has shifted its focus and no longer implements projects targeting working migrant children; some of the children it has supported, now grown-ups, still are working in Hanoi, continuing to make ends meet by street-selling. The man keeps in touch with some of them and offers assistance from time to time when they are in need of extra financial help. He gives 200,000 VND per month to each family he decides to support; it is up to the family to decide how the money will be spent. The few other foreign individuals who came up in conversations with members of migrant families had no previous or current affiliations with NGOs. What these foreign supporters or patrons have in common is that they give their own pocket money.

Children Working in the Informal Sector

Another coping strategy employed by migrant families having only limited financial assets and access to formal credit sources is to increase family income and economic security by having their children work on the street. But while children’s work makes a substantial contribution to a family’s survival, it comes at the high price of compromising the educational environment of the children. In what follows I will illustrate how working children come to be conceived as breadwinners for the family and how they balance their schooling and their work life.

While the decision to migrate often emerges out of discussions held by migrating and non-migrating family members, including more distant relatives and in-laws, children who migrate with their families rarely have a say when it comes to either migration or their engagement in street work. And yet the children of many low-income migrant families engaged in street-selling, are the family’s primary

breadwinners. It certainly is clear that parents and guardians whose children work as street-sellers recognize their children's significance as income-earners. They know full well that the sympathy of tourists and other onlookers is elicited far more readily by a child than by an adult. Even in the case of children who work "alongside" their parents or guardians, they always are encouraged to approach the potential customers alone as their parents/guardians watch them, and watch out for them, from afar.

Several children now working as street-sellers told me that when they were small they accompanied their parents, working as beggars. Quynh, a 12-year-old girl whom I met near the Hang Dau lake, said she was first brought to Hanoi by her parents, who still were married at the time, when she was just an infant. The family worked around the lake, her parents carrying her on one or the other of their backs as they begged. This practice continued until she turned six years old, at which age she was sent back home to the countryside to enroll in a primary school in Nam Dinh. Another example is that of a father with a wife and three children who has been begging for decades. He told me that it always was much easier to catch people's eyes and to evoke their pity when he was accompanied by his child, as opposed to begging alone.

While children and their families working on the street often have a particular territorial base, on a certain street-corner of the city or around the lake area, they nonetheless shift their work location every once in a while. Thu for instance, as we saw earlier, usually works as a street-seller alongside her parents near one of the international chain hotels located in the city center, but on the first and fifteenth days of each lunar month she and her youngest brother routinely go to a pagoda,⁴³ because on those days every pagoda is packed with worshippers. The siblings sit in an outer corridor of a pagoda and ask for offerings, hoping to arrest the gaze of a worshiper by looking miserable, what with their disheveled hair and dirty and torn outfits. Thu and her parents alike spoke with real excitement about how much money they can make in one day when they "work" at the pagoda. "It's amazing, you would be surprised! We can make as much as 200,000 VND in just one day!"

Just as I was preparing to leave Hanoi in 2010, Thu and her parents started selling drinks, late at night until around midnight, at a traffic junction within walking distance of the location where they work during the day. Ngoc, Thu's father, sounded enthusiastic when he told me about his family's new

⁴³ My first encounter with Thu and her younger brother at a local pagoda will be elaborated upon in Chapter VI.

business. "I'm really hoping that this business will help our family to make more money so we can have better lives, you know?" The other family members, however, would tell me that business was slow lately. Their targeted customers were tourists staying at the nearest international chain hotel, and other foreign travelers passing by. There was a time when postcards sold well, but nowadays only a few tourists buy them since they can take as many pictures as they like with their own digital cameras. The warm seasons of course work better for their street-selling business than the cool ones do, because there are more tourists on hand buying their products such as fans, T-shirts, and caps. In terms of time of day, the hours from late afternoon through early night (3-4 p.m. to 9-10 p.m.) are busier than the morning hours.

Like Thu's family, some street-selling families habitually alternate their working areas, depending on the time of day. For instance, a single mother of two boys works alone near the Hang Dau lake during the day while her sons are at school; at night one often can find her at another lake area located in the north of the city center, accompanied by her kids. The mother and sons make the rounds of the restaurants and small eateries lined up around the lakeshore, selling chewing gum. Longtime street-sellers and former street children who were working in the Hang Dau area in the late 1990s and early 2000s told me that they always stayed there; it was rare for street-sellers in those days to change locations regularly or to cover multiple areas.

The money that children raise from their street-selling work becomes an important source of family income. Thuy told me that at the end of the day she gives all the money she has made to her mother. That amount varies widely, and is very unstable. On a good day she can make 100,000-200,000 VND, but sometimes she cannot sell anything for an entire week. Similar to Thuy, Quynh passes all the money she earns on to the foster mother (*me nuoi*) she lives with. "When I return home in the evening, my foster mother is expecting me to give out the money I made that day. I have no problem with that, but I can tell she is disappointed on the days I made little money or didn't make any money at all." Quynh's living situation is somewhat unique. Shortly after her return to the countryside at the age of six, subsequent to her initial migration to Hanoi with her parents, the parents got divorced and she was left with her father. He later remarried and that woman, who became her stepmother, had a baby by her father. The stepmother became abusive toward Quynh after she had given birth to the baby, and when Quynh had finished primary school her father asked one of his former "beggar colleagues" in Hanoi to let

Quynh stay with her. Their agreement was that the foster mother would provide her with meals and a place to stay, and Quynh would work full-time as a street-seller. "I'm still new to street-selling and I'm getting advice from other street kids who work in the same area. It's tough and I miss home sometimes, but at least I don't get beat up by my stepmother as long as I'm here," said Quynh.

Ha, a longtime street-seller around the Hang Dau lake, talked about how her parents sometimes got into an argument over whether she and her elder sister should continue to attend school or work longer hours. Their father, who worked as a beggar, would encourage the sisters to stay in school at least until they had completed their primary education at the charity class, whereas their mother wanted them to spend more time working so they could earn more money for the family, even if at the cost of schooling. "My Mom thinks it is a waste of time for us to go to school because we can't help her with street-selling while we are attending the charity class in the morning," said Ha. The sisters have been working on the street since they were little, and are important breadwinners for their family. On good days they each can make as much as 60,000-70,000 VND, sometimes even more, and their earnings go a long way toward defraying the family's monthly expenditures, which run to 3.5 - 4 million VND. The household finances are managed jointly by the father and the mother, with the father being responsible for the family's daily expenditures and the mother taking care of their rent.

In contrast to working migrant children, some children who followed their parents to the city but do not work outside are adjusting to the new urban lifestyle that involves spending more time at home and yet doing a narrower range of household chores. A migrant mother who moved to Hanoi with her three daughters told me that when the family was living in the countryside the daughters would spend more time helping her with household chores both inside and outside the house, with the latter tasks including farming and feeding the animals. Since their migration to Hanoi her eldest daughter has taken care of her younger sisters, cooking and cleaning while the mother works outside as a vegetable-and-fruit-stand seller.

Thus we see yet again how zealously migrant families seek and strategize ways to maximize their family income and thereby upgrade their economic security. In such efforts the children often play a significant role as income-earners, but they rarely have a voice in the decision-making as to where they will work or when or how their earned money will be spent. We also have noted migrants' propensity to

shift locations in recent years to cover multiple working territories, and have speculated that this bespeaks the growing challenge for the ever-increasing number of street-sellers to make enough money to sustain their new residencies in Hanoi.

Many working children who earn cash to help out their families told me there is not much difference in their daily routines between weekdays and weekends, except that they attend school on the weekdays. Those who were going to the charity class would spend only a few hours there, either in the morning or the afternoon, and oftentimes they were virtually forced to play hooky if their parents expected them to go to work even during the day to earn extra money. For instance, Thuy's mother would leave the house by 8 a.m. each day to work around the lake as a street-seller, and Thuy confessed that she had to miss her class a number of times in order to accompany her mother to work. It is worth noting in this connection that children working as street-sellers around the Hang Dau lake area tend to work until 10-11 p.m. during the summer, whereas during the winter they knock off at around 7-8 p.m.

Working children often shared with me their preference for going to school over working on the street. Thuy, for instance, said she would rather stay in school than go to work with her mother on the street. Even though she was having difficulty keeping up with the class at times, she enjoyed playing and talking with her friends during the class breaks, and she found school to be more relaxing than stressful. "What about when you are working with your Mom? What is it like?" I asked. Thuy hesitated for a moment, then whispered in my ear: "It's not much fun, 'cause my Mom is constantly watching me, right by my side, to make sure I'm selling, and I need to follow her around all day." Looking over at her mother, who was chatting by the lakeside with her fellow sellers, Thuy murmured, "Even now, I know she doesn't want me to waste too much time, just talking and not working." Indeed, when Huyen and I first tried to talk to Thuy directly, she ran away from us. We then approached her mother to have a chat with her. After the mother invited her daughter back to sit with us, she did so. And yet during our interview with her mother, every time the mother saw foreigners approaching she told Thuy to walk over and display her wares.

While the street-child's choice between work and school might seem to be strictly a no-brainer, in fact it was not always clear to me whether working children prefer school to work. Similarly to Thuy, Ha, first claimed that she very much enjoyed going to school because she was able to have fun with her

classmates, chatting and playing with them. Yet she later admitted that what she disliked about going to school was having to get up early in order to attend the morning class, which starts at 8 a.m. "It's really hard to wake up in the morning, because I often get back home from street-selling late at night, like 9 p.m. or even after 10 p.m. How I wish I could sleep in!" "What about studying? How do you like it?" "Well, that's the other thing," she replied. "Frankly, I don't really like studying. In the class we need to study hard and remember many things, and I found it hard. But working on the street, on the other hand, is much more simple!" Because of their long hours of street-working and the resulting lack of sleep, I often saw Ha and her elder sister Lan asleep at their desks during the class break, when their classmates were chatting, playing, or working on their assignments. When the class was over the sisters would rush back home to eat lunch, then head for the Hang Dau lake to join their parents, who were working as beggars. Ha told me that street-selling comes naturally to her, since she started working on the street alongside her parents at the age of three. Even when she was still an infant, her father would take her with him as he went begging around the lake. Ha's seemingly paradoxical remarks, whereby street work is "simple" while studying is "hard," actually well reflects her mixed feelings about her school and work lives. Her longtime experience as a street-seller has given her a certain professional pride, but her prolonged working hours leave her little time to study at home and above all take a toll on her sleep, thereby hindering her from making the most of her time in class. Then too, several times being forced to repeat the same year in the charity class has understandably deepened her diffidence at school.

One always must remember that every street-seller, be s/he an adult or a child, is always at risk of getting caught by the police. Even though the number of street children in Hanoi has indeed decreased over the years, the city regulations remain in effect and are invoked time and again by those working to get the street-sellers and small traders off the street of Hanoi.⁴⁴ Thuy has been caught by the police many times, and this unsavory aspect of her job is one of the main reasons she dislikes working on the street. Once she was sent to a detention center in Dong Anh, where she was held for fifteen days. Her elder sister, too, has been caught by the police a number of times. On one such occasion the family

⁴⁴ Clean-up campaigns are continually being implemented by the government with a view to clearing street-vendors, petty traders, and other "social evils" off the pavements and thereby bringing at least some measure of order to Hanoi's traffic chaos. While streets filled with food stalls and peddlery have long been a norm of the city, and while many believe they add a bit of charm to the city (Cohen, 2003), the government is striving, via its beautification projects, to bring some order to disorderly streets and neighborhoods.

managed to pay the police around 500,000 VND to set her free. Ha, one of the old-timers in the Hang Dau area, has gone through a series of detentions and releases over the years. Seven years ago she and her sister Lan both were sent to the detention center in Don Anh, where they ended up staying for a month. In the end their father managed to raise just enough money to bail them out. When they were released they were sent by the police right back to their home village in Hung Yen province,⁴⁵ only to come back to Hanoi a few weeks later, reunite with their parents, and get back to street work. They still get caught by the police every once in a while, but now they have found a way to circumvent being sent to the detention center: by giving a small amount of cash to the police at the time of their arrest.

In closing this chapter I wish to begin by reminding the reader that the *ho khau* system continues to play a vital role in rendering possession of permanent residency the foremost criterion determining one's ability to access economic resources through the formal, governmental channels. The state's attempts to redress Vietnam's growing socioeconomic polarization via the implementation of such official programs as NTP, facilitation of preferential loans to the poor, and increased educational and health expenditures, while laudable in and of themselves, have, largely owing to the superannuated residence-based policy, not done enough to reach, and to remediate, the target groups, which includes migrants (Luong, 2003). Although some NGOs have developed loan and saving programs for poor residents lacking access to formal credit sources, too often such implementations are restricted to certain localities that the organizations operate in and have close ties with, and they are not anticipated to replace official programs. As a result, and as has been repeatedly noted in these pages because the point stands right at the heart of this study, migrants without permanent residency turn to migrant networks so as to cope with financial adversity in the short term and to improve their economic standing over the long term.

Informal networks present both opportunities and challenges, however. On the one hand informal connections serve as resourceful information-providers, helping migrants to tap into job opportunities in their places of destination. We have seen that in the case of migrants who retain close relationships with relatives and friends in their home villages, asking them for financial help looks like an option but rarely is so in fact; many of these people have inadequate financial resources, and those remaining in the home village are in no position to extend help, being dependent on the migrants' earnings in the first place. The

⁴⁵ A northern province located about 50 km southeast of Hanoi.

major obstacle keeping migrants from pulling themselves up out of poverty is their limited access to credit from formal sources, the ones that offer loans at subsidized interest rates. We have seen that migrants lacking financially dependable contacts within their circle of friends or relatives resort to “hot loans” tendered by such informal loan-providers as loan sharks, as they try to cope with financial adversity. Accordingly, these migrants run a great risk of being exposed to even higher economic vulnerability.

The next chapter will examine migrant families’ access to social resources, or rather their lack of it, with a particular focus on the education sector. It will point to a significant gap between *de jure* and *de facto* access to formal education among migrant children. Alternative education as typified by “charity classes” or “compassion classes” offers educational opportunities to migrant children whose access to mainstream schools often is blocked by regulatory and/or financial constraints. Transferring from alternative to mainstream schools is not always easy, however, owing not only to the low compatibility of their curriculums but also to the mounting school-related fees levied by public schools and to the widespread practices of “extra study”—fee-charging supplementary, private class sessions provided by schoolteachers—and of bestowing monetary gifts upon teachers. The latter trends have become pronounced in the wake of the *doi moi*-instigated education reforms.

CHAPTER V: IMPEDIMENTS TO ACCESSING SOCIAL RESOURCES

How accessible is good schooling for the migrant children residing in Hanoi; that is, what educational options do they have? How does their residential status affect their access to state schools? How have the education reforms introduced in Vietnam along with *doi moi* impacted the migrant poor? These are the questions that this chapter sets out to answer. It begins, however, by providing its reader with a brief overview of the development and dissemination of school education prior to the economy's marketization, of the Vietnamese citizen's stipulated right of access to education within the relevant national laws, and of the nation's current education system in its two chief forms of mainstream and alternative education. It then proceeds to illustrate how alternative education has been accessed more heavily than has mainstream education by many migrant children due to their socioeconomic constraints, and delineates the financial and regulatory obstacles they face as they seek to access mainstream education. The chapter also presents a case study of alternative education, a charity class attended by migrant and underprivileged children in the Thanh Ninh area who have no access to regular public or private schools. Unfortunately, these children acquire only the most basic literacy and arithmetic skills.

As will be further discussed in the ensuing section, while alternative education in the form of so-called "charity classes" or "compassion classes" does provide a very basic sort of education to children whose financial, familial, and residential circumstances do not allow them to attend mainstream schools, the viability of transfer from alternative to mainstream schools is low, given the incompatibility of the curricula. Moreover, the ever-greater school-associated financial burdens for parents and guardians in the wake of the *doi moi* related education reforms, the prioritization of admission of children with permanent residency, and the shortage of classrooms in urban centers all are factors serving to keep socioeconomically marginalized migrant children out of mainstream education. As a result, education's potential use as an opener of pathways to social mobility for migrant children is largely being wasted.

It should be stated right at the outset of this chapter that this study is confining its discussion to the education sector, as it seeks to assess migrants' degree of access to social resources. Given that avowed limitation of focus, the study does not pretend to adequately address the issue of how other components of the social sector, such as healthcare and social protection, figure within the sphere of migrant families' courageous attempts at resource-mobilization. A look at migrants' access to rights and

resources that went beyond the education sector and compared all such sectors would afford a more comprehensive picture of the various social resources accessed and used by migrant families, in that way making a more cogent case for the increasing social burdens being placed on migrant households and the proliferation, thereby, of social inequity.

Development and Dissemination of School Education in the Pre-Doi Moi Period

One cannot begin any discussion of the education system in Vietnam without noting the deep historical influence of Confucianism. While Confucianism was introduced to Vietnam from China during the period of Chinese domination, ranging from 111 B.C. to 939 A.D., Confucian-type schools began to take shape only around the start of the fifteenth century, with privately-run village schools instilling in their pupils, right up until the nineteenth century, what was essentially a mandarin elitism (London, 2011a). Under the guidance of Confucian scholars, the students, all of whom were male, studied Confucian classics and ethics in preparation “for exams and eventual careers as clerks, bureaucrats, or mandarins” (London, 2011a, p. 6).

The emergence during the French colonial period of Franco-Vietnamese (“Annamite”) schools contributed not only to the undermining of the Confucian institutions but also to the formation of anti-colonial sentiments that eventually fueled revolutionary movements guided by an anti-colonial intelligentsia (London, 2011a). Developed in 1917, the Franco-Vietnamese school system sought to “keep Vietnamese out of French schools and to train Vietnamese for administrative occupations in a way that would not threaten French superiority” (Kelly, 1975, as cited in London, 2011a, p. 11). The greater influence of, and exposure to, French education in southern Vietnam, as seen in the presence of a larger number of Franco-Vietnamese schools in that region than in the northern and central ones,⁴⁶ precipitated regional differentials in formal education. What is more, the introduction of the French language as a major medium for instruction, and use of the Romanized Vietnamese script known as *Quoc Ngu* during the first three years of primary education in Franco-Vietnamese schools, resulted in a declining use of the Chinese characters that had long been the central tool of writing instruction within Confucian education.

⁴⁶ According to Thompson (1937, as cited in London, 2011a), by 1869 there existed in the south of Cochin China 126 Franco-Vietnamese primary schools, serving an estimated 4,000 plus students. In Tonkin in the north, on the other hand, there were just 42 Franco-Vietnamese schools, of which merely 13 were primary level; the majority, 29 schools, were targeted to the training of colonial functionaries. Moreover, the

Under the French-Vietnamese education system, the illiteracy rate among the Vietnamese people was reportedly as high as 95 percent (“Education in Vietnam,” n.d.).

A shift from education as something strictly for privileged groups to mass education was prompted by Ho Chi Minh’s call for a “war campaign” against illiteracy in 1945 (Ashwill with Thai, 2005; Woodside, 1983). Not long after the issuance of the mass-education decrees of September 1945, by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam under the control of the Viet Minh, literacy classes were being organized in northern villages for three different age-groups: from 8 to 15 years old, from 16 to 45 years old, and the over-46-years-olds. Astonishingly, just a year after the promulgation of the decree, 2.5 million people had attained literacy (Woodside, 1983). Following this so-called “guerrilla model” of education, a formal school system was designed in 1949-1950 that included the free and compulsory provision of a four-year basic education to all children aged from 7 to 13 years old (Woodside, 1983; “Education in Vietnam,” n.d.). Moreover, the creation of the so-called “School Protection Committees” in the northern communes—their chief tasks being the mobilization of the human resources needed to build primary and lower secondary schools, the appointment of teachers from the local residents, and the settlement of the contribution norms that would jointly pay the teachers’ salaries—led to the rapid rise of people-founded schools (“Education in Vietnam,” n.d.). It cannot be doubted that all such anti-illiteracy activities at the grassroots level contributed to the rapid expansion of primary schools in the north in the 1960s, “with an average increase of primary-school pupils of 9.1 per cent per year” (Woodside, 1983, p. 415).

In 1976, the two Vietnams were at last reunified. The post-reunification period then saw the integration of the national education system, with the government launching its efforts to expunge the remaining influences of the old education system in the south and to expand anti-illiteracy activities for the age group of 12-50 years old (“Education in Vietnam,” n.d.). The process began with the development of a new 12-year school curriculum and the replacement of the textbooks previously used in southern Vietnam. It was not until 1989, that a state-wide education system was adopted based on the education model in the south: a 12-year general education ranging from primary through upper secondary schools, as opposed to the 10-year system in the north (“Education in Vietnam,” n.d.).

introduction of these Franco-Vietnamese schools to the south preceded that to the north and the center by several decades.

Mainstream and Alternative Education

Current Vietnamese law enshrines the right of every citizen to receive an education, regardless of her or his background. More specifically, Article 10 of the 2005 Education Law, "Rights and obligations of citizens to learn," states that

Learning is the right and obligation of every citizen. Every citizen, regardless of ethnic origins, religions, beliefs, gender, family background, social status or economic conditions, has equal rights of access to learning opportunities. The State shall undertake social equity in education and enable everyone to get access to education. The State and the community shall help the poor have access to education, enabling gifted people to develop their talents. The State shall give priority in enabling children of ethnic minorities, children of families in areas with special socio-economic difficulties, targeted groups of socially prioritised policies, disabled and handicapped persons and beneficiaries of other social policies to realise their learning rights and obligations.

So too, Article 16, "Right to study," of the 1991 Law on Protection, Care and Education of Children (amended in 2004) stipulates that "children have the right to study," and that "children studying at the primary education level in public education establishments don't have to pay school fees" (No. 25/2004/QH11 of June 15, 2004).

In addition to the state's professed interest as elaborated in these national laws, its commitment to equal educational provision is reflected in a national program that implements the universalization of primary and lower secondary education.

The current national education system in Vietnam consists of formal or mainstream education, *Giáo Dục Chính Quy*, and non-formal or alternative education, *Giáo Dục Thường Xuyên*. Within the mainstream education the sub-sectors of the education system break down as follows: pre-primary education (*Mai Giáo*), including crèche (3 months to 3 years old) and nursery school and kindergarten (from 3 to 5 years old); primary education (*Tiểu Học*), ranging from grades 1 to 5; lower secondary education (*Trung Học Cơ Sở*), ranging from grades 6 to 9; upper secondary education (*Trung Học Phổ Thông*), ranging from grades 10 to 12; professional education with professional secondary education and vocational training/education at three levels: elementary, intermediate, and college levels; and higher education, including the college undergraduate college, master's, and doctorate levels. Within the twelve years of formal basic education, primary and lower secondary schooling is compulsory for all children as stipulated in Article 11, "Universalisation of education," of the Education Law of 2005. While the vast

majority of schools offering formal education are state-owned, there also are private schools⁴⁷ that follow more or less exactly the same curriculum as that used by their government-school counterparts (Save the Children, U.K., 2006).

Alternative education includes continuing education which currently, as stipulated in the 2005 Education Law, constitutes one part of the national education system, as well as other types of formal and non-formal education programs provided outside of the state-endorsed programs. Generally meaning to adult education of non-formal sorts, continuing education has made a significant contribution to Vietnam's high literacy rate, now estimated at 93 percent.

The universal primary education program known as *Pho Cap* has been implemented by the government with an eye toward achieving the goal of having children in all localities complete Grade 5 by the age of fourteen (Bui, 2011). In essence this program brings a form of alternative education to children who are performing at a level more than two years behind that of their cohort and thus are not admitted to mainstream education—that is, to state schools having a full-fledged curriculum (Save the Children, U.K., 2006; Tran, 2011). Since the program's leaner curriculum requires fewer weeks of class and fewer subjects to study, students enrolled in it can complete their primary education within three years, as opposed to the usual five. As is also true of continuing education that caters to adults, the program is provided by the local authorities under the auspices of the Department of Education and Training (DOET) and makes use of school buildings or continuing education centers or community learning centers located within the particular district or ward.

⁴⁷ Since the early 1990s, private schools have widely been developed in Vietnam (Tran, 2011). *Doi moi* paved the way for the coexistence of public and private establishments in the education sector, and thus an increasing number of private schools emerged in the nation's urban areas in particular. Bias against private schools as being substandard continues to make itself felt, however, with even many of its providers believing that their certificates and diplomas are less valuable than those issued by the state schools. Strictly speaking, there are four different types of educational establishments in Vietnam: (i) public schools, established and fully funded by the state; (ii) semi-public schools, founded by the state and operating with partial funding support (e.g., land, subsidies) from the state; (iii) people-founded schools, set up and financed by social or economic organizations with permission from the state; (iv) private schools, founded and funded by private owners (individuals or groups of individuals) with permission from the state. People-founded and private schools are referred to collectively as "non-state/non-public schools" or "private schools" (London, 2011, pp. 18-19; Tran, 2011, p. 134). In keeping with this general, broader notion of public/state and private schools, throughout the study I use the term "private schools" without drawing any strict distinction between people-founded and private schools. At present the degree of privatized education is highest at the pre-primary level (over 50%), followed by the upper-secondary (over 25%) and tertiary (approximately 21%) levels; the percentage of non-public schools is fairly low at the primary and lower-secondary levels (approximately 3%) (Tran, 2011, pp. 135-136).

Aside from the universal primary education program, there is also non-formal education provided outside the bailiwick of state services. Such non-formal education includes literacy classes widely called “charity classes” or “compassion classes,” and private schools chiefly targeting dropped-out students and socioeconomically underprivileged children. Charity/compassion classes often are provided free of charge by NGOs, mass organizations, and religious institutions (Save the Children, U.K., 2006), whereas private schools, regardless of how they are funded, invariably impose a charge.

Alternative education offers school-age children lacking access to mainstream education an invaluable opportunity to acquire a basic education. In effect it represents the best option for migrant children whose families’ limited financial assets or constrained working/living conditions do not enable them to attend mainstream schools. Still, the huge variability in the quality of the teaching⁴⁸ and the notable absence of the breadth and depth of education at its finest—deficiencies largely due to the compressed curriculum in the universal primary education program and to the private schools’ and the ‘charity/compassion classes’ lack of conformity with the official school curriculum—often make it difficult for students who have received an alternative education to be reintegrated into mainstream education (Save the Children, U.K., 2006; UNICEF & MOLISA, 2009). Some NGOs have been striving to facilitate the transfer of students, from the affection classes they support to state schools, by negotiating with the DOET and other local authorities in the localities, but their efforts have not always paid off and have rarely reached the national level.

Hindrances to Accessing Mainstream Education

According to the Population and Housing Census data for 2009, the enrollment rate of primary-school-age children in Vietnam was approximately 92 percent. Yet, as was rightly pointed out by the author of a previous study (London, 2011), the ongoing inherent problem with the census data—that they exclude temporary migrants—makes it likely that the primary-school enrollment rate of migrant children in primary schools is much lower than that of non-migrant children.

⁴⁸ For instance the charity class in the Thanh Ninh area, the case study here, has been running in tandem with a state school, making use of its state-certified teachers. In other “affection classes” that have been provided by two different NGOs operating in the Thanh Ninh area, all the teachers are “volunteer teachers,” most of them being college students who are getting valuable experience but do not have teaching certificates.

Then too, existing studies point to discrepancies between the *de jure* and the *de facto* operation of the Vietnamese education system; Vietnam is still a long way from its stated goals of universalizing primary education regardless of a child's socioeconomic background and granting free access to public primary schools. In an attempt to explicate the factors that have been contributing to the gap between education law and education practice in Vietnam, in the next two subsections I will be looking at the financial and regulatory aspects of Vietnam's education system. In the course of doing so I will pay particular attention to how both the education reforms enacted in the wake of *doi moi* and the state's residence-based policies are making it harder rather than easier for low-income migrant families to send their children to mainstream state schools.

Financial Barriers

Vietnam's structural shift from state socialism to a socialist-oriented market economy has necessitated the transformation and reconfiguration of the relationships among the state, market, and households within the education sector. One of the post-*doi moi* education reforms entailed an emerging concept of "socialization" or *xa ho hoa*, which essentially means a transition to "an increasing share of institutional responsibilities for the provision and payment for education away from the state" (London, 2011b, p. 83). The state's withdrawal from its role as sole and full-scale education-provider has facilitated a move toward an increased marketization of education services via the development of private and semi-public schools. This socialization process, a mobilization of resources within the private sector, has also necessitated "the introduction of the fees-for-service principle" (London, 2011b, p. 83), thereby increasing educational costs for households as the recipients of the services. Such an imposition of fees on households includes the cost of textbooks and workbooks and the collection of various school fees, not just tuition but also "an array of indirect fees, [such as] construction costs,⁴⁹ PTA fees, lunch fees, fees for the use of school facilities and equipment, like electricity" (UNICEF & MOLISA, 2009, p. 20). School essentials such as uniforms, bags, and stationery, as well as means of transportation, also must be borne by households.

For many migrant families whose members are engaged in such unstable and poorly paid jobs as collecting garbage, street-vending, small trading, and motorbike (*xe om*) driving, the burden of school fees

⁴⁹ These often are listed as being "contributions" to school construction or rehabilitation, but parents are compulsorily being charged with construction costs as part of the school fees by local authorities.

has long been an impediment to sending their children to public schools. Even those parents who manage to get their children enrolled in state schools often complain about the significantly high number of non-tuition fees as opposed to the tuition fees themselves.

As if such fees were not a sufficient burden for households to bear, it has become the norm for children who attend state schools to also do “extra study” or *hoc them*. This comes in the form of fee-charging supplementary, private class sessions provided by schoolteachers (London, 2011b), who always are eager to augment their meager incomes.⁵⁰ These sessions normally take place outside of school premises, often at a schoolteacher’s residence. “Extra study,” which has grown into an informal business carried out by low-paid state schoolteachers, started its transition from rare to common to normative back in the late 1990s. Initially it was a way not only of reviewing what was covered in the classroom but also of expanding students’ knowledge based upon the classroom instruction.

That rationale seems innocent enough, and attendance of extra study sessions is not compulsory. Unfortunately, however, in an attempt to increase their students’ attendance at extra study, some teachers purposely cover only half of what should be taught in class so as to save the rest for the extra-study sessions. Others provide special sessions to prepare students for in-class exams. Thus students and their parents/guardians often are under considerable pressure to have the children enroll in the extra-study classes, because attendance there can significantly upgrade students’ performances on school exams and can allow a student to curry favor with the teacher. The amount charged for extra study varies, depending on subject and grade level.⁵¹ Students normally are required to pay for the extra-study fees at the beginning of each month. While all the subjects are taught by the same teacher at the primary level, each subject is taught by different teachers at the lower secondary and upper secondary levels.

⁵⁰ The average monthly salary of public schoolteachers ranges from 1.5 million to 1.8 million VND.

⁵¹ In the case of a particular first-grader attending a public primary school, the student attends extra-study sessions in Vietnamese literature and mathematics, both of which are taught by the same teacher. A monthly fee of 1 million VND is charged by the teacher to each student. For comparison purposes, a particular tenth-grader going to a public upper secondary school attends extra study sessions in mathematics, physics, and chemistry. Mathematics class sessions are held four days a week and charged for on a monthly basis (400,000 VND per month); physics and chemistry sessions are both given once a week and the charges are 100,000 VND and 70,000 VND per session, respectively.

In addition to the extra-study payments, parents offer teachers other gifts, often monetary,⁵² on special occasions and these serve as important sources of additional income for teachers. Such occasions include Teacher's Day (November 20th), Women's Day (October 20th), Mid-Autumn Festival, the beginning and the end of the school year, and the Lunar New Year. Needless to say, most of the migrant parents and guardians cannot afford such gifts or private classes, given their marginal economic condition.

A retired schoolteacher reflected on how monetary gifts to schoolteachers, or *phong bì gửi thầy cô giáo*, began to prevail. Although there has long been a norm in Vietnam that you offer a gift when you ask someone a favor, it was not, he told me, until after the advent of *doi moi* that gift-giving from parents to teachers on various occasions became common. At first, gift-giving took a non-monetary form. Fruit, such as oranges, was a most popular gift item for Teacher's Day. But with the growing circulation of money as part of the shift to a market economy, gift-giving increasingly has taken a monetary form. Looking back on his teaching days, this retired schoolteacher shared with me his recollection of an encounter with a mother who was trying to get her son admitted to the school where he was teaching:

About ten years ago, I met a poor widow whose husband had just died and left her with a son. She came to see me and asked for my help in getting her son enrolled at the school where I was teaching at the time. I told her that our school would be willing to take him, in because it catered to children from disadvantaged families just like him. I then asked her to come to our school the next day with her son, and to bring his grade reports from his previous school as well as his birth certificate. The following day she and her son turned up at my doorstep, not at school as I had specifically asked her to, with his school documents, a bag of gifts, and an envelope in hand. I told her that I understood her hard living conditions and that she would not need to bring me any gifts because I was willing to help her and her son no matter what. After I asked her to come back and see me the next day at school, she left. However, they never showed up the following day. Then about two weeks later, I saw her son at school. I later learned that after she came to see me, she approached another colleague of mine for help and gave him the gifts in exchange for her request; he gladly received them. You see, I turned down the gifts out of kindness but she did not get that, unfortunately. She must have thought I refused her gifts because I thought they were too little or I wanted more money. I felt very sorry for her, because I really wanted to help her and her son without any compensation. As the Vietnamese saying goes, "There is no such thing as a free gift (Không ai cho không ai cái gì)."⁵³ People often think you are expected to give gifts in exchange for a favor done, or

⁵² Most commonly parents present an envelope containing money, but sometimes they add a small gift to make the gesture more polite. While the amount of a monetary offering varies according to area, school, and budget of parent/guardian, anecdotal evidence suggests that the average monetary gift to public schoolteachers is 500,000 VND per teacher; still, the amount is increasing year by year. It is considered desirable that parents/guardians give these offerings to all the teachers their children are associated with. As a child advances through the grades, from the pre-primary to the tertiary level, the number of teachers requiring an offering, as well as the amount of the offering to each teacher, will rise, along with the number of subjects taught by the various teachers.

⁵³ It literally means, "If you do not give anyone anything, no one will return your favour."

in anticipation of a favor. The mother must have taken it that I would not return her favor because I did not accept her gifts.

Migrant families' inability to pay private-class fees or to offer gifts disinclines some teachers to give attention to migrant students. As its worst this syndrome can even extend to the manifestation of outright discriminatory behaviors by teachers toward migrant parents, guardians, and students. In one such instance, Huynh's mother claimed in tears that she and her children were treated harshly by the children's schoolteachers. Her children had attended a local state primary school for several years before they transferred to a charity class. Because of their limited finances the parents could not afford to buy any gifts for the schoolteachers, or to send their children to attend their extra-study classes. One day the mother was called to the school by their teachers, who bluntly told her that Huynh and her brother should transfer to other schools. The official reason they gave was that the family's *ho khau* was not registered in the district where the school was located. Given that this had not been an issue for years subsequent to the children's admission to the school, and that there were other students whose *ho khau* were not registered in the district but were attending the school with impunity, the mother contended that the real reason the teachers wanted her children to leave the school was that they were unable to bring "benefits" to them in the form of gift-offerings or attendance at "extra study."

Like Huynh's mother, Ms. Hanh asserted to me that her eldest son had been maltreated by his primary schoolteacher, who she claimed was not paying him as much attention as she did most of his classmates. "You know why? Because we cannot afford to buy her any gifts!" she said agitatedly. Initially her son was attending the extra-study classes offered by the teacher but eventually he had to discontinue them because his parents could not keep up with their ever increasing fees. Since his withdrawal from "extra study," he has been given a cold shoulder by his teacher: nowadays she rarely gives him the opportunity to speak up in class, and he no longer gets called upon to write answers on the blackboard. The teacher's behaviors have led Ms. Hanh and her son to believe that she no longer cares much about him as a student. Lamenting the teacher's discouraging behavior, the mother said with a sigh and a disappointed look, "Had I been able to "bribe" her with some gifts and send my son to her extra-study classes...she would have been more attentive toward my son!"

In contrast to the financially challenged migrant parents, those enjoying better economic conditions and thus able to fulfill the teachers' informal financial needs can gain preferential treatment for their children. Huyen, mother of a four-year-old girl attending a preschool in the Hang Dau district, told me how her daughter's teacher had changed her behavior since she gave her a monetary gift of 200,000 VND on one of the gift-offering occasions for teachers. Before Huyen offered the gift, the teacher would greet her only casually when Huyen came to preschool to drop off and pick up her daughter. After the gift-offering, however, the teacher not only became more sociable and friendly, greeting her with smiles and asking her how she was, but also started to share more about how her daughter was doing in class. "I must admit that I had mixed feelings about how she changed her behavior just like that, you know? But I'm really happy that she is more caring and paying more attention to my daughter now. That's all that matters to me as a parent," said Huyen.

One must refrain from drawing any too-hasty conclusion as to what actually triggered these teachers' deficiencies in attentiveness and their discouraging behaviors toward some migrant students. It would be wrong to do so without examining a more sufficient body of substantive evidence accrued via class observations and interviews with the students in question, their classmates, and their teachers. What can soberly be said, however, based on the sort of testimonies we have been hearing from both migrant and non-migrant parents and guardians, is that within the sphere of Vietnam's current educational practice, and especially in state-school settings where the teachers' salaries clearly are inadequate, parents/guardians' financial capacity to contribute to teachers' supplementary income *matters*. Moreover, lack of access to the extra-study sessions means that the children are at a disadvantage in relation to their classmates who come from wealthier households, when it comes to taking competitive examinations (London 2007).

It also cannot be doubted that the government's promotion of "socialization" in the education sector has placed greater financial burdens on individual households and thereby made it harder for low-income families, having only limited resources to allocate to tuition and other school-associated fees, to send their children to mainstream schools, be they public or private. Not only do non-tuition school fees and extra-study sessions add up to far more than tuition, but the combined amount keeps rising as students move up to higher grades (London, 2011b). Even allowing for rising household incomes at the

national level, the proportion of the average Vietnamese household's budget devoted to educational expenditures has been estimated to be over 50 percent. Given the 3:1 disparity in household expenditures on education between urban and rural areas, and the 6:1 disparity between the wealthiest and poorest quintiles (General Statistics Office as cited in London, 2011b), one can readily understand just what the urban migrant poor are up against, as they struggle to put a portion of their hard-earned money aside to pay for all the manifold aspects of their children's schooling.

Furthermore, the state's increased imposition of financial responsibilities onto households raises the vexing question of educational and social equity. Placing even more of the responsibility for educational services on the recipients' shoulders is hardly in conformity with the state's endorsement of charge-free provision of primary education as stipulated in the Law on Protection, Care, and Education of Children. At the same time, the upsurge in fee-charging practices even within the public educational establishments is steering the children of socioeconomically marginalized families away from attending state schools and extra-study classes, which flies in the face of the state's professed commitment to universal accessibility and social equity in education as laid down in the Education Law. Thus, the irony is sadly inescapable: the state's education policies, with their inevitable emphasis on "socialization" given the new socialist-oriented market economy, have only served to exacerbate inequalities by creating differential access to education resources, especially within the arena of formal education. Or to put the matter differently, those richer in the financial assets that can be used to grease the wheels of their children's education—e.g., members of the state elites and of the newly emerging urban middle class (London, 2011b, p. 93)—are gaining preferential access, as compared to their socioeconomically disadvantaged counterparts, to formal schooling. The result is wider educational opportunities for just the children of those privileged few, and thereby an uneven distribution of educational resources and development.

Regulatory Impediments

Regulatory aspects continue to play a major role, though not in absolute terms, in determining whether children can access formal education. Two such key regulatory forms are birth certificates and *ho khau*. In principle, in order for children to enroll in state schools, both their *ho khau*, confirming their permanent residency in the area where the school is located, and their birth certificates are required. The latter often

are treated as a passport to not just registration at state schools but also free health checkups and medical treatment in the place of current residence (Le et al., 2011). As for the child's possession of permanent residency, it entitles her/him to enter one of the state schools in the locality where her/his *ho khau* is registered.

The two absences, of birth certificates and of *ho khau*, often are in fact intimately intertwined. If migrants fail to return to the place of origin where their *ho khau* was registered after their temporary migration to somewhere else, their names are likely to be removed from the register after six months (Hayton, 2010). Then, when such unregistered migrant couples decide to get married or to deliver babies at the place of destination, they are sure to face various difficulties; for one thing, neither their marriage certificates nor their baby's birth registration is likely to be issued. Estimates made in 2000 suggested that over a quarter of the babies born in 2000 were undocumented, which equaled roughly 250,000 babies.

If a migrant child wished to be transferred to a state school in the locality of the current residence, s/he would need to return to the place of origin where the parents' *ho khau* was registered in order to obtain a copy of her/his certificate. Alternatively, s/he could ask the hospital where s/he was born to reissue the birth certificate, but some hospitals fulfill such requests only for a steep fee. Although the new laws and regulations introduced in 2004 now allow the registration of babies with the People's Committee at the location where they are born, not necessarily in the place where their parents' *ho khau* was issued (UN Viet Nam, 2010a), the regularization of this practice has been met with reluctance on the part of the local authorities. Some migrant children do not have birth certificates because their parents were too poor to pay for hospital fees and their mother ran away from the hospital just after giving birth. In such cases the request for reissuance of the certificate is unlikely to be accommodated. Moreover, the birth of a baby needs to be registered with both the local People's Committee and the police within 60 days of the baby's delivery. When that set of processes does not get done in time, the parent(s) are liable to be fined.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ For instance, the local police demanded that a permanent resident in the Thanh Ninh area who was not aware of this 60-day rule pay 1.5 million VND, simply because she had failed to register her baby in time; after negotiation, the fee was reduced to 1 million VND.

The socioeconomic significance of the all-important birth certificate is such that it can spell the success or failure of a child's attempt to gain entry to a state school. In the case of Phuong, a 4th-grader in the charity class, because of a simple, mistake forced her to forsake her dream of attending a state school. When she was born in 1998 her grandmother went to the administrative office in the locality where her mother had *ho khau*, to register her birth. Alas, she inadvertently wrote her name wrong, as Huong instead of Phuong. This tiny mistake later proved to be costly indeed to poor Phuong. When she reached primary-school age she applied for admission to a public school in the Thanh Ninh area that her elder sister already was attending with financial aid from an NGO; the school eventually turned down her application, pointing out that the name on her birth certificate did not match the name on her *ho khau* record. The tendering of a monetary bribe (or "gift") to local officials, along with a request to have her name on the birth certificate changed, might have helped to set her record straight, but such a ploy was beyond the financial capacity of Phuong's family.

The prerequisite of possessing valid birth certificates and *ho khau* documents therefore represents an impediment blocking access to mainstream education for temporary-registered and unregistered migrant children. Due to the overloaded status of state education facilities,⁵⁵ children without permanent residency are by no means guaranteed a seat in a public primary school if the school is already full (Save the Children, U.K., 2006; UN Viet Nam, 2010a; UNDP, 2011). Some migrant parents who lack permanent residency but have superior economic wherewithal and social connections⁵⁶ manage to get their children enrolled in mainstream schools by paying higher fees to the state schools than do

⁵⁵ The lack of classrooms, and the poor physical infrastructure of those that do exist, has been a continuing problem for primary education in Vietnam, a place where the number of school-age children is significantly greater than that of classrooms in state schools. Double-shifting or even triple-shifting of classrooms has been widely utilized as a way of tackling the problem in an era of inadequate financial resources (Trinh, 2006), but this practice has generated consequences. On the one hand it has resulted in an expansion of enrollment in compulsory education (Cobbe, 2011). On the other hand the limited hours of classroom teaching, combined with the low salary of schoolteachers, is conceived to be responsible for the growth of teachers' side-jobs, the most popular of which are the extra-study classes. Hanoi, with its high rate of population growth, has been hard hit by the shortage of school facilities and its resulting challenges.

⁵⁶ It should be noted, however, that in less frequent cases some migrant children (e.g., Phuong's elder sister) are granted admission to state schools via an introduction and assistance from NGOs even when their parents/guardians cannot afford to send them there. In such instances NGOs normally bear all the costs, including tuition and other school-related fees. One also could turn to a personal connection, but even doing that would not guarantee one's child a permanent place in a public school. Minh, the mother of two children, told me that even though her son did not have a birth certificate at the time, he once was admitted to a public school simply because Minh knew the school principal personally. Her son was doing well there but when he reached the third grade the principal resigned and the school demanded, out of the blue, that her son submit his birth certificate. When he failed to do so, he was asked to leave the school. He then had no other option but to attend an affection class offered by an NGO.

their permanent-resident counterparts, or by sending their children to semi-public or private schools that have even higher costs; neither of those options is affordable for most low-income migrant families. The Migration Impact Survey, conducted by the Institute for Social Development Studies in 2008, revealed that 43 percent of the children of those surveyed said they could not go to school; of those children, 84 percent could not go because of their non-permanent residential status—that is, they held no *ho khau* at the place of residence (Le et al., 2011). Moreover, and as previously mentioned, the residence-based policy excludes non-permanent migrant residents from benefiting from public support, such as those governmentally subsidized programs for the poor which include, among other things, exemption from school fees and provision of school supplies.⁵⁷

The only remaining educational service available to migrant children who wish to enroll in school but do not have birth certificates, *ho khau*, dependable social connections, or disposable income is alternative education. Both existing research and the data drawn from my field research suggest that affection classes—one of the major forms of alternative education—are the most probable and practical option. Migrant participants in my study whose children were attending the “charity class” confirmed that their children’s lack of birth certificates and/or *ho khau*, as well as the extra fees imposed upon non-permanent residents, were the chief reasons preventing their children from going to public primary school. The charity class, like many other affection classes, does not require incoming students to submit birth certificates or *ho khau*, or to pay any fees. A small-scale survey conducted in one of Hanoi’s migrant-concentrated neighborhoods by Save the Children, U.K. (2006), as part of their larger analysis of the plight of migrant children, found that only a small number of them were attending mainstream state schools; from the 17 families, 9 children were attending mainstream education, 13 were participating in affection classes, and 14 were not going to school at all (pp. 81-83).

And yet, as described in the preceding section, when these affection classes are compared to their full-fledged public school counterparts, they are seen to suffer from disadvantages that hinder students once placed in alternative education from smoothly reintegrating into mainstream education. For

⁵⁷ In one case of a permanent-resident household in the Thanh Ninh area that has benefited from a government-subsidy program, the family has been provided with a year’s supply of stationery (i.e., notebooks, textbooks, and pens) as well as food (e.g., rice and traditional Vietnamese rice cakes or *banh trung* for *Tet*). The head of this household was a retired woman in her sixties who previously had worked in a state-owned factory. Since her retirement she has been taking care of her physically and mentally challenged son and her grandchildren, doing so

instance, one of the remaining challenges for students who have at least found their way into affection classes has to do with their attempts to move up to state secondary schools. Most affection classes teach basic literacy and arithmetic skills, and thus are at best equivalent to the primary level of education; indeed some classes, such as this study's charity class, issue diplomas to students who successfully complete the fifth grade. And yet the widespread bias against the diplomas issued by non-public, alternative education establishments, especially when that works in tandem with the lack of birth certificates, often militates against students' gaining admission to public lower secondary schools.

What seems to be problematic about the government's stance vis-à-vis its current education services is not only its imposition of regulatory prerequisites in order to access formal education but also its "conditional" commitment to universalization of compulsory education and education equality. Two points must be made in the latter regard. First, in order for Vietnamese children to benefit from the state provision of education services and subsidies they must satisfy certain conditions, above all possession of *ho khau* in the current residence and birth certificate. This condition may be waived in exchange for increased financial charges, such as higher admission fees for non-permanent residents in the school locality⁵⁸ and "bribery" to reinstate *ho khau*/birth certificates. Having social connections can also help a household gain better access to the formal schooling of its choice even if it otherwise does not have such access, but it is likely to come with a commission fee.⁵⁹ Understandably, such alternatives are not affordable by all non-permanent children's families, let alone by migrant parents having little disposable income and lacking a broad circle of friends and acquaintances with connections to public schools. Second, the regulatory conditions sadly bespeak the state's withdrawal from its role as an education provider proactively reaching out to that marginalized migrant population which, as of now, is so clearly being denied equal access to formal schooling. The state's stance, especially as it is paired with its

via the modest income she assembles from selling porridge on the street, and adding that pittance to her pension and her government subsidies.

⁵⁸ This imposition of higher school fees applies to all students whose permanent residency is outside the locality of the school. For instance, a permanent resident child in one locality of the Thanh Ninh area was charged 7 million VND in admission fees at a public school in a ward outside her/his locality, in comparison with 2 million VND charged to incoming students with permanent residency in the ward where the school is located. In some other cases entrance fees are waived entirely for students having permanent residency in the school's locality.

⁵⁹ In one instance, the mother of a first-grade daughter paid 8 million VND to a schoolteacher who had helped her daughter to enroll in a school outside of the family's locality—that coming on top of a 2 million VND entrance fee. The greater the number of middlemen, the higher the commission fee invariably is.

promotion of the “socialization” of education, is exacerbating the unequal distribution of education services by discouraging the full-scale inclusion of those who do not meet the preconditions.

Moreover, the government’s reluctance to fully commit itself to ensuring universal access to either mainstream or alternative education, regardless of a child’s satisfactory “prequalification,” appears to be reflected in the absence of any systematized push, undertaken by state and local authorities in tandem with private education providers (e.g., private schools, affection classes, etc.), to identify out-of-school children and those at risk of becoming such. The study conducted by UNICEF and MOLISA (2009), assessing Vietnam’s child protection laws and policies acknowledged that, despite the state’s endorsement of universalized primary education and the existence of a comprehensive national program designed to assist out-of-school children in resuming their schooling, currently there are no systems or preventive measures in place to detect out-of-school children and to provide the necessary assistance to vulnerable children and their families.

In a similar vein, Save the Children, U.K. (2006) reported, based on their interviews with migrant families all across Vietnam’s regions, that few migrant families with school-age children had been approached by DOET, DOLISA, the former Committee for Population, Family and Children (CPFC⁶⁰; now part of MOLISA), or local authorities or schoolteachers to ask about the status of their children’s school enrollment or to encourage their children to go to school. The migrant families interviewed for the present study implicitly lend their support to Save the Children, U.K.’s study, for they told us that they have had few interactions with officials from the local governmental bodies or with local authorities, beyond the visits made by the charity-class teachers and the NGO staff members involved in the charity class. When some of the charity-class students dropped out of state schools and were in search of alternative education opportunities, they either were contacted by the charity-class staff or turned to a small circle of migrant friends who then put them in touch with the class.

Some government and local authorities might say that the problem they have in identifying out-of-school migrant children derives from the fact that many of the latter are either temporary or unregistered residents. And yet in my meeting with DOET personnel in Hanoi, an official involved in alternative

⁶⁰ As a government body charged with the state administration of child protection, CPFC is responsible, among other things, for coordinating the implementation of programs on the protection and care of disadvantaged children and for

education proudly claimed that there were no out-of-school children in Hanoi, brandishing as he said this a list of all the students enrolled in recent years in the alternative education schools supported by the State. But when I brought up the issue of the limited educational opportunities available to the children of non-registered migrant families, and asked about the availability of outreach activities initiated by the department, he responded hesitantly: “To be honest, there is no easy way to count or locate out-of-school children if they are not properly registered as Hanoi residents. We do count students as long as they are enrolled in school regardless of their registration status, but otherwise we won’t know for sure.” Anecdotal evidence drawn from Save the Children, U.K.’s study (2006), which itself was based upon interviews done with the local authorities in their study sites, suggests that it normally takes six months of residence in the area (which also happens to be the period of maximum temporary residence for KT4 migrants) for them to detect families having out-of-school children and to then allocate budgetary support for those children and place them in one form or another of alternative education. In other words, newly migrated children with temporary residence permits of less than six months, let alone non-registered migrant children, are entirely out of the picture when it comes to the public provision of assistance for school enrollment. One can only lament the fact that at the moment there are no proactive and systematic measures in place to identify out-of-school children, much less those at risk of soon entering that category.

It must also be admitted, however, that many migrant families do not proactively seek out public support, relying instead upon their own networks for assistance when it is needed. With respect to unregistered migrants in particular, the very fact of their unregistered residential status impedes them from accessing the public education resources that normally are available to the marginalized. Understandably, their “unlawful” status in their current residence discourages them from approaching the local authorities. The result, however, is a vicious cycle: heightened dissociation between those facing regulatory obstacles and those not even aware of them and the increasing vulnerability of the former, as that is evidenced notably, but by no means solely, by their alienation from mainstream education.

Case Study of Alternative Education: Hoa Hong River Charity Class

This section focuses on the Hoa Hong River charity class in the Thanh Ninh area, describing how it was founded and how over the past quarter-century it has managed to provide a basic education to children

organizing educational programs about, and generally fostering awareness of, child protection (UNICEF and MOLISA,

who have fallen away from, or never had access to, formal, mainstream education. It examines how the relative value of the charity class, and thereby of all types of non-formal education, is perceived by migrant parents and guardians (largely in relation to potential socioeconomic outcomes) and by the children themselves.

How It Started

The charity class was founded in 1988 on the initiative of Mr. Tuan, a longtime schoolteacher who began his teaching career in Hanoi in 1970. Following his military service from 1972 to 1976 and a subsequent two-year assignment to work in the Hanoi office of the DOET, he was appointed to teach at the Truong Thu Do education center beginning in 1978 (Ni Thư Quân Đội Nhân Dân, No 14221 of 8/12/2000, P1-2). Back in those days the Truong Thu Do, with its mission of eradicating illiteracy, was primarily targeting adults without basic education skills.⁶¹ After he began teaching at Truong Thu Do, however, he learned that a significant number of children in the Thanh Ninh area were not even attending primary school. These included the children of impoverished and migrant families, as well as migrant street children who had come to the city without their parents. In order to see for himself their living and educational circumstances and thereby gain a better understanding of them, he decided to explore the Thanh Ninh neighborhoods of the brown village and its adjacent wards along the dyke. As he strolled through these neighborhoods in the evening, after he had finished teaching his class at Truong Thu Do, he was astounded to discover that there were children who did not know how to write, read, or count accurately. “At first, no one believed me when I told them that there were literally ‘illiterate’ children out there.”

Mr. Tuan encouraged the parents he encountered to send their children to school, but it was not easy for him to convince the reluctant ones. Some parents were indifferent about their children’s education because they, too, often were illiterate or had very little education. These parents would say, “Look, our children are not going to school but they are still alive!” (*không có học mà vẫn sống!*). Children in the brown village, in particular, were hesitant to talk to strangers; they did not seem to know how to communicate with people outside of the village, Mr. Tuan recalls. Living on a boat throughout the year, these children spent most of their time with their own families and their neighbors and friends; they would

2009).

rarely “go ashore” (*lên bờ*) and there interact with outsiders. Many parents were worried that sending their working children to school would mean losing their important income-earners, leading to a deterioration of their livelihoods. Mr. Tuan was undeterred, however: “Without being given a chance to attend school, I felt that these kids were being left out of a life-cycle that every child follows, which would include schooling.”

Inspired by Mr. Tuan’s persistent efforts to promote schooling for out-of-school children in the Thanh Ninh area, his colleagues at Truong Thu Do joined in. They proposed to Truong Thu Do management that the center, as an institution whose *raison d’être* is to eliminate illiteracy, administer a charity class and create a place of learning for those children. Given the distance of about 5 km between the Truong Thu Do and the Thanh Ninh area, they suggested that the class be set up in the Thanh Ninh area as opposed to holding it on the premises of Truong Thu Do. That way, not only would the children’s class be within walking distance of where they were living but it also would have more visibility in the community. A handful of parents, seeing Mr. Tuan and his colleagues striving to open the class and reaching out to recruit out-of-school children, began to lend a hand. They assisted the teachers in organizing the class and encouraged both their own children and neighborhood kids to join it. Mr. Nam, a longtime brown-village resident whose youngest son attended the charity class until its relocation in 2013, fondly remembered the days when he and his neighbors got involved in its start-up: “At first I was skeptical about what those teachers were trying to do, because school education was something new to us. Back then, almost all the children in our village were illiterate. Seeing them keep visiting us with such enthusiasm eventually made us want to become part of their efforts and see what happened.”

As noted, since its establishment in 1988 the charity class has been imparting a basic primary level education. At the time of the startup the class essentially relied on voluntary contributions from the individual teachers’ own funds. Because of the limited budget, its initiators could not afford to rent a room; they decided the class would be held in the house of one of the students whose parents had agreed to let them use one of their rooms. The word that the class was being offered to children in the Thanh Ninh area free of charge rapidly spread through the grapevine, and soon it started to draw a large number of children who had no access to schooling. In the meantime, Mr. Tuan and his colleagues’ efforts to

⁶¹ After a series of organizational changes it now provides continuing education at the lower secondary and upper

convince the Truong Thu Do to take part in the operation of the charity class were slowly bearing fruit. In 1991, it officially came under the auspices of the Truong Thu Do.

Recent Administrative Changes and Future Prospects

Since its establishment in 1988, the charity class has opened up innumerable educational opportunities to children who have had difficulty accessing the regular public schools, equipping them with basic literacy and numeracy skills. It continues to admit students on a year-round basis and accepts children without “papers,” meaning those who have neither birth certificate⁶² nor household registration in the locality. Since so many students do not accurately know their birth name or their date of birth, and give different information every time they are asked, the charity-class teachers need to keep updating such information.

At the time of my fieldwork during the 2009-2010 school year, the charity class was administered by the Truong Thu Do in coordination with an international NGO, which began to provide funding in the 2008-2009 school year. The class was held in a rented space on the ground floor of a private two-story house located in a tiny alley off a street that is always full of noisy traffic. At the entrance to the house someone had put up a modest sign that read “*lớp học cộng đồng*” (community school). Near the entrance to the classroom was a small parking space that could hold several bicycles and motorbikes, and a spiral stairway led up to the second floor where the landlady’s family lived. The classroom itself comprised an area of about 25 square meters and had the basic set-up: ten two-person desks with green plastic chairs; a blackboard, desk, and chair for the teacher; beside the blackboard, a water-dispenser and a dish rack in which to place mugs; and a wall-mounted electric fan. At the back of the classroom was a locked glass cupboard in which textbooks, workbooks, and other students’ readings were stored; on the top of shelf several game boxes were stacked. Attached to the classroom was a bathroom with a toilet and a faucet for washing hands.

The class was held every day from Monday through Friday. Until 2011 it was divided into two sessions, morning and afternoon. In principle the first-to-third-graders were assigned to the morning session lasting from 7:30 to 10:30 with a 15-minute recess, while the fourth- and-fifth-graders attended the afternoon session from 2 to 5 with a 15-minute recess. Since the class followed the same school

secondary school levels, for students who for the most part come from disadvantaged families.

calendar as other public schools, the new school year began in September and ended in May. The first semester ran from September to January, the second from January to May. During the summer months from June to August the class was held three days a week (as opposed to five during the regular school year), but students' attendance was not mandatory. At the time of my fieldwork during the 2009-2010 school year two female teachers, Ms. Linh and Ms. Duong, had been appointed to teach the class, with each session being instructed by one or the other of them. Because it was a multi-grade class, the teachers needed to take turns teaching students of different grades simultaneously. Ms. Linh was in charge of the morning class and Ms. Duong taught the afternoon class; both teachers also were teaching at the Truong Thu Do. While Ms. Linh, the newer and younger teacher, had a teaching certificate for both the primary and the lower secondary grades, Ms. Duong, the longtime teacher, was a certified teacher for the lower secondary level only. In the mainstream education system, teachers are allowed to teach students only at the level for which they are certified. Ms. Duong and other former teachers who had been appointed by the Truong Thu Do to teach the charity class were certified to teach either at the lower secondary or the upper secondary level but not at the primary level. This somewhat unusual arrangement was due to the fact that the Truong Thu Do, the parent organization of the charity class, is a continuing education institution that targets lower secondary and upper secondary students.

The charity class imparts arithmetic and Vietnamese literature at the primary level, following the government-approved curriculum of continuing education for these two subjects. The students must take final exams at the end of the first and second semesters, and only those who pass the exams are allowed to move on to the next grade in the following school year. At the end of the 2009-2010 school year, 27 out of 34 students passed the end-of-the year exam and thus advanced to the next grade. Out of those 27, 5 students successfully completed the fifth grade and graduated from the charity class. The 7 remaining students out of the 34 were to repeat the same grade in the 2010-2011 school year, either because they had failed the exam or because they were unable to complete their year-long studies since they had been transferred to the charity class in the middle of the 2009-2010 school year. Over the last few years a steadily increasing number of students who have completed the fifth year have gone on to study in a lower secondary program at the Truong Thu Do. There were 3 fifth-grade graduates at the end

⁶² According to the charity class teachers, the children lacking birth certificates usually are *con hoang* or illegitimate

of the 2010-2011 school year and four in the 2012-2013 school year; all 7 moved on to the first year of a lower secondary education program at the Truong Thu Do. Since the charity class gained the endorsement of the MOET in 2000, after years of tenacious negotiation by the Truong Thu Do management, its students are now, in principle at least, allowed to transfer to a mainstream primary school if they so desire, and those of them who have successfully completed the fifth grade can apply for admission to lower secondary schools. In reality, however, it remains difficult for them to transfer to a mainstream school or to move on to any lower secondary school other than the Truong Thu Do.

At the time of my fieldwork in 2010 the NGO was organizing various activities for the students, ranging from free meals (breakfast or lunch, depending on the session they were attending) to basic health checkups (including height and weight checks, health education, and the distribution of deworming medicine) to presenting the students having the best attendance rates with free school supplies and other gift items, to staging recreational activities for special occasions (e.g., *Tết*, International Children's Day on June 1st, and *Tết-Trung-Thu* or Mid-Autumn Festival, which is held on the 15th day of the 8th lunar month), to gift-giving at the graduation and end-of-school-year ceremony. Above and beyond their in-class activities the NGO staff members would make home visits to check on how the students were doing at home and to keep their parents/guardians informed about their progress in the class.

Over the years the charity class has gone through a series of administrative changes. Not only has its physical location changed more than a few times but its shaky budgetary situation contingent as it generally is upon outside funding, also has resulted in a high turnover of teachers and considerable fluctuations in student enrollment. According to Mr. Tuan, the class managed to receive funding from various NGOs, both local and international, from 1997 to 2012, with the exception being the 2007-2008 school year during which it relied on self-funding. Beginning in the early 2000s the class benefited from the largesse of international NGOs, with their generous funding covering a large proportion of its administrative costs, including teachers' salaries and rental fees for the classroom. These NGOs also attracted an increasing number of incoming students by organizing a broad range of educational and recreational activities. In its heyday in the late 1990s and early 2000s the charity class could boast over 40 students and as many as 7 teachers appointed by the Truong Thu Do.

children.

The heavy reliance on external funding to keep the class running, purely positive as such funding might at first sound, has resulted in its institutional instability and caused the frequent departure of teachers who were reluctant to stay on due to low job security. “We are constantly looking for potential donors, because we cannot count on our current donors to extend their support to us forever,” Mr. Tuan told me back in 2010. Said another teacher, speaking out about job insecurity back in 2010: “We are on a short-term labor contract⁶³ with the funding agency for our teaching job in the charity class, not with Truong Thu Do. So if we lose our donors, there is a good chance that the class will dissolve and we will lose our jobs. Even though we still belong to Truong Thu Do and teach several classes there, it’s unlikely we will be able to make up the difference in lost pay.” The teacher who said that later left the class, when she landed a position at a public primary school in 2011. The number of teachers of the charity class has been on the decrease over the years; as of 2013 only one teacher, who is slated to retire from teaching in 2016, was in charge of the entire class. The decreasing number of teachers, as that is compounded by the increasing workload on individual teachers, also is making it difficult for them to find the time to pay home visits and stay in close contact with each student’s family.

The discontinuation of funding from an NGO, due to the project’s reaching its completion in December 2012, led to the relocation of the charity class from the Thanh Ninh area to the premises of the Truong Thu Do⁶⁴ and thereby to a decrease in the number of students. The student enrollment has dropped by almost 60 percent since 2010. At the end of the 2009–2010 school year, there were 34 students; at the time of my follow-up visit in September 2013, there were only 14. As a result, the class now is being offered only in the morning. Several reasons were given by the charity-class teacher and the founder of the class, Mr. Tuan, for the reduced enrollment numbers. First, the relocation of the class put it literally beyond the reach of students who had been commuting on foot and who now had no means of getting to it, such as a bicycle or a parent who could take them to and from school by motorcycle. Second, ever since the peak period of student enrollment in the late 1990s and early 2000s—which coincided with a surge of migrant children, with or without their parents, coming from rural villages in neighboring provinces to the center of Hanoi—the number of students has continued to decrease, which

⁶³ According to the labor contract, the teachers were compensated for teaching the charity class at a rate of approximately 2 million VND per month.

may bespeak a declining need for the class. While it is not easy to determine the extent to which the decreased enrollment numbers in the charity class are due to a reduction in the demand for charity classes in general, and/or to migrant and impoverished children's increased access to public schooling, the readily available funding from various organizations for disadvantaged children, plus the relaxation of admission policies in some public schools, may also serve to explain why the class is shrinking. Since the discontinuation of the NGO's project funding the class has still been offered free of charge but students no longer receive extra benefits, such as free meals and gifts of school essentials.⁶⁵

Parents' and Guardians' Perspectives on Schooling

How do the parents and guardians who are sending their children to the charity class see the value of such schooling, and its utility for their children's future? Anecdotal evidence drawn from my interviews with migrant parents and guardians suggests that they have a general sense of satisfaction that the charity class has given their children at least a minimal level of education. In the case of migrant families whose children work on the street, in particular, the ability to read, write, and count money accurately is considered an essential skill for doing well at their street job. Yet other parents and guardians attribute the value of schooling in general to its expected role of fostering a sense that one is a moral member of the society and thereby repelling unwanted bad influences, such as "social evils."⁶⁶ Both the parents and guardians of working children who stand at greater risk of being exposed to "social evils" as well as those without such children expressed their belief that a school education would allow their child to become a "useful person" (*người có ích*) who can make a contribution to society, as opposed to someone acting in opposition to the social mores.

⁶⁴ The class is now being held in a classroom of the Truong Thu Do, which is located about 5 km from its previous site.

⁶⁵ Some of the current students are, however, receiving financial support and school materials from outside aid organizations.

⁶⁶ Despite their financial instability, a good number of migrant parents and guardians shared with me their hesitation about having their children work outside, even though that could help the family to supplement its income. One major reason they cited is their unwillingness to have their children work on the street and thus pick up bad habits and/or get involved in disorderly conduct. When children break the law, parents often are accused of being responsible for their children's misdemeanour, which is viewed as a consequence of bad, irresponsible parenting. In Vietnam, where *xấu hổ* or shame plays an important role in structuring the social order, there is a deep-seated prejudice against law-breakers. They are labeled as those who are shameful and thus morally unfit to live in society. Moreover, if a member of a family breaks the law and gets sent to prison, all the members of the immediate family, and even their relatives, are treated with contempt and excluded from the community. Such practices are particularly common in rural village settings, where the social relations of the residents are so tightly knit.

Some parents' and guardians' responses also attested to their faith that schooling can lead their children to a better future. Citing their own experience, whereby low levels of education have kept them from having a better life containing a wider range of lifestyle choices, they stressed that they would do whatever it takes to put their children through school so that they do not follow in their own footsteps.

Thao, a 34-year-old mother of three daughters from Thanh Hoa province, said that schooling is extremely important and that she would never want her children to lead lives like hers. After she had finished her primary education, she stopped going to school and started working on the farm to help out her family. Later she migrated to Hanoi to work as a domestic servant. Eventually she returned to Thanh Hoa and married a man from the same village, with whom she has had three daughters. They worked hard, raising such farm animals as pigs and chickens. Five years after their marriage, they managed to build a house in the village. However, an outbreak of the bird flu, which occurred just a year after they had completed the house, had an adverse impact on their farming business, and this eventually caused her husband to migrate alone to Taiwan in 2007 while Thao and their daughters remained in the village. During the first year and a half he would send remittances to his family, but suddenly he stopped doing so for no reason. Unable to get in touch with him, Thao decided to migrate to Hanoi with her children so that she could pay off the debts she owed to a local bank and to her relatives. Since their relocation to the city, Thao has worked at a small vegetable-and-fruit stand near the charity class. Her oldest daughter assists her by tending the stand after school, but Thao told me that she refuses to picture her daughters working on the street all on their own. Another mother of two daughters in the brown village, a primary school dropout, said that she has to live a hard life owing to her low level of education and her early marriage. After her own mother went into bankruptcy, the family sold their house in Ninh Binh province and moved to Hanoi to live in the brown village in 2000. The mother was the sole caretaker and breadwinner, selling drinks on the bridge; her husband became physically disabled after being involved in an accident when working at a construction site. "The last thing I want for my daughters is that they will follow the same life-path as I did! That's why I'm doing my best to keep them in school, and not to make them drop out to work on the street with me." Similarly, Nhu, a widowed single mother from Thanh Hoa province whose only son was attending the charity class, indicated that she was willing to sacrifice herself in order to let her son continue his schooling; she believed it would give him a better chance of pursuing further

education and thereby gaining a brighter future. “Neither my [late] husband nor I had sufficient education. We both graduated from the primary school and that was it. Because of that, we have suffered a lot and had a life full of hardships. At the end of the day, education really matters.” The mother and son migrated to Hanoi after the fisherman father died in a sea accident. When I met her she was providing for her son by working all day at a *com binh dan* in the Thanh Ninh area. “If we were to go back [to our home village] there would be no future for him, except becoming a fisherman like his father, and that’s the last thing I want. I don’t want to lose my only son like I did my husband!”

Despite their conviction that schooling will lead to a better future for their children, these parents and guardians tend to shy away from getting involved in school matters. Not only do they rarely attend PTA meetings but they also feel that, because of their low educational backgrounds, they are not well qualified to help their children with their schoolwork. On top of that, it is not easy for migrant parents who work outside the home for long hours to spend enough time to work closely with their children and check up on how their classwork is going. Even the parents who occasionally did attend PTA meetings confided that their educational and financial background always made them feel timid; and indeed, they rarely spoke up.

Their inactive school involvement, along with their diffident behavior, has left a widely held impression among schoolteachers that migrant parents and guardians leave everything to the school. As a charity-class teacher put it, “they don’t think that children’s schooling is part of their responsibility, but that it’s all ours!” Also referring to parents’ heavy reliance on schoolteachers, another teacher remarked that the teachers must find ways to foster parents’ interest and encourage their active involvement in the children’s school affairs.

It is worth mentioning that some families managed to send their children to mainstream public schools with financial support from NGOs, even as their siblings attended the charity class. These parents’ responses seem to suggest that they assess the utility of schooling based on their various children’s intellectual capacities and ages. In referring to their children who were attending the charity class, these parents (or guardians) often would emphasize that they were slow learners. “My daughter has been going to the charity class for more than a year, but she is not a fast learner like her older brother and it takes her a lot of time to catch up on what she studied in class,” claimed Huynh’s mother. Prior to

joining the charity class Huynh attended a mainstream public school in the Thanh Ninh area, where she repeated the first year for three years in a row⁶⁷ and eventually dropped out. After having been transferred to the charity class, there she was when I came on the scene, still enrolled as a first-grader. “Hopefully, she will complete the first-grade this year and move on to the second grade,” said the mother. Huynh’s brother has been attending a local public school courtesy of a scholarship given to him by an NGO, on the condition that he maintain his academic record in the superior range. Similarly, a grandmother, who was helping to support her two granddaughters as well as her mentally and physically challenged middle-aged son by selling porridge on the street, noted how pleased she was with her younger granddaughter, a charity-class student, for getting at least a basic education. “She is assiduous, but not very bright. As long as she knows how to write and do the math, I think she will be fine. If she is going to become a street-vendor like me in the future, she will at least need to know how to count.” By contrast, she had high hopes for her older granddaughter, who was attending a public secondary school. “She is very smart and studies very hard. I hope she will continue to excel in her studies and land a job in the government sector. She tells me she wants to become a police officer in the future,” said the grandmother proudly; she added, however, that it was ironic that the granddaughter desired to become a police officer, given that her parents were in prison for selling drugs.

In addition to the children’s intellectual capacity, age is seen by parents and guardians as being another issue when it comes to who is better suited to a non-formal type of education such as the charity class. As noted, it was not uncommon to see older children studying there in grades lower than those appropriate to their age. Some, like Huynh, would repeat the same grade for more than a year, each time failing to pass the end-of-the-year exam. Others would join the class so as to resume their schooling after an extensive out-of-school period. Thanh, a 19-year-old girl from Bac Giang province, was one such student who was studying in the charity class along with her younger classmates. Although occasionally the class would admit an older-aged student such as she, those students tended not to stay long because they not only had a hard time balancing study with work but also found it uncomfortable to be studying with young “peers” half their age. When Thanh was studying in the morning session with other classmates in the lower grades, her ardor caught everyone’s attention. She was commuting from outside

⁶⁷ There is no automatic promotion, even at the primary level, in the current Vietnamese education system.

of the Thanh Ninh area, a half-hour bicycle ride, but she would never miss the class, even in a heavy rain.⁶⁸ Since her migration to Hanoi in 2008 at the age of 17 she has been working as a live-in babysitter and apprentice for the family of a younger sister of her foster mother, who runs a tailor shop. Thanh was adopted by her foster mother in Bac Giang, a local schoolteacher, after her biological parents were divorced when she was just a toddler. After the divorce her mother remarried, to a new Chinese husband, and left Thanh in the care of her foster mother, who was one of her neighbors. Even though Thanh was hoping to continue her schooling all the way through the lower secondary and upper secondary levels, her aunt, the foster mother's younger sister, brushed off such a crazy idea. "Frankly speaking, it's of little use for her to study in the charity class. I mean, she is too old to study at the primary level anyway. . . . I keep telling her to go to a vocational school instead, so she can acquire more practical skills and get a job. But she never listens to me." At that point the aunt sighed. "I'm not saying that she is intellectually challenged or anything like that. In fact, she knows how to read and write and understands the basic math. But look at her, she's nineteen, almost twenty now, and yet she is still studying as a fifth-grader. . . . I just don't think her studying in the charity class will get her anywhere." The aunt once offered to lend Thanh money so she could start up a business on her own but Thanh turned down her offer, insisting that she wanted to continue her schooling. "Thanh says she wants to become a teacher like my sister, or even a doctor, but neither me nor my sister thinks it's going to happen. It's just unrealistic, and she needs to understand that," said the aunt bluntly.

In summary, most of the parents and guardians of the charity-class students perceive the value of schooling as a pathway to success. They want their children to acquire a basic education not just to improve the literacy and numeracy skills needed for daily survival but also to develop social morality, and thereby keep at arm's length the undesirable social influence typified by "social evils" so as to become a person who makes a contribution to society. Such hopes and beliefs uneasily coexist with their inability, owing to long working hours, and reluctance, owing to a shameful awareness of their low educational backgrounds, to get actively involved in school affairs. The responses of the parents and guardians who have children attending public schools or the charity class indicate that they evaluate the worth of

⁶⁸ Because of poor drainage facilities in Hanoi heavy rain, even for just a few hours, can cause water to pond and thereby produce traffic congestion. In the charity class, if the attendance rate was very low on rainy days, the class would be canceled.

schooling relative to the level of each child's intellectual ability and her/his age. Among the charity-class students are underachieving children, slow learners who repeat the same grade, and students who do not meet the age requirement for admission to the regular public schools. Understandably, the parents and guardians have higher expectations for their better-performing children enrolled in public schools than for those attending the charity class. The unfortunate result has been a reinforcement of the idea that non-formal types of education such as the charity class are suited strictly to those who do not meet the "standard," not only in regulatory and financial but also in intellectual terms.

Children's Perspectives

How do children see the value of schooling and its utility for creating their own futures? The data drawn from my interviews with the charity-class children suggest that most of them, beyond an exceptional case such as Thanh's, take a cynical view of schooling. Their somewhat pessimistic responses with respect to its potential to help them build their future life stand in stark contrast to the expectations of the class providers, by which term I mean the teachers, the founder of the class, and the members of the NGO that was offering funding for the class at the time of my fieldwork. They would share with me their high hopes that the charity-class education would boost their students' self-confidence and integrate them into the wider society, enabling them to lead a life of greater socioeconomic self-sufficiency because they can fill a wider range of occupations. And yet the children themselves almost never shared with me any such vision of how the acquisition of a basic education would help them to climb up the academic and social ladders. Virtually all of them said that most likely they would follow in their parents'/guardians' footsteps, engaging in casual laboring jobs or working in the informal sector. Just as their parents and guardians were largely content to have the children obtain just the charity-class minimal level of education, so too the children had no desire to pursue education at a higher level, beyond the upper secondary or even the lower secondary school. Rather, they were quite exclusively concerned with how they can have a more financially stable life in the future. One female student told me she probably would work as a bar hostess just like her big sisters⁶⁹ (who also had attended the charity class), and would be glad to do so because they were making good money. Another female student said, "Many people ask me what I want to do for my life when I finish school. . . . Well, as long as I can earn a lot of money, I don't really care. I just don't

want to suffer financially like my parents when I grow up.” A male student responded sarcastically, when Huyen and I asked him how he thought the charity class would help his future, “How do *you* think it will help us to get a good job in the future? Do you *really* think that the knowledge we are taught in this class will take us somewhere, say, to go to college eventually?” As illustrated by these students’ remarks, there was a general sense of resignation among the charity-class students, a feeling that the mere acquisition of a basic education would not help them to climb up the academic and social ladders.

Thus, the charity-class students would rarely talk about their academic ambitions, instead making more critical and realistic assessments of what kind of future most unlikely lay ahead for them. One possible option for them, if they were to stay on the basic-education track, was to go to a vocational school. Hung, a social worker who was helping out at the charity class in 2010, said, “In my personal opinion, the charity-class students should be encouraged to go to a vocational school if they don’t have a choice, or the means to go to a lower secondary school. That way they can make the most of what they studied in class, acquire professional skills, and get a job more quickly. Many migrant children, like our students, are pressured to work to support their families by the time they reach the secondary school ages. I do think that the charity-class provides a great entry to education for these kids, but it takes an enormous amount of time and money to stay on to higher education. Unfortunately, many migrant families cannot afford that.”

The next chapter will turn its attention to migrant families’ access, or lack of it, to cultural resources. More specifically, the chapter identifies the various types of informal networks to which migrants have access, networks that offer them varying degrees of material, financial, and moral support, social collectivity, and a sense of trust. It also will show that the mutually exclusive nature of social relations in the urban settings of today’s Vietnam has led to increasing social differentiation among Hanoi’s residents and to the segregation/peripheralization of the city’s migrants.

⁶⁹ According to the charity class teachers, this girl’s mother runs a bar where gangsters hang out and play games and where her elder sisters do indeed work as hostesses.

CHAPTER VI: CULTURAL RESOURCES AND THEIR CONSTRAINTS

The collectivity, and thereby the cautiousness, of migrants can be both a system of support and a burden. On the one hand, it strengthens community ties and builds cohesion among migrants who belong to the same social network; on the other hand, it hinders the surer integration of migrants into the mainstream society, exacerbating social differentiation and segregation among migrant and non-migrant residents having varied degrees of financial means.

In what follows, I first will examine how cultural resources provide migrant families with opportunities to build their lives in the destination area. In so doing I will take up two primary types of informal migrant networks: village-based networks—comprised of migrants having the same place of origin, including kindred—and non-village-based networks made up of migrants having different places of origin. As illustrated in Chapter IV, migrants often turn to informal social networks as a source of personal referrals for housing and jobs, among other things, before and after their relocation to urban centers. Anecdotal evidence culled from my field observations suggests that the migrants deem the village-based networks of social relations more trustworthy, and resort to them more frequently than they do to the non-village-based networks. Although both networks serve as support systems for migrant families, the difference between them appears to have to do not just with the rigidity of social boundaries and the recruitment of membership (Smith, 1998) but also with the fact that the former system rests on moral foundations of communalism that run deep beneath the village congregations of northern Vietnam, whereas the latter system remains confined to the exchange of material and moral support, without the ultimate goal of fostering social solidarity and equity among the parties involved.

Social Relations and Networks

Migrant Neighbors

One major component of the non-village-based migrant network is migrant neighbors who have come from different places of origin and with whom migrant families get acquainted after they have relocated to Hanoi. While short-term or newly arriving migrants often stay in *nha tro*, long-term migrants, and especially those accompanied by their families, tend to reside in private rental properties. One finds, in the informal settlements that are within walking distance of the Thanh Ninh market, cluster housing where multiple households (an average of five to six) inhabit each complex. Within the complex, each shelter of

approximately six square meters is taken up by three to four residents, normally coming from the same household. They use communal shower and toilet facilities.

Huyen and I often would pay a visit to one such complex where several of our research participants were living. Chi, whom the reader met earlier—a woman in her mid-30s, living there with her three children and “common-law” husband—was one of the participants we regularly would visit. When we came by her shelter at around 9:30 on a Saturday morning, we found her sitting inside with her two sons and newborn baby. As we stood at the entrance of her shelter to greet her, she greeted us back via a faint smile, beckoning us to enter. Knowing she had growing children, on our way to her place we had picked up a big bag of snacks, bread, candies, and packages of milk, which we now gave to her. After thanking us for the food she asked her two sons to take the goods out of the plastic bag and divide them into shares, to be given away to their neighbors in the same complex. As we were chatting the boys were taking out the food, one piece after another, and showing some excitement when they saw their favorite snacks. Once they had finished the initial task, the mother instructed her younger son to take each share to one or the other of their neighbors. Cradling food and drinks in his small arms, the boy made several trips. Virtually all the “supplies” were gone in the blink of an eye; the only things left in their shelter were a piece of bread, two packages of snacks and of milk, and a few pieces of candy. On our way back, Huyen, noticing my look of surprise at the way they had divided up the things we had brought, and at how quickly most of them had disappeared, said to me, “I hope you didn’t mind that she gave the food away to their neighbors. That’s how they support each other, you know? That way you can show your generosity, and when you have some trouble, you too can ask your neighbors for help, even though you can’t always expect they will help you in return.”

As this incident illustrates so well, sharing life-staples is a common practice among migrant neighbors who interact with one another on a regular basis. Huyen’s remarks get to the heart of the matter, however, for they rightly suggest that providing help to one’s neighbors is the essential first step to be taken by anyone who finds herself or himself within this sort of exchange system. Sharing food and taking care of children are among the most frequent ways of offering assistance to neighbors. Later I learned that when one of Chi’s neighbors needed to return to her home village with her husband for several weeks, Chi and another neighbor took care of the couple’s primary-school-aged daughters until

their parents came back. The daughters, as well as some other kids in the same compound, would often come by Chi's shelter to play with her newborn baby. Occasionally the older girls were asked to babysit the baby when Chi had to run errands outside, with that "swap" showing us, in the mildest and therefore the truest way, how this "circle of mutual assistance" tends to function.

Aside from sharing material things, such as food and babysitting help, migrant neighbors sometimes appear to form a sort of "protective mechanism" to ward off unwanted attention or interference coming from outsiders. My first encounter with Thu, a twelve-year-old girl from Nam Dinh, provides us with an excellent example of this phenomenon.

It was a rainy day on the fifteenth day of a lunar month. Huyen and I decided to go to a pagoda in the city center, hoping to meet and have some informal conversations with "begging children." Huyen had convinced me that because such children often are migrant children, we would have a good chance of making some connections with them and their families. As noted earlier, the first and the fifteenth are the days of the month when a large number of people flock to pagodas to worship, and thus some begging children invariably turn up, begging in exchange for grace. When we arrived in the late afternoon the pagoda already was packed with worshipers, and it took us a while to locate any begging children. "Maybe because it's raining today. Usually, you would easily catch sight of people begging," Huyen said. As we walked up the stairs to enter the pagoda and then moved further inside, we saw a girl and a little boy, who appeared to be siblings, sitting and nestling up to each other in an exterior corridor. Right beside the boy was a green-colored plastic bowl, in which five or six small bills had been placed. The girl was slightly dark of skin and wearing a soiled pink T-shirt, a pair of jeans, and a pair of yellow sandals; her disheveled hair was escaping from a loosely tied knot. The little boy, with long eyelashes and a runny nose, was blinking as he looked up at the girl's face. In contrast to the girl's relatively light clothing, the boy was wearing a heavy sweatshirt and cords with a frayed hem. As we walked toward these two, the boy snuggled up next to the girl, kissing her cheeks and neck as if seeking reassurance, and the girl looked at us from beneath lowered brows. Huyen slipped a ten-thousand-dong bill into the bowl and the girl bowed her head slightly. We greeted her and the boy and asked how they were doing. "I'm okay, but my brother is having a cold," she replied. After chatting with her for a while, we asked if she would mind having us sit next to them, and she said no. She told us that her name was Thu and that she was twelve

years old. She and her four-year-old brother, Khanh, had two other siblings, and they lived with their parents in the northeastern end of the Thanh Ninh area.

As we were talking to Thu and Khanh, I noticed that a middle-aged woman with shoulder-length hair was squatting cater-corner to us. Apparently she too was begging for grace, for a dark-green communist helmet had been placed on the floor of the corridor, upside-down. Wearing a long-sleeved white shirt, a pair of trousers of a black-and-white pattern, and a dark-green cloth cap, the woman was sitting on the floor with her shoulders hunched and with no shoes on. Putting a fishy look on her face, she kept staring at us the entire time that Huyen and I were approaching Thu and Khanh, and then chatting with, and seating ourselves beside them. Not long after we had started chatting, I saw her make eye contact with Thu and call something to her from a distance, which I was unable to make out.

As it later turned out, the woman had recognized Huyen, having seen her before on the street when she was with another former street friend, who now works as a social worker for an NGO. The woman's and Thu's families were neighbors, and both receiving financial assistance from the NGO: full tuition expenses for the children, plus a part of their living expenses. Huyen, too, recognized the woman's face; she told me she had seen her in her neighborhood, but did not really know who she was. As it turned out, the woman was trying to tell Thu that she need not worry about us, because we were friends of the NGO woman.

After that subtle exchange had passed between the woman and Thu, she seemed to feel more relaxed about talking to us. Thu later said that at first she thought we were journalists, seeking a cover story about poor kids or something like that. But the woman—and not just any woman, but one of her migrant neighbors—had told her not to worry; that brought her big relief.

Thu and her brother Khanh always would come out together to the pagoda on the first and fifteenth days of every lunar month. She said that when they were at the pagoda they could make about 200,000 VND in a single day. They would sit and beg from morning until late at night, around 10 p.m. Even as we chatted, worshipers were dropping cash into the plastic bowl as they walked by us. Once the bowl was full of bills, Thu would collect them, empty the bowl, and place the bills in a small pink bag. She repeated this procedure three or four times during our conversations that lasted for only a total of a little more than a half-hour.

Five days after our visit to the pagoda we again met up with Thu, this time on the street where she regularly works alongside her parents. During our encounter at the pagoda we made a promise that we would come by the place where her family works regularly and say hi. While she and her mother sold tourist items such as caps, postcards, and fans, her father, a *xe om* driver based on the same street-corner, waited for customers. Her mother, Hien, and her father, Ngoc, greeted us, and we introduced ourselves. Hien, modestly dressed in a simple white, half-sleeved shirt and a pair of gray trousers, shook hands with me and with Huyen, smiling into our eyes. Ngoc, wearing a pink striped shirt and a pair of blue jeans, also greeted us, putting a friendly smile on his tanned face with a mustache. Thu, who looked a little tired, waved at us from her perch on a low plastic stool. Dressed all in black with a clean T-shirt and a pair of knee-length pants, and sporting a beaded hairband, she looked neater than she had the first time we saw her at the pagoda. Behind Thu, her brother Khanh and two other little boys were playing around. As I was talking to Hien another woman came out of nowhere, greeted me, and joined our conversation. Huyen, too, noticed her sudden appearance and exchanged words with her. The woman then tapped my shoulder and asked, "Don't you remember me?" Not being able to figure out who she was, I replied, "I'm sorry, but would you please remind me where we met?" "At the pagoda! Remember me now?" she said back to me, with a big smile. It took me a short while to get my head together and realize that this was indeed the same woman from the pagoda; she looked completely different, for then she had been begging in a sleazy outfit and with empty eyes. This day she was all smiles and very upbeat, and smartly dressed in a body-fitting pink polo t-shirt and a pair of orange-colored skinny jeans. I now learned that this woman's name was Nguyet, and that she is a single mother of two boys from Thai Nguyen province. Indeed, one of the boys playing with Thu's brothers was her son. She and Thu's family know each other because, as noted earlier, they live in the same neighborhood in the northeast end of the Thanh Ninh area.

This story has been shared simply because it attests to the fact that migrant neighbors from different places of origin offer each other support not just in material but also in non-material forms. The solicitousness of Nguyet's behavior directed toward Thu at the pagoda seems to have been one aspect of a protective mechanism based on a sense of fellowship. Migrants keep a wary eye on outsiders, people outside of their circle, thereby keeping other migrants of their inner circle from falling prey to outsiders

who may not have their best interests at heart. In this case the protective mechanism worked well for all concerned, both insiders and outsiders, but of course the possibility exists that at certain times it seals migrants off too effectively from the outside community and that at other times it keeps the newer migrants from making contact with those who migrated to Hanoi some time ago.

Luckily, in the case of the pagoda incident it worked out well for us, because Nguyet recognized Huyen as someone falling within their inner circle, and this allowed Thu to lower her guard and chat with us more unreservedly. The mechanism, of course, could work both (in positive and negative) ways when one tries to establish connections with some migrants.

Village Circles

We noted earlier the important fact that within migrant networks, it is the village-based network that often plays the most vital role of building interpersonal relationships and thereby allowing a migrant to form a sense of community along with her/his fellow country people, both prior to and after the migrants' relocation to new destinations. In contrast to those relationships with migrant neighbors from different places of origin that are constructed after migrants have arrived at their destinations, the village-based social relationships do a better job of offering support throughout the migration process. Village-based social relations include, among other groupings, kindred, friends, peer groups, and neighbors from the migrants' place of origin. Prior to relocation, rural migrants often turn to contacts within their village-based network so as to establish connections in the destination area, find job opportunities, and arrange accommodations. Some migrants move along with other people from the same village. Then, after their arrival in the cities, migrants seek and generally gain emotional support and moral encouragement from their fellow migrant villagers.

There can be no doubt that one's place of origin plays an important role in building interpersonal relationships and forming a sense of community with one's fellow country people upon migration. Child and adult migrants having strong village connections best weather the migration process, and do the best job of making their village ties part and parcel of their lives during their time spent in the urban destinations.

Huyen, a longtime resident in Hanoi in her late 20s from Hung Yen, first migrated to Hanoi to work there as a street child in 1994 at the age of 12. She first learned about the possibility of street-

selling from one of her neighbor friends, back in her village days. One summer, that girl and her mother left for Hanoi on a temporary migration of a few months. After their return from Hanoi, their lifestyle clearly seemed to have changed for the better: her friend started putting on new, pretty clothes and shoes, and her family members were similarly well attired. When Huyen asked her friend what she and her mother had done in Hanoi, she replied that they had worked as street-sellers and had made a lot of money doing so. Seeing up close her friend's sudden change to an improved life-condition introduced into Huyen's mind the idea of migrating to Hanoi. Later she acted on her plan in order to help her divorced mother, who was raising three children on her own, meet the family's expenses.

As Huyen recounted her experiences as a street child, she told me that she and her girlfriends from the same village of Hung Yen had formed a group whose purpose was to always keep an eye out for each other. At the time more than twenty street children had come from different villages and provinces and were working around the Hang Dau lake; these children all assembled themselves into groups based on their places of origin. "For us, it was our way of protecting ourselves in the city," Huyen said. "At one time, one of the street girls from another provincial village group got pregnant after she got involved with a white man. We all knew the man, because he would often hang out in the lake area and would talk to us. He was Australian, and appeared to be in his fifties or sixties. We were pretty fond of him because he would treat us to sweets and was also a very generous customer. He would often buy a bunch of stuff from us, like postcards. The man promised the girl he would take care of her and the baby and even fly them back to his country, telling her that he would make the necessary arrangements so they could all live together in Australia. Well, guess what happened? He never came back and we never saw him again! After having seen what happened, my girlfriends and I from the same village made a pact that we would never go out with a foreign man alone. We also promised each other that if someone from our group got invited for drinks or meals by a man, the rest of us would accompany her so we could watch out for her." Huyen added that having her village friends around, providing their moral support both on and off the street, gave her much comfort and emotional security when she was struggling to adapt to the unfamiliar city environment. Even though she got acquainted with, and even befriended, some of the other street children from different provincial villages, she contended that her ties with them were

nowhere near as strong or solid as her relationships with her village friends. “There were some nice kids, too, but you can’t really trust them as much as you can your village friends.”

The collectivizing tendency seen among Hanoi’s rural migrants is nicely evidenced by their settlement patterns during their stay in temporary accommodations. This is especially true when it comes to the temporary migrants, those who migrate but stay in the city for just a relatively short period of time. I had a chance to visit several *nha tro* in the Thanh Ninh area and see firsthand what such accommodations look like and how the migrants live—or perhaps *exist* is the more accurate word—in them. Typically, migrants of the same gender and from the same home village stay in a shared room within a *nha tro*. If there is a married couple in the group they may take up a room of their own, but many temporary migrants are not accompanied by their spouses, be they legal or “common law.” As in hotels, the amount of the daily accommodation-charge for *nha tro* depends on the comfort, privacy, space, and so forth allocated to each tenant. In general the owner of the house rents out some or all of the rooms to migrants who need a place to stay in Hanoi for varying periods of time, ranging from a few days to several months. Chi Mai is one such *nha tro* owner. She and her husband run a variety shop on the first floor of their house while they rent out the third and fourth floors to temporary migrant workers. Most of their tenants are casual laborers at a nearby wholesale market; they work during the night as porters, carrying boxes of vegetables and fruits between trucks and the market.

I met Nguyen through Huyen. One day Huyen told me that her aunt, her mother’s older brother’s wife, was in town and staying with her village women from Hung Yen province in a *nha tro* in the Thanh Ninh area. I of course said yes when she asked me if I was interested in visiting her, and we found that the place where her aunt Nguyen and her village friends were staying was, like most such *nha tro*, a plain, multiple-storied house with no sign saying “*Nha Tro*” or anything of that kind. The house is on a street crammed with small shops selling daily necessities, noodle shops, cafés, and other simple eateries. Huyen said that her aunt always stays in this place whenever she and her fellow village women come to work in Hanoi.

When Huyen and I visited her aunt at around 9 a.m., Nguyen and her village friends were chatting, sitting on the floor of a plain room. Three women, all seemingly in their 50s, were getting ready for the day.

Each had in front of her a big, transparent plastic bag filled with underwear for both men and women and hair accessories in every color. All of them work as roving vendors, carrying their products on a pole. Nguyen told us that she and her friends had been coming to work in Hanoi for about ten years. They do so several times a year during the slack seasons on the farm,⁷⁰ to accrue extra income for their households. Each time they stay for from two weeks to a month. When they come to Hanoi they share the bus ride and stay in the same room. The first thing they do upon their arrival is go to a large wholesale market in the central district where they buy the products that soon they, too, will be selling. Nguyen and her village women work from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. In the past they would start off their work earlier in the day, but since the police began to crack down on street-vendors they have delayed their starting-time. During the early rush hours there are a good number of police officers on the street, but after 9 a.m. there are fewer. On good days the women can make about 70,000 to 80,000 VND. Their daily expenses run to around 30,000 to 40,000 VND, which includes accommodation fees (7,000 VND per night per person) and meals. Because their work requires them to keep walking around all day they choose to eat filling food, but avoid noodles because then their hunger returns too soon.

To some extent the village-based relational networks, the reality and efficacy of which we have been given a glimpse of by partaking briefly of Huyen and Nguyen's experiences, have commonalities with non-village-based relations, most basically in that both seem to serve as a protective mechanism whereby the associates look out for each other. Nonetheless, to my mind the village-based relations constitute a more solid sort of commitment and a more profound sort of trust in both spatial and moral terms. As will be further elaborated upon in the ensuing sections, some migrants display a notable wariness toward their migrant neighbors of different places of origin, even though they reciprocate help when needed and generally are empathic to one another. At any rate, and even though I realize that both Huyen and her aunt Nguyen's stories reflect just their experiences as temporary single migrants unaccompanied by their families, their accounts of village-based networks led me to reflect on the profound sense of collectivity and solidarity fostered by village ties, which in turn made me want to gain a

⁷⁰ In Nguyen's home village where the main and only crop is rice, the slack seasons are March to April and August to September, the months that fall between the first planting in February and the harvest that lasts from May to June and between the second planting in July and the harvest from October to November; it is common for women in her village to temporarily migrate to Hanoi during those months.

deeper understanding of how a sense of community has historically been shaped in village settings. We turn to that topic now.

Social Collectivity in Rural Northern Villages

The existing literature on the sociocultural dynamics that make themselves felt in different parts of Vietnam points to striking differences between the North and the South. One oft-cited regional difference in social organization is that between the tight-knit network of social relations often found in the North and the more loosely integrated nature of social relations in the South. In his study of socioeconomic differentiation and transformational dynamics in post-*doi moi* Vietnam, Luong (2003) argued that the stronger collectivity of the social networks identified in rural northern Vietnam, as well as in many central coastal villages, is associated with both a traditionally high degree of village endogamy and the presence of a more strongly egalitarian ideology. On the other hand southern rural villages, where exogamy is more common and indeed preferred, are operating on more loosely-knit networks.

The north-south difference in degree of social collectivity has been found to show up in migrants' settlement patterns and coping strategies. Hardy (2003b), for instance, noted that migrants to Hanoi come mostly from the northern provinces, whereas a composite of migrants to Ho Chi Minh City represents a wider range of regions. He also pointed out that the settlement patterns of migrants in the two urban centers are notably different: while migrants in Ho Chi Minh City tend to be scattered, and their residential preference is based on proximity to place of work, those in Hanoi "live and work in clusters by district/village of origin, excluding outsiders" (Hardy, 2003b, p. 129). Similarly, Luong (2003) suggested that migrants from northern and central villages have a propensity to "cluster together residentially and occupationally" (p. 104); they also bring their village associations into play to provide themselves with mutual assistance in their city life, and these therefore form an essential part of their coping strategies.⁷¹

As we seek to unearth the root causes of the collectivity and solidarity so notable in the social relations of the northerners, the logical first step is to look at how socioeconomic and moral arrangements have shaped social relations in those rural villages of northern Vietnam from which most migrants to Hanoi originated.

⁷¹ As will later be noted, however, a village-based "safety net" is not available to all migrants. This is particularly the case when it comes to long-term, non-seasonal migrant families having few remaining ties to their places of origin.

Scott (1976), in his early, seminal study of Vietnam's peasant economies, illustrated how rural peasants in Nghe-Tinh⁷² on the north-central coast of Vietnam consistently exhibited a "subsistence ethic" that structured their normative behavioral patterns in making economic decisions and forming social ties. Scott argued that the peasants of the early 1900s in Nghe Tinh coped with economic and political upheavals by adopting the safety-first maxim, with its emphasis on risk-averse behavior and securing a "minimum income." For peasants having only modest resources, the basic organizing principle was to stabilize and secure their subsistence income rather than amplify their individual profits or lift their levels of income.⁷³ Retaining her/his subsistence rights was critical to a peasant's capability, as a member of village society, not only to obtain sufficient resources to carry out her/his ceremonial and social obligations by fostering ties with other fellow villagers but also to fully engage in patron-client relationships with other better-off villagers, landowners, or officials via the mutual reciprocity of exchanges and redistributions of resources. In turn, any breaching of the rule of reciprocity or the right to subsistence was deemed a violation of the village's unwritten moral codes. When and if such ruptures reached an intolerably high level, they were sure to be met with protests and perhaps even rebellions.

Revisiting Scott's study (1976), Mcelwee (2007) found that "moral economy" continued to exist as a guiding principle for social relations and economic decision-making in contemporary Nghe Tinh. Her field observations in five different villages in the Cam Xuyen District of Ha Tinh province in the early 2000s revealed that reciprocal help between relatives and neighbors constitutes an essential part of village social relations and their norms; among other things, labor exchanges with respect to farming, and food-sharing (e.g., meals, garden products, extra rice) with those in destitution, were commonly practiced and strongly encouraged. Despite both the government's campaign to introduce to the province alternative cash crops (e.g., peanuts, sesame, corn, beans) to replace rice with its low economic productivity and an uptick in the trade in forest products (e.g., rattans, medicinal herbs and plants, wild meats), the villagers resolutely stick to rice-production as their primary source of investment and their chief livelihood strategy; thus the wealth of village households continues to be assessed based on their

⁷² This is the geographical area that encompasses the two provinces of Nghe An and Ha Tinh. Thus it is where a series of revolts in opposition to the colonial French regime, initiated by Vietnamese peasants, commonly known as the Nghe-Tinh Soviets, took place between 1930 and 1931.

self-sufficiency in rice. Moreover, *tin h cam* or social sentiment still serves as an essential lubricant for the denizens of the tight-knit village communities in Nghe Tinh where endogamy prevails. Demonstrations of social sentiment toward fellow villagers, which range “from inviting neighbors to share meals to loaning them equipment for their fields” (Mcelwee, 2007, p. 71), are highly valued and serve to forge social bonds and create mutual trust among villagers.

Such moral dimensions embedded in the social relations of the village world of northern Vietnam have also been elaborated upon in Malarney’s (1996) study of ritual reformation and revitalization in Think Liet Commune, on the outskirts of Hanoi. In this village characterized by highly differentiated socioeconomic strata in relation to age, status, wealth, and so forth, *quan he tin h cam* or sentimental relations are the key ingredient fostering a sense of social solidarity and equity in the village. As Malarney has put it, “To ‘live with sentiment’ or ‘be rich in sentiment’ were positive moral evaluations in village life. To earn such an appellation individuals had to be attentive to other families, conscientious in assisting others in times of need or crisis, and willingly assertive of their commonality with others in social life” (p. 547). Among ritual practices, funerals provide the greatest opportunity for villagers to express and publicly display their sentiment toward others through the exchange of gifts and debts. While villagers offer trays of food presentations to the family of the deceased for use at funeral feasts, the family reciprocates their generosity by giving back to those who made the donations according to the value of the gifts received.

Furthermore, the existing literature has underscored the fact that collectivism, which has long characterized the dynamics of political economy in Vietnam’s northern and central regions, largely stems from the communal institutions, and respects the strict social boundaries, that prevail there. Associated with the ideology of the “subsistence ethic,” the ubiquity of communal institutions—communal land and village rituals, among other things—is conceived to have played an important role in fostering social ties and collectivism among village residents who are socioeconomically highly differentiated.

Historically, communal land served as a shared resource and survival safety-net for village inhabitants in times of hardship. Access to communal land and food allowed the less well-off residents of

⁷³ Scott’s “moral economist” position was challenged by Popkin (1979), who offered his contrastive view of Vietnamese peasants as “rational economic agents” acting on individualistic behavioral principles so as to maximize their economic profits.

the village to gain social protection in exchange for their service and their loyalty extended to such patrons as better-off village residents, village officials, notables, and mandarins (Scott, 1976). Communal land also has functioned as a mechanism fostering more equitable resource redistribution, for the income made from the land often is used for such collective purposes as defraying the expenses of communal rituals, schools, village feasts, and ceremonies (Luong, 2010). During the colonial period the amount of inalienable communal land within the cultivated acreage was significant in the nation's north and center, at an average of 21 percent and 25 percent, respectively—a stark contrast to the south, where a mere 3 percent of the people occupied communal land. Luong (2010) argued that although the land reforms in the postcolonial period led to the growing disappearance of communal land, the relatively easy accommodation of land collectivization in the northern and central villages, in comparison with southern villages after the reunification, reflects the ongoing sense of communalism and collectivism derived, to no small extent, from people's awareness of the preexisting communal land in the north and the center.

Village rituals constitute another social element that has contributed to the high degree of communal unity in the northern and central villages. In his longitudinal study of Son-Duong village in the Red River delta of northern Vietnam, Luong (2010) has revealed how the collective worship of tutelary deities, along with the strong village endogamy, communal land, and nucleated settlements has played an important role in cultivating a sense of communal collectivism and exclusivity. He found that full access to communal resources, such as participation in the village rituals devoted to worshipping tutelary deities and eligibility for periodic redistributions of the communal land to adult male villagers, was not granted to *ngoai tich* or outsiders (i.e., those born outside of the village) but only to *noi tich* or insiders. Remarkably, it could take as long as three or four generations before “new” village residents, whose progenitors came from outside the village, were fully accepted as “insiders.” These rigid conceptual boundaries of village membership, Luong argued, not only were “reflected in and reinforced by an extraordinarily high level of village endogamy” (p. 57) but also “underlay the northern and central tradition of great formality in interaction with outsiders” (p. 270). By contrast, such differentiation of membership was not so strict in southern villages, where a higher degree of geographical mobility and a preference for exogamy were identified.

In sum, while both village-based and non-village-based networks provide channels through which the migrants' mutual support and reciprocal favors can flow, a strong collective spirit and close social ties are more evident in the social relations of the former sort of network. The historical climate that has fostered exchanges of reciprocal help and collectivism in the northern and central villages still seems to pervade the tight-knit communal relations exemplified by Hanoi's migrants of the same place of origin from the north. It also has been noted, however, via our look at the firm social boundaries of village membership in a northern rural village, that collectivism and exclusivity are two sides of one coin. In other words, our observations of the migrant and non-migrant residents of the Thanh Ninh area, and of the ways in which they interact with one another, appear to confirm one's suspicion that social solidarity and discrimination go hand in hand.

I will now illustrate how mutual distrust, exclusivity, and segregation are experienced by both migrant and non-migrant residents of the Thanh Ninh area and then suggest what cultural implications these have for migrant families who are able to access only limited economic and social resources. Doing so will allow me to demonstrate the presence in the area of a multi-layered structure of inclusion and exclusion. Exclusive attitudes and behaviors certainly have been identified, both between migrants and non-migrants and among the migrants themselves. In order to better show how such distrustful exclusiveness plays out on multiple levels (e.g., conceptual, demographic, social, moral), I have classified the residents into the following categories: (1) migrants and non-migrants; (2) villagers from the same place of origin and villagers from other places of origin; (3) permanent residents and non-permanent residents; (4) middle-class and lower-class residents.⁷⁴

Social Exclusion and Stigmatization

⁷⁴ If one adopts the classification by Smith (1998) of "social units" and "collectivities"—those being the two sub-components of social structure, with their differential boundaries and memberships—then the social groups recognized among the Thanh Ninh area residents and discussed in this study's introduction may be classified as follows: (i) migrants/non-migrants: collectivities; (ii) villagers from the same place of origin/villagers from other places of origin: social units; (iii) permanent residents/non-permanent residents: social units; (iv) middle-class residents/lower-class residents: collectivities. Whereas the resident's membership in her/his village as place of origin, and her/his permanent residency in Hanoi, appears to be fairly clear-cut and rigid, the boundaries between migrants and non-migrants and between middle-class and lower-class residents often are unclear. The degree of communal unity found within all the groups except villagers from the same place of origin seems to be minimal, if not quite non-existent.

Prevailing Discrimination

The most generalized categorization that divides Thanh Ninh residents is one's status as a migrant or non-migrant. This distinction often is drawn in the public discourse, as well as in the conversations of Hanoi's non-migrant residents. Little wonder, then, that migrants so often are lumped together regardless of their native provinces; all that matters is that they did not originate from Hanoi. It should be remembered, however, that the development of Hanoi itself has historically been attributed to the generations of people who have migrated there from its neighboring northern provinces.⁷⁵ As mentioned previously, the Thanh Ninh area, which has been attracting spontaneous migrants from outside of Hanoi ever since the early 1990s, also holds a mixture of migrant and non-migrant residents.

What seems to be characteristic of Hanoians' categorization of "migrants," as opposed to "non-migrants" or "local residents," is that the criteria for being a migrant tend to entail repugnant qualities: unsophisticated, dirty, uneducated, and so forth. Migrants are perceived as bringing social problems to the city and thus often are associated with *te nan xa hoi* or social evils—anti-social behaviors that jeopardize public order and security such as crime, alcohol abuse, drug addiction, gambling, prostitution, vagrancy, human trafficking, and the spreading of HIV/AIDS (Cohen, 2003; Hardy, 2003b; Human Rights Watch, 2006; Save the Children, U.K., 2006; UN Viet Nam, 2010a). Such stigmatization is all too likely to exacerbate the social isolation and marginalization of the city's migrants.

All of which is not to say, however, that a discriminatory attitude toward migrants flourishes throughout the Thanh Ninh area or in Hanoi generally. Thao was one of the newcomers to Hanoi, having moved to the city with her two daughters from Thanh Hoa province just two months prior to my meeting her. She told me that she had not thus far run into any discrimination expressed or acted out by the people she had met; to the contrary, they sympathized with her family's situation. She admitted, however, that she associated herself only with a handful of people, such as her landlady and neighbors. Similarly, Long's mother said she had never been maltreated by her neighbors, or by bosses or customers at her previous or current workplace. At the *com binh dan* where she had previously worked, the customers

⁷⁵ As Li (1996) wrote, "Hanoi is really a city of migrants who originally came from the countryside. It has been said that few of the Hanoians have been here for five generations" (p. 16).

were very supportive. Some of them sympathized with her tale of woe⁷⁶; so much so, indeed, that they would give her a large tip for her service. Then too, a migrant father of three children, who has been working as a beggar for over fifteen years, told me that at least with respect to his next-door neighbors, he had never felt a sense of discrimination. All his neighbors are longtime migrant residents who earn their living just as he does, by working on the street, and they too come from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. “Besides, I don’t have much contact with outsiders except when I am at work, begging, you know,” he added with a chuckle.

A few of the children of the migrant families whose members I interviewed seemed to be blessed with sympathetic classmates and understanding teachers. A good example in this regard is Huong’s second oldest son, who at the time of my first visit was a second-grader, attending a local public school with the financial support of an NGO. He was the only child in his entire class to come from a socioeconomically disadvantaged family, but he told me that his classmates and his teacher had shown support and compassion for him. At a recent PTA meeting, the teacher took the trouble to explain the situation of this boy’s family and asked the other parents to understand why they were being exempted from paying their PTA dues.

That one anecdote must not, however, be taken as entirely representative of the situation. The members of many migrant families and the people working with them did not hesitate to reveal to me their encounters with the discriminatory attitudes manifested by local non-migrant residents. Reflecting on the challenges that go along with running the charity class, Mr. Tuan, its founder, indicated that one of the continuing challenges the class faced, apart from the administrative ones, was that of confronting the deep-seated prejudice against migrant children among local residents. “Some [non-migrant] residents are not happy with having the class in their neighborhood. They think that the class is a bad influence to the community. In their mind the class attracts migrant children from poor family backgrounds, and those kids and families are much of the root of the unwanted influence, like the ‘social evils.’” He added that even though some of the neighbors were sympathetic to the children and to their family’s life-conditions, the unwelcoming attitude still remained strong among most of them. The class teachers had even been

⁷⁶ She migrated to Hanoi after she had lost her husband in a sea accident. Initially, she came to Hanoi alone and worked in a *com binh dan* to which she had been referred by one of her village acquaintances. In order to support her only son, she left him behind in the countryside with her extended family during her initial migration to the city.

approached by the neighbors, who complained that their students were too loud and too dirty-looking or suggested that they should find another location for the class. Some neighbors even contacted the police, who came and quibbled with the operation of the class, clearly trying to extort bribes.

Diffident Migrant Children

Even non-migrant children add to the stigmatization of their migrant peers. In the study sites visited by the authors of the Save the Children, U.K.'s study (2006), local non-migrant children were asked in group discussions what they thought about children who came to the cities from other provinces to stay and work with their migrant parents. They responded that they would not play with them, even though they sympathized with their circumstances. They further claimed that their "migrant counterparts" were not well mannered, listing such reasons as their use of bad language, slovenly appearance, habit of wandering in the streets, and poor study habits.

Migrant children working on the street are an easy target for thoughtless, discriminatory slurs. Thu and her younger sister Hoa told me that when working on the street, some adults would call them *bon vo hoc* or illiterate kids right to their faces. Understandably, this hurt the sisters' feelings and pride; Thu told me that on one occasion she had snapped back at them: "Give me some math problems with a pen and a sheet of paper, and I can solve them for you!" In 2010, at the time of my initial fieldwork, Hoa was attending a public primary school with financial support from an NGO, whereas Thu had been out of school for almost four years. She dropped out when she was in the second grade; she has been working full-time as a street-seller alongside her parents ever since. When we had last met in 2010 she was hoping to return to school once the new school year started in the fall, with some help from the same NGO that her sister had been assisted by. Speaking nostalgically of the days when she was in school, Thu once showed me her old, well-thumbed textbooks and workbooks. "I miss studying in school, and I can't wait to go back to school soon so I can prove everyone that I can read and write and that I'm not some stupid, uneducated child!" exclaimed Thu.⁷⁷

It seems that the pervasive mistrust of and discrimination against migrants casts a shadow on some migrant children's self-perceptions. It is hardly surprising that a sense of shame springs up among

some migrant children after they have repeatedly been called “poor migrant child” or “migrant child with bad social influence.” Sadly, the negative effect of such catcalls impacts even the parents and guardians who are struggling so hard to provide for their families by working on the street. A grandmother who was working as a roaming street-vendor said that her granddaughters occasionally would lend her a hand when they had some spare time after returning from school. However, her elder granddaughter often was reluctant to work alongside her because she felt humiliated whenever her classmates saw her working on the street. When her son (i.e., the granddaughter’s father), who was rumored to have been put in jail for dealing drugs, died of lung cancer shortly after his release, the girl went straight back to school right after her father’s funeral, so that no one would find out about her family.

With the exception of the case of Chi’s son, the children who were attending or previously had attended public schools said they kept a low profile there, so that their classmates would not find out that they were from underprivileged migrant families. Other children told me that they hardly ever played with the neighborhood children either, because they were afraid of getting teased or of being called a “bad influence.” Those working with the charity-class students maintained that the migrant children often were ashamed of their family backgrounds, which in turn contributed to their lack of self-confidence. Mr. Tuan said, “I know that many of our students feel disrespected by society because of their difficult socioeconomic circumstances. That’s why they keep to themselves and stay away from the outside community. Poverty and lack of education often make people underestimate themselves and lose confidence in themselves. . . . I really hope that our students will find the courage to seek out what they want to do with their lives and take the responsibility for what they set out to do.”

Thus an important fact revealed through my interviews with the migrant children is that many of them have few social interactions with their peers, either in the neighborhood or at school. Quynh told me she rarely went out of her house except to go to the charity class. Ha, another migrant child attending the charity class, said she had no friends except for a handful of classmates from the charity class. When I asked what they did together outside of the class, she answered that they went around their neighborhood, chatting; when her friends weren’t around she would stay home, watching TV or chatting

⁷⁷ My follow-up research done in 2013 revealed that Thu had managed to go back to school in the fall of 2010 but then was forced to drop out again because of the discontinuation of her financial aid from the NGO. After leaving school in 2012 she migrated to the port city of Hai Phong, where her uncle on her mother’s side lives, to find work.

with her elder sister at home.⁷⁸ In the case of some children, especially boys, who do not work outside like their street-working peers, one of their favorite leisure activities is to play games at the online game shops spread around the neighborhood. They even would sneak out to play games during the class breaks, said one of the charity-class teachers.

Working migrant children have less free time than do their non-working counterparts, but that which they do have they use to hang out with their siblings or other working friends/peers on the street. During my visit to the shelters of migrant families working as street-sellers I would see children, in their off hours, freely coming and going to and from their own and neighbors' houses to play together. Girls also would babysit or play with their neighbors' babies, soothing and cradling them in their arms. And yet Lan and Ha, sisters who work together on the street with or without their parents' surveillance, said they would rather sleep than play with their friends. They would come back home from work late at night, usually after 9 or 10, feeling beat.

Thus we see that migrant children have only limited social contacts in their daily lives. While the students in the charity class did make friends with one another, the children attending public schools and those who had done so in the past indicated that they seldom hung out with their classmates. Instead they spent much of their time alone or with their siblings at home, while occasionally playing with other migrant peers whom they know well. Working migrant children, due to their long hours of work, do not have much time to play in the first place, but when they do, they spend the time with their siblings and working peers of similar family backgrounds.

Social Representations of Migrants

The public portrayal of migrants as constituting an unwanted influence upon the community affects in varying degrees the ways in which migrant people see themselves and interact with others outside of their small circle of friends and acquaintances. Where do such pervasive negative perceptions of migrants come from? The question seems all the more pertinent, given the fact that migration has been part and parcel of the historical formation and the recent development of the city. A closer look at how migrants are narrated in the governmental discourse, as well as in the everyday context, indicates that it is the

⁷⁸ I once visited Ha's home where she lived with her father, elder sister, uncle, and grandmother on her father's side. During the interview with her grandmother, which lasted for over an hour, Ha chatted with her elder sister and played games on her sister's mobile phone.

state discourse, and policies emphasizing the need to exert tighter control upon spontaneous migration, which underlie the pervasive view of migrants as being an undesirable component of the city. As a consequence, not only are the contributions and latent benefits of migrants to the city scanted, but their social position thereby becomes all the more peripheral.

The following examples will show that depictions of migrants as being “social evils,” people who make “the community ‘dirty’, ‘polluted’, ‘noisy’, ‘disordered’, ‘over-populated’, ‘congested’ and ‘unsafe’” (Le et al., 2011, p. 11), are very evident in the context of local administration.

A local online article about “in-migrants in Hanoi” (“Nhập cư vào Hà Nội,” 2009) well captured these negative conceptualizations of migrants on the part of local, non-migrant residents and authorities. The article depicted the current state of inward migration in Hanoi and discussed the control measures that are currently in place. It started out with a description of the rapid growth of the incoming migrant population to Hanoi over the last decade, then went on to reveal the migrants’ low standard of living, the difficulty they have securing affordable housing, and the high cost of rental housing. Taking as an example Phuc Tan ward, one of the highly migrant-concentrated areas in the central part of the city, the article elaborated upon the enhanced measures to maintain social order that had been introduced into the ward, according to the article, by its chairman. New measures had been taken to ensure that lodging house (*nha tro*) owners and their migrant tenants comply with the regulations for temporary registration during the latter’s stay in the ward.⁷⁹ The measures, according to the article, were intended “to ensure public security and order, declaration of temporary residence in/absence from the ward, environmental hygiene and prevention of drugs.” The ward’s chairman commented that these problems relating to migrants had been happening for many years and had taken a toll on the ward’s officials. He also called for the migrants to be held to more stringent standards, so that urban management could be better administered.

In keeping with the tone of the article, which implicitly ascribes increased social disorder to migrants, Hardy (2003b) cited administrative anxieties consistently being felt by security officials in Hanoi. Referring to the effects of migration to the city, a ward-level official in the Hai Ba Trung district said this:

⁷⁹ Presumably these measures were taken in order to counter the *nha tro* owners’ widespread practice of unlawfully renting rooms to migrants without gaining permission from the ward to do so; their tenants are not able to apply for temporary registration permits, for these require the endorsement of their landlord, verifying their residence in Hanoi.

From the time laborers from other provinces started coming to this area, the political and security situation, as well as social order and safety, has undergone complex problems. Their living conditions are unhygienic, disputes over work involving fights and arguments have taken place, furniture is left on the pavements and streets. In addition, there has been gambling, thefts and swindling. (Hardy, 2003b, pp. 131-132)

In the eyes of security officials who are dealing with day-to-day urban management down on ground level, so to speak, migrants are the root cause of a deterioration in social order in their communities. At the very least such officials find it hard to manage and control migrants' disorderly activities by using the traditional tools of law enforcement. They further expressed their frustration as to the lack of clear regulatory guidelines helping them to administer incoming migrants. Yes, there is the *ho khu* system, but it continues to emphasize preferential rights and has little legally binding force. Thus it is an ineffective tool of population management, in the currently market-driven yet nominally socialist state.

The treatment of "migrants" in the public discourse as a phenomenon that reeks of social disorder is also reflected in the logic of the government-initiated "clean-up campaigns." As noted earlier, a series of such campaigns has been deployed by the government with the aim of cracking down on street businesses and "social evils," both of which often are associated with migrants, who are implicitly cast to play the role of the villain bringing disorder to the streets (Cohen, 2003). The targeted villains are in theory removed from the streets by having their products and equipment confiscated and by being charged fines or even being arrested and sent for "re-education"—only, of course, to come back to the street.

Hayton (2010) criticized such campaigns to counteract antisocial behavior via "exclusion" and "re-education" as being nothing more than "the old ways of dealing with social problems" (p. 62). On the one hand, as Hayton rightly argued, the government's approach has failed to address the underlying causes prompting the emerging growth of social problems. On the other hand, the campaigns seem largely to have been successful in instilling into local residents, as well as city administrators, the idea that keeping migrants off the street will automatically bring orderly, "civilized living" to the city. Street children and itinerant vendors often are derided or even harassed by non-migrant residents such as local shop-owners and neighbors, who support the campaigns and feel themselves vindicated by the public discourse that deems migrants to be strictly an unwanted and deleterious social presence in the city. Such a parochial attitude was reported to be very much present in Hanoi by the Save the Children U.K.'s research team,

whose interviews with local authorities revealed their hope that unskilled migrants would leave the capital and return to their places of origin (Save the Children, U.K., 2006). In the joint research conducted by Villes en Transition Vietnam, the Centre for Sociology and Development Studies Ho Chi Minh City, and the Institute of Sociology Hanoi (as cited in Save the Children U.K., 2006), close to 50 percent of local (KT1 and KT2) respondents voiced the unease they feel about having rural migrant residents in their area. Their concerns were centered on the disorderly behaviors evinced by street-vendors, scavengers, and those not complying with the regulations for traffic, garbage disposal, and so forth. Quite simply, in their view migrants are a threat to “civilized living.”

What I for one find intriguing is that the actual records fail to corroborate the derogatory view of migrants that pervades both civil and governmental discourse. For instance, police records in the Think Liet ward of Hanoi, where the presence of migrants is significant, show that the number of permanent residents arrested for criminal violations and drug abuse was three times greater than that of non-permanent (KT4) residents (Save the Children, U.K., 2006). So too, a discussion that transpired within the Department of Public Security in Ho Chi Minh City confirmed the fact that there is no significant variance between migrants and non-migrants when it comes to rates of urban crime (Parliamentary Committee for Social Affairs, as cited in Save the Children, U.K., 2006).

“Nha Que” and Its Cultural Connotations

In Hanoi, the differentiation of migrants and non-migrants tends to be associated with that of *nha que* (country bumpkins) and *nguai o than pho* (city people), or more precisely *nguai Hanoi* (Hanoians). This propensity derives from the fact that most migrants come from rural areas, usually the northern provinces. Similar to the categorization of “migrants” in Hanoi as described earlier, the term *nha que* carries cultural connotations: traits, mannerisms, and speech-patterns that are conceived to be somewhat unsophisticated.

One of the questions Hanoians frequently ask in their first encounter with someone new is where s/he is from: *nguai o dau?* In my initial encounters with the migrant families I, too, was almost always asked about my place of origin, and would I ask them back what part of Vietnam they were from. Curious to know whether the duration of their residential period in Hanoi was affecting their self-identification as “country people” or “city people,” I would ask them how they identified themselves. Migrant parents,

regardless of their period of habitation in the city, would immediately reply that they still considered themselves to be “country people” and definitely not “Hanoians.” A widowed single mother from Thanh Hoa province said without hesitation, “Of course I’m *ngươi* Thanh Hoa!” [“a person of Thanh Hoa”] I will continue to live in Hanoi as long as I can and I may end up dying here, not in my native village in Thanh Hoa. Still, it will never change that [I am a person of Thanh Hoa]. Besides, look at me, I am *quê mùa* [rustic, cloddish] in every way!” She went on to say that even though she and her son were treated nicely by her neighbors, as well as by the owner and customers of the *com binh dan* where she was working, she always felt shy around strangers, especially “city people,” and did not have much confidence in her looks.

Like their migrant parents and guardians, children who came to Hanoi with their families responded that they identified themselves as *nha que* regardless of their duration of residence in Hanoi. While they appreciate their city life, which gives them more comfort than they knew in their former rural life, their current living conditions as migrants, and the very fact that they were not born in Hanoi, appear to make it virtually impossible for them to adopt the status of “Hanoians.” For instance, two migrant sisters who have been working as street-sellers for years said in unison that they were *nha que*. “But you have been living in Hanoi all these years. What makes you say that you are *nha que* and not Hanoian?” I dared to ask. They explained that even though they have not been back to the Nam Dinh countryside for years and have not seen their cousins or friends over all those years, they were not born in Hanoi. The elder sister added, “Besides, we are still poor, and our family is surviving hand-to-mouth. We don’t miss our life in the countryside, though. We had blackouts all the time, and the life was even harder!”⁸⁰ By contrast, a handful of children of the second generation—children who were born in Hanoi but whose parents had migrated to Hanoi prior to their birth—responded that they were “Hanoians.”

As the aforementioned single mother’s remarks suggest, the association of the term *nha que* with a certain physical appearance is common. A mother who was living in the brown village with her migrant husband and their daughters was born in Hanoi and raised there as she grew up. And yet even though she has never been a “migrant” and might well be regarded as a “Hanoian” by outsiders, neither she herself nor her relatives would even dream of thinking of her as such. “All my relatives and my brothers

are still living with their respective families in this neighborhood in Hanoi where I grew up. Every time I see them they always make fun of me and say that I now look like *nha que*, not Hanoian. You know why? That's because my skin has gotten thicker and darker ever since I moved down here. You may not believe it now, but when I was young, I had really fair skin. Because I do a lot of farm work here under the sun and it's hard work, I've gotten thinner and my skin has turned very dark. At one time I was even mistaken for a drug addict because of my physical appearance!"

Speech-patterns are another of the aspects that makes certain people *nha que*. Huyen, originally from Hung Yen but a longtime resident of Hanoi (for over a decade), recently successfully transferred her *ho khau* to the Thanh Ninh area after she and her husband bought a piece of land and built their house there. She once told me this, after getting off the phone with a lady from another province: "You know who I was talking to? She is this lady from Ha Thai province. She reminds me a lot of my female relatives in my home village." I asked her why. "Country people often talk loud, in a friendly and casual manner, even to someone we have never met or someone younger than us. Because I am not from Hanoi originally, I know the way my country folks talk to each other and this lady just reminded me of that," she explained. "What about Hanoians? Do they speak any differently?" I asked her back. "To me Hanoians, especially women, are often more soft-spoken than countrywomen, and are very particular about their wording. They sound more polite and formal."

Aside from one's appearance and speech-patterns a third factor distinguishing the non-migrant from the migrant is house ownership. Owning a house, as opposed to "perennial renting," brings a *nha que* person one step closer to being a true Hanoian. It must not be forgotten, however, that many migrants are confronted by a much more basic challenge posed by city life: that of finding an affordable place to live. The lodging house or *nha tro* may be suitable as a temporary dwelling-place for seasonal migrants but when it comes to longer-term residence, low-cost rental housing is sought out.

A migrant woman originally from Bac Giang province has been running a tailor shop in Hanoi for thirteen years. At the time I met her for an interview in August 2010, she was renting two floors of a house rented out by a live-in landlord: the front space of the first floor for her tailor shop, and rooms on the second floor for her family's residential space. The landlord's family takes up the rest of the space of

⁸⁰ One thing that seemed to separate migrant children from their adult counterparts was that few of them expressed

the four-story house. She told me that it has been a real disadvantage for her to keep living and running her business in a rental space. Her family and tailor shop are always at risk of eviction, if they cannot keep up with the payment of their monthly rent. At the time of the interview the family was paying 4.5 million VND per month, their residential and shop space included. Since she started her tailoring business she has changed the location of her shop/home twice, in each case due to a rent increase. Each time she relocated, she informed her customers of her new location. While some loyal customers kept coming back wherever her shop moved, others stopped coming after the relocation because of the distance, so she had to find new customers. Although her case may be somewhat unusual in that her rental situation involves both her business and her residential space, it nonetheless reflects how migrants living in rental housing struggle to keep up with the city's standard of living.

Another intriguing aspect of owning a house in the context of the *nha que*/Hanoian axis is associated with marriage. Because of the limited residential space in general and the high standard of living in Hanoi, it is common for newly married Hanoian couples to live in the groom's parents' house for a while until they can afford to get their own place. What happens when a migrant husband takes a Hanoian wife? I was told on various occasions that men of *nha que* are under a lot of pressure to buy a house in Hanoi. Owning a house is considered a milestone for Vietnamese men in general, for it demonstrates their financial security and earning-power as marriage partners. If a migrant man wishes to marry, or is already married to, a Hanoian woman, buying a house in Hanoi---however small it may be---has an even more significant meaning: that he is one step closer to becoming a Hanoian.

A conversation I once had with Hue, a Hanoian girl in her early twenties, nicely summed up how the status of Hanoian women typically accompanies their perceptions of self-worth and the expectations they hold for their marriage partners, as well as the cultural connotations linked to the term *nha que*.

Author (hereafter A): I recently heard someone make a comment like, "He is good-looking but I don't think he is from Hanoi, because he's got facial features that are more *nha que*." That got me thinking about what makes "Hanoians" and about the real meaning of *nha que*. Do you actually believe that people from the countryside look physically different from "Hanoians?" And how many generations does it take for a person to be recognized as a "Hanoian," anyway?

Hue (hereafter H): Well, yes, there are some differences in physical features, I suppose, although I can't pinpoint them off the top of my head right now. . . . To me, mannerism and demeanor makes it more obvious who are *nha que* and who are "Hanoian." In terms

nostalgia for their place of origin, not even when they happily acknowledged themselves to be *nha que*.

of generations, people would say three generations or even five generations, but I'm not really sure. In my case my grandparents were intellectuals who migrated to Hanoi from Hai Phong, so I'm the third generation. Ever since I was little my parents and grandparents taught me manners, like how to eat properly. For example when we eat a banana, we must split it in half, even if it's a monkey [miniature] banana. If I ever tried to eat the whole banana, my Mom would slap me!"

A: Wow, then I am *nha que* for sure!

H: No no, it doesn't matter if you are a foreigner! It only applies to a Vietnamese person. I have some friends from school whose family migrated to Hanoi in their parents' generation. The friends were born and grew up in Hanoi but they are just different, definitely not "Hanoians" in my opinion. It's their mannerisms. . . . You can easily tell who are *nha que* by looking at how they behave, at school and at home. They are often loud and boorish. Besides, the "value" of Hanoian girls is high. This may sound a bit strange to you, but it's a pretty big deal for a man from the countryside to marry a Hanoian woman. There is one unspoken agreement, though: If he is to marry a Hanoian woman, he should make every effort to buy a house in Hanoi once they get married. Many Hanoians still think that it's unfavorable for married couples to continue living in a rented house. And this applies not only to Hanoian women and their husbands living in Vietnam but also to those living abroad. I have a cousin who lives in France. She was born in 1977 and had been single until recently, so if she had been here she would have been called *e chong* ["old maid"]. She is very bright, has two Master's from French universities, and has been working in Paris. After she got married to a French man last year she told her husband that she didn't want to live in a rented apartment anymore, and talked him into buying a house in the suburbs of Paris. When she told me that story I thought that even someone like her, who has lived overseas for so long, still keeps a Hanoian spirit in herself!

Thus we see that migrants deemed to be *nha que* are looked down upon owing not just to their appearance but also to what one might call their cultural connotations: their rural mannerisms and speech-patterns. Even some migrants themselves refer to themselves as being a country person, and do so with a touch of self-derision. By contrast, a certain conceptual prestige is attached to "Hanoians," with an image of sophistication radiating out of their looks and behaviors. The bulk of my anecdotal evidence suggests that what makes a "full-blooded Hanoian," in the eyes of both migrant and non-migrant residents, is at least three generations' worth of personal history in the city. While there is no fixed or written definition of "Hanoian," it is clear that longtime residency as a migrant, or even having permanent-residential status in Hanoi, does not suffice.⁸¹ Furthermore, the high cultural value placed on owning one's home serves to further marginalize most migrants, given that they reside in rental housing. In addition to the city's rising living cost that migrants struggle to keep up with, administrative edicts often

⁸¹ For instance, even now that she has acquired her permanent-resident status, Huyen still does not consider herself Hanoian. "My husband and I sold our piece of land in the countryside to buy this property in the Thanh Ninh area where we live now, so our *ho khai* is now registered in Hanoi. But our ancestral homeland is still our village in Hung Yen province," she said.

hamper them from owning a house in Hanoi. Thus, a migrant man marrying a local Hanoian woman comes under pressure from her and her parents to buy a house; if he succeeds in doing so he may be entitled to the status of “semi-Hanoian.”

Distrust toward Other Migrants

As we have seen, village-based networks, imbued as they are with a fairly exclusive and strong sense of communal unity, serve as much-needed safety-nets for migrants. Two of the most frequently cited locuses of such village-based networks, within the migrants’ notably restricted social worlds, are the *nha tro* and the workplace. Agergaard and Thao (2011) revealed that the female migrants working as porters in the Thanh Ninh area rarely strayed far from their lives’ twin foci: their lodging house and the nearby wholesale market where they worked. Even though they moved from one *nha tro* to another during their temporary migration in Hanoi, they invariably shared bed space with co-villagers. Thus their social contacts occurred almost entirely within their own network of fellow porters and villagers, which fed their feeling of isolation and of not being integrated into city life.

This feeling of isolation and segregation from the local community is experienced not only by the seasonal migrants who often stay in *nha tro* on a temporary basis but also by those inhabiting the area on a semi-permanent basis but without legal, permanent residential status. Unlike seasonal migrants who often congregate with people from the same village in *nha tro*, or at least reside in the same neighborhood, longtime migrants prefer to stay in low-cost rental accommodations on their own. While these longtimers are loosely connected to people of the same place of origin who also are living in the city, they see each other only occasionally unless they work in the same neighborhood as street-sellers, motorbike drivers, and so on. While longtime migrants who left their children in the countryside maintain strong social ties with their home villages by paying regular home visits and sending remittances to support their families, those who settled in the city with their children do not seem to maintain a similarly strong connection to their native realms. Among the longtime migrant participants whom I interviewed, those who brought their children with them to the city return to their home villages once or twice a year at most, and only for special occasions such as *Tet*. They seldom send remittances to their parents or relatives in the village, for usually they have their hands full just feeding their own immediate families in the city and meeting each new month’s rent-demand. Nevertheless, what these longtime migrant families

with limited social bonds share with other migrants having a stronger sense of village connections is a tendency to be secluded from the local residential community. Longtime, non-seasonal migrants who have few remaining ties to their place of origin in the city or the village, and whose non-permanent residential status hampers them from attaining full social participation, are susceptible to a greater risk of social isolation and segregation.

What underlies the increasing isolation of some longtime migrants, like those who participated in this study, is the exclusive nature of migrants' emotional attachments to their own village. Similar to the sense of distance and mistrust felt mutually by migrants and non-migrants, as described earlier, a person's place of origin can make a significant difference when migrants interact among themselves, too often fomenting a sense of mutual exclusivity and distrust between migrants from one place of origin and those from another.

Many instances of such distrust of other migrants cropped up in the course of my interviews with, and observations of, participants who live or have lived in an environment in which a mixed group of migrants live next to each other. One of the things that caught my eye upon my visits to migrant families was that even some of the most economically disadvantaged families often keep big dogs. This is especially true of those living in complexes along with other migrants from different places of origin. I once visited the dwelling-place of Dat, one of the charity-class students, which was located in a complex catering to low-income migrants in the Thanh Ninh area. He lived with his grandmother and his younger siblings in a modest shelter only about 12 square meters in size; there was a large wooden bed that took up much of the space, along with a small wooden table and an old TV. In addition they were keeping one big dog and four small puppies. I asked the grandmother why the family kept so many dogs. She replied that they did so to protect their shelter from burglaries. She went on to say that they had had their TV stolen in the past, and that was why they had started to keep the dogs. "As you know, our [migrant] neighbors often hang out with untrustworthy, anti-social people like social evils. We got our TV stolen by one of those people. With the dogs around, we have better protection."

Similarly Minh, a migrant, widowed woman living on the Hoa Hong River, also was keeping a medium-size dog and a cat. She said that while the cat caught mice around the house, the dog was of help in watching her houseboat during her absence. Living with her primary-school-age daughter and son,

she had raised them as a single mother since her husband's death in 2009. "I work as a tea- seller on the Thanh Ninh bridge, along with my neighbors of the brown village. I make around 1 million VND, with which I am barely able to provide for my children. On good days I can make about 150,000 to 200,000 VND, but on other days I make as little as 50,000 VND or even less. When it rains, I can't work because there is no shelter. It's really unstable, you see. . . . While I'm working at night they are left all alone in the house and I worry about them, especially my daughter. Even though I'm acquainted with my neighbors, I don't really trust them. Having the dog around at least gives me some sense of security while I'm away" (see Figure 6).

Recalling the days when she shared a room with other migrant coworkers from different places of origin, a migrant woman from Thanh Hoa province told me that she was habitually cautious. Initially she migrated to Hanoi on her own, leaving her only son Long with her mother. She would return to her home village once every month to see them. In her early days in Hanoi she worked as a waitress at a small *com binh dan* in the Central Square. She was introduced to its owner by one of her fellow villagers who had just returned from Hanoi. He provided her and the other waiters/waitresses with free meals and accommodations, with the latter meaning that she shared a room with a group of migrants from different provinces. She always would ask her boss to pay her salary only right before her trip back home to see her family. I asked her why, and she replied bluntly, "Because I never trusted my roommates." She asserted that if she had been paid on a regular basis and had kept her money in the shared room, there would have been a great risk that her "roommates/coworkers" would steal it. Eventually she quit her job and returned to her hometown, after she had earned enough money to support her family. But then in 2010, not long after her happy reunion with her son, she came back to Hanoi with him in tow to work at yet another *com binh dan* in the Thanh Ninh area. "Are you still asking your current boss to give you your salary only when you are about to go back to the countryside?" I asked. "Oh no, not anymore," she replied. "After moving back to the city I opened a bank account, and I have started depositing my salary every month." I asked her how she learned how to deposit money in the bank, and she said that her current boss had taught her how to do it. "Do you also exchange information with your coworkers or with your migrant friends in Hanoi?" I asked. She said not so much. Although she got along with her co-

workers, she would not get actively involved with them. “My son and I are living a rather solitary life in Hanoi,” she said.



Figure 6. House dog and cat

In summary, the senses of solidarity and exclusivity that village-based networks provide to Hanoi’s migrants is like the two sides of a coin. On the one hand they serve as important support-systems, helping fellow villagers to cope with the challenges of city life. On the other hand the exclusiveness of village ties, or the corresponding mentality created by a complete lack of such ties, can serve to discourage the formation of bonds of trust between migrants from different places of origin. The real-world result of all this is that migrants tend to either constrain their social worlds within their own village networks, or to cut themselves off altogether from village connections and the local residential community.

Low Social Participation

The division of Thanh Ninh residents into those lucky enough to have permanent residency and those sadly lacking it is directly linked to one's possession in Hanoi, or more precisely in the Thanh Ninh area, of *ho khau*, and thereby of all the associated rights and services granted within the place of residence. Although permanent residents often are equated with non-migrants, it is misleading to assume that all permanent residents in the Thanh Ninh area were born in the area and have continued to live there ever since. Technically, permanent residents include not only people who have lived in the area since their birth but also those who initially migrated from other districts or provinces and later succeeded in transferring their *ho khau* to their current places of residence. Conversely, non-permanent residents are those who do not have *ho khau* in their current place of residence, regardless of their birth or extensive residential period in the area.

Lack of permanent residency in a person's current place of residence can lead to a type of social exclusion resulting from the residence-based policy practice. Both anecdotal evidence and existing studies point to the low level of non-permanent residents' social participation in their communities. Le et al. (2011) found that very few of the non-permanent resident migrants whom they interviewed had ever participated in cultural and sport activities organized by the community (3.2 percent) or community meetings arranged by local authorities (1.2 percent). Asked why they had not participated or attended, most of these people replied that their non-permanent residential status did not permit them to attend (92.7 percent). So too, among the migrant research participants interviewed for this study, none of the non-permanent migrant residents had participated in communal activities or meetings. They all indicated that they neither had been invited to attend, nor had they voluntarily asked if they could. The general consensus across both the permanent and the non-permanent residents was that migrants without permanent residential status, let alone unregistered migrants, are allowed to participate. In the same vein, the UNDP (2010) assessment of urban poverty in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City reported that migrants without permanent residency did not actively participate in civil society. In the study, social inclusion was classified into four different categories of activity: (i) participation in social-political organizations (e.g., youth union, women's union); (ii) participation in neighborhood social activities (e.g., local meetings); (iii) receipt of social services (e.g., obtaining information about public health); (iv) social relations in the neighborhood (e.g., interactions with neighbors). The study's results showed that participation rates of

non-permanent residents in (i), (ii) and (iii) were about half, or less than half, of the rates of permanent residents. In the UNDP study that included both temporary registered and unregistered migrants, approximately 10 percent of the non-permanent migrant residents remarked that the lack of a residence permit in their current residence hampered their involvement in (i), (ii) and (iii).

This low level of social participation also applies to children. In the study done by Save the Children, U.K. (2006), it is reported that when recreation activities were organized by local officials for the children residing in one of their study sites in Hanoi, on the occasions of Children's Day (June 1st) and the Mid-Autumn Festival, non-permanent-resident migrant children were not invited or permitted to play with the other children. They were even told by adults at the site to get out, and that the playground belonged only to local children. The study stated that this tendency to exclude or at least discourage non-permanent resident children (especially those within KT4-registered migrant families) from participating in communal activities was also common elsewhere, and that such children's chance of becoming part of a youth league, or a union member, was slim.

The combination of the financial factor (low-income) with the social one (lack of permanent residency) clearly does serve to strongly discourage the social participation of non-permanent migrants. Nor is this a merely abstract concern, for the above-referenced urban poverty assessment (UNDP, 2010) found that deprivation of social inclusion had a high correlation with the poverty level of non-permanent residents, and that this was particularly the case in Hanoi. By contrast, no such correlation was established for permanent residents. Interestingly, regardless of residential status, low-income residents were less likely to participate in social activities because they felt they were not being included, whereas higher-income residents were less likely to participate because of lack of time. The most basic inference one draws in this regard is that low-income residents lacking permanent residency are the migrants most likely to have a disconcerting sense of social exclusion, and the least likely to get involved in social activities.

Class Awareness

Aside from the differentiation between migrants and non-migrants, this study's data also reveal that virtually all the residents of the Thanh Ninh area —villagers from the same place of origin and villagers from other places of origin, and permanent residents and non-permanent residents— discern each other

based on a class-conscious division into two categories: awareness of themselves as being either middle-class or lower-class residents.

Perceptions of Middle-Class Residents

In the Thanh Ninh area where people with markedly different living standards live relatively close to each other, dismissive attitudes sometimes were exhibited by some of the better-off residents toward their neighbors who were leading a life more socioeconomically disadvantaged than their own.

Characteristically, the complaints and accusations made by the better-off residents against their less well-off counterparts focused on the latter's unhygienic practices and on security issues. The following conversation I held with the members of a middle-class permanent-resident family that had moved across neighborhoods in the Thanh Ninh area illustrates how middle-class residents' encounters and interactions with some of their impoverished neighbors can instill a feeling of distrust.

Thanh My, a permanent resident who runs a small variety shop on a street-corner adjoining a neighborhood comprised of both poor migrants and middle-class residents, complained that often she was awoken early in the morning by her migrant neighbors, drunkenly shouting on their way home after working the night shift at the nearby wholesale market. As her customers include those poor neighbors, she sympathizes with their financial distress. In the past she even let them defer payments, although her mother-in-law was against it. She admitted, however, that some of her customers never paid her back even when they had promised they would. "You see, as much as I want to, I can't really trust them," she said, with a resigned tone of voice.

Hearing what Thanh My was saying, Huyen, her sister-in-law who was living in a newly built house cater-corner to Thanh My's shop, echoed Thanh My's concerns, saying that she too was having a hard time living next to those neighbors. "I know that their life is hard and I feel empathic toward them, because I also grew up in a humble family in the countryside myself. So, I feel like I can relate to them. But the way they act in our neighborhood, like throwing their garbage on the street and leaving their dogs' mess there without clearing it away, that's just disgusting and I can't stand it! I always end up cleaning up the mess that they spread in front of my house by myself." She added that each household of local residents, like her and Thanh My's family, was required to pay 3,000 VND once every three months for garbage-collection, with trash being picked up by the collector every afternoon. But because their

neighbors who leave litter behind are mostly unregistered migrants they never pay such fees, which of course only adds to the anger felt by Thanh My and those like her (see Figure 7).

Security is another issue. After Huyen moved to what was, as of 2009, her current location, she ran into “unexpected intruders” several times. Prior to moving into that newly built house she and her family had lived in a rented one, in a neighborhood located even further north of the market. Although the neighborhood was a mere 500 meters or so from her new residence, it was made up mostly of middle-class residents who either owned their houses or could afford to pay the rental fees ranging from 400 to 600 USD. Her new home, on the other hand, was located in an alley adjoining a neighborhood containing both shelters for low-income migrants and the houses of middle-class residents. When she first moved in she often would leave the door to her porch unlocked, as had been her habit in the old house. Her new neighbors advised her that she should always lock the porch, but she didn’t take their advice seriously. Then one day, as she came down to the kitchen on the ground floor, she found a stranger trying to carry her TV out of the house. She screamed at him, and the thief ran away empty-handed. It later turned out that the intruder was a migrant neighbor living in a nearby shelter. It comes as no surprise that after a few more such incidents, Huyen finally decided to lock the porch at all times.



Figure 7. Litter piled up on a street-corner

Middle-class residents, who take pride in their relative economic well-being in comparison with their impoverished neighbors, shared with me their resentment at the public perception of the whole Thanh Ninh area as being a deprived one. A longtime local resident who has been living with her husband and two children in a four-storied house recounted how she and her husband had some unpleasant experiences when they arranged for the delivery of some furniture and electronic products that the family had purchased. “Every time we gave our home address to shop staff to ask for deliveries, they would give us this look as if there were no way we could have afforded to buy! It was really annoying! People just assume that the residents in this area are all poor migrants, which is not true.”

Brown Village

The brown village residents who inhabit houseboats on the river arguably comprise the most impoverished population in the entire Thanh Ninh area. Just to remind the reader as an aid to visualization, a few dozen houseboats, each containing a family, are spread out adjacent to the midstream island, and the latter is accessible by foot only from the middle of the bridge that crosses the river. As one heads down the stairs of the bridge to step onto the island, one sees fields all around. The scenery makes one feel that one is in the countryside, far from the hustle and bustle of the city.

The first batch of migrants began to live in boats in the 1980s, but as compared to the rapid expansion of informal settlements on the opposite shore, the development of the brown village was slow. A woman who migrated to the brown village in the late 1990s from Binh Dinh province, in southern Vietnam told me that there were about eight families when she first moved in; all were living in tiny little boats, about half the size of the houseboats in which most of the village's residents now dwell.⁸² Just like this woman, people made the decision to live in boats because they were too poor to pay for rental houses or rooms elsewhere. Those who did not have even enough money to buy boats started squatting on islands, but their shelters soon were demolished by the local police. The current head of the village, one of the early settlers from Ha Dong,⁸³ worked as a garbage collector when he first came to Hanoi in 1979. When he ran out of money he could not pay his rent, so he camped out under the bridge in the village area for a while.

According to its village head, the number of residents gradually increased over the years to reach over 20 households or nearly 150 residents. As the media began doing stories about the "brown village" and its residents' impoverished lives, several NGOs started to come in and offer assistance in improving the livelihoods of village residents. Since 2004, one of the NGOs based in the Thanh Ninh area has provided assistance in the forms of food and refurbishment of the residents' houseboats. (Every time the area is hit by heavy rain and wind, especially during the typhoon season, their boats get badly damaged.)

⁸² I have been unable to access comprehensive data on the price of houseboats, but one resident who moved into the brown village and purchased her family's houseboat in 2008 told me it cost her 6 million VND. Her house was average in size for the village and formed of two small connected boats: one was used as the family's living room and kitchen, the other as their sleeping room. While the prices of houses on the other side of the river in the Thanh Ninh area and outside of the brown village proper, must vary greatly due to the mixed-class nature of the area, houses on the eastern edge of the Thanh Ninh area, in a flood-prone area facing the river and thus considered to be on the low end in terms of land value, range in value from 60 to 100 million VND.

Even though the government no longer bothers trying to chase the villagers away, as they frequently did in the past, no public assistance, not even provision of emergency food and clean water in times of natural disaster or of the not uncommon massive blackouts, will come to the village residents.

Despite its unofficial name of “brown village,” no resident in the village makes a living by fishing. Instead most of the village residents work as collectors of trash and recyclables, although some women work on the bridge as tea-sellers from noon to midnight and a few villagers are tenant farmers. Outsiders largely write off the village residents as “social evils,” but the villagers shrug off such characterizations with a smile. Some residents, however, including the village head, admitted that many of the village residents had at some point in their lives been engaged in such antisocial activities as robbery, prostitution, and drug-dealing. The village head, who has played that role for more than ten years, stated that one of the reasons the residents voted him village chief is that he has never been a “social evil.” While the village’s residents have come from different parts of Vietnam, most of them are unregistered in Hanoi. Some men who initially migrated to Hanoi alone and got married afterward have lost ties with their home villages and are not registered anywhere.⁸⁴

The public image of village residents as lower-class “social evils,” which is lent credibility by the backgrounds of some of the residents and by their illegal occupations in the area, is one that the landholders of the island presumably would have no trouble embracing. Many of these landholders live in the suburban Gia Lam district in the eastern part of Hanoi. They would invariably give the cold shoulder to the brown-village residents when they passed them, according to those residents themselves. When some local government officials burned down some of the residents’ boats in the course of destroying the shanties inhabited by squatters, no landholder lifted a finger to stop them. Things started to change a bit in the mid-2000s, when the brown village began to draw the attention of the media and NGOs. The village residents told me that nowadays the landowners, as well as some local authorities, will greet them and even pay a visit to their houseboats. A few of the residents now work part-time as tenant farmers on the landholders’ vegetable farms on the island, thereby making 1-2 million VND a year. “After twenty years, they finally came to realize that we are not all evil but kindhearted and honest human beings,” said

⁸³ Previously, Ha Dong was the capital city of Ha Tay province. Today it is a suburban district of Hanoi.

a man who was one of the earliest settlers in the village. He added that “they,” the landholders and some local authorities, even went so far as to raise their voices against the central government when it tried to demolish their settlements recently.

And yet despite their improved relations with the landholders of the island and some local authorities in the Thanh Ninh area, brown-village residents still encounter prejudice that runs deep. A sense of segregation was shared by all the migrant children and family members I spoke to in the village. They said that some people outside of the village would even be so cruel as to call them *bui doi*, a term often used to refer to people living or working on the streets such as vagrants and street children (Human Rights Watch, 2006) and sometimes extended to include the rural migrant poor, come to work in the cities. “Outsiders dislike us and call us *bui đòì*. They think we make the city dirty and messy,” said a woman who migrated to the brown village from Ninh Binh province with her husband in 2001. Another longtime resident, Mr. Nam, asserted that discrimination against the brown-village residents remains all too real: “The government is still trying to chase us away from the river, because they don’t want Hanoi to look like a shabby and unclean city!” A staff member of the NGO providing support to the charity class divulged how an extracurricular activity they recently had organized in the brown village went nowhere with parents and guardians living outside the village. The NGO personnel planned the activity not only in the hope that the vast outdoor space of the brown village would allow the class’s students to get out of the small classroom and scamper across the fields but also because they saw a great opportunity for students and parents/guardians from both inside and outside the village to gather and get to know each other. No such luck! While four out of seven students from the brown village and a few of their parents/guardians did participate in the activity, only a handful of the students from outside the village came, and none of their parents/guardians showed up. As for the students from outside the brown village who did not attend, they claimed that their parents/guardians would not let them do so, citing their sense of uneasiness about having their children associate with those from the brown village.

In contrast to the ongoing tensions between brown-village residents and outsiders, it appears that a sense of solidarity is retained within the village to some extent. The village chief expounded on how the villagers offer mutual help in times of crisis. “When some troubles occur in the village, they will be

⁸⁴ Children of the married couples I interviewed in the brown village often were registered under the wives’ *ho khai*

brought to my attention. If it is about disputes between the village residents, I will visit the homes of each party to intervene to stop the fight, and will advise them on how they can better handle the matter in question and be reconciled peacefully. When the trouble involves financial matters, I will make visits to each household to ask their help for fundraising for the family concerned.” On a more mundane but no less inspiring level, the village women who work as tea-sellers during the nighttime hours always make the trip to and back from the bridge, their workplace, together, so as to watch out for each other. Normally they work from noon till midnight. It takes about fifteen minutes on foot to get from the edge of the village to the bridge: the women risk being attacked when walking outside alone, particularly after dark, because there is no streetlight along the way in the field. When some women sell out their night’s supply drinks and snacks faster than the others do, they help their comrades to sell out theirs and wait until everyone else has finished her job, so that all can return to the village together.

Heartwarming as such conduct is, the degree of solidarity and communal unity among the fishing-village residents does not appear to be as high as that produced by the village-based networks of social relations illustrated in a previous section. Said one longtime female resident: “What connects us here is sorrow. We come from many different places, but the thing we have in common is that we are all leading hard lives. Some ran away from their countryside and cut ties with their families, some committed crimes and got arrested, some are living with sick spouses and physically disabled children.” Another woman who moved to the village three years ago with her two children, after her husband died, said: “We do help each other whenever we can around here, but I’m trying to keep a low profile. I don’t want my kids to get associated with other residents’ children either, because as you know, some of the residents have drifted into crime. And I don’t want them to get a bad influence as they grow up.” Having lived in the southern part of the Thanh Ninh area prior to moving to the brown village, she shared with me her desire to move out of the houseboat and return to the “opposite shore” once she had accumulated enough money to rent a place for her family. “All my friends from the neighborhood are still there, so I sometimes hang out with them when going over to the other side of the river.”

In sum, the brown village, this impoverished community made up of unregistered migrants, provides us, owing both to the nature of its residents and to its geographical distance from other

that were still in their villages; the husbands had no valid *ho khau* anywhere.

residential neighborhoods in the Thanh Ninh area, with the ultimate image of social segregation and stigmatization. Yes, tensions between village residents and those dwelling in what feels like “the outside world” have eased somewhat in recent years, but the still widely heard aspersions of the residents as being mere *bui doi* suggests that the deep-seated prejudice against them hasn’t gone away. The disdain displayed by the Thanh Ninh residents outside of the village tells us that the village residents are envisioned as comprising the bottom of the social pyramid.

The brown village differs from the rest of the Thanh Ninh area not only in that does it retain a certain degree of self-governance under the leadership of the village chief; it also fosters a sense of unity among the village inhabitants as unregistered migrants and “social outcasts.” Such a sense of congregation is rarely seen in other parts of the Thanh Ninh area where neighbors of mixed social class, residential status, and place of origin live close to each other and yet scarcely intermingle with one another. Nevertheless, and as noted earlier, a feeling of mistrust expressed by some village residents toward their village neighbors suggests that the degree of solidarity and social ties within the brown village is not as intense as that produced by the village-based networks, which are imbued with a sense of implicit trust, with “social sentiment” (*tin h cam*).

It is clear that multi-layered class tensions pervade the Thanh Ninh area. Not only do its geographical location and the external appearance of the houses serve as markers of class divisions, but the residents’ remarks and attitude toward their less-well-off neighbors often illuminate their class awareness. As we have seen, other Thanh Ninh residents mentally assign brown-village inhabitants to the very bottom rank within the area; the combination of their poverty, their informal, floating settlements attached to an isolated island, and the previous backgrounds of some residents deemed “social evils” serves to reinforce people’s widespread conception of them as being not “underprivileged” and thus deserving of their compassion but rather as mere *bui doi*, dust of life.

It comes as no surprise that middle-class residents of the Thanh Ninh area, many of whom are permanent residents, expressed feelings of resentment at being bracketed with their less well-off counterparts in the area by outsiders (i.e., city residents living outside of the Thanh Ninh area). Better-off residents also hold grudges against and distrust their poor neighbors owing to littering and security

problems. In their minds, their low-income migrant neighbors are the ones putting a strain on urban infrastructure and threatening public security. Such a mindset, in turn, impedes the building of community spirit and the fostering of social interactions among residents of varying social classes.

Growing social tensions and a sense of fear that derive from class-consciousness in urban neighborhoods are being similarly reported in other parts of the world. For instance Caldeira (as cited in Scheper-Hughes & Hoffman, 1998) noted that some residents in mixed-class neighborhoods of São Paulo had built protective barriers out of a fear of violence and social insecurity. People of greater affluence could afford to protect themselves by living in high-rise apartment buildings with security guards or in gated communities with electronic surveillance systems, while using private shopping centers. These physical barriers serve to reinforce class divisions and thereby foster discrimination. Caldeira's study thus demonstrates how social segregation can be achieved not only in geographical and symbolic terms but also in material forms, in cities where residents of different social classes live in close proximity.

One can see in the Thanh Ninh area, as well, the separation of mixed-class residents taking concrete shape, as when its better-off residents inhabit multiple-storied, spacious, solitary houses as opposed to flat shelters or houseboats packed with poor migrant families, and when even middle-class residents of modest means and living close to low-income neighbors make sure they keep their sturdy porches locked. A difference that this study has identified in the Thanh Ninh area, however, is the existence of a mechanism designed to protect a resident from not just neighboring residents of a lower social class but also those of socially equivalent status; we have seen how the keeping of dogs is a popular "security system" that low-income migrant residents utilize to prevent their own neighbors from breaking in and burglarizing them.

What appears to permeate Hanoi's urban space, thereby creating a vicious cycle of social segregation and discrimination, is the idea that those who symbolically and/or materially represent poverty, lack of hygiene, and "social evil" need to be wiped out—or at least rendered invisible. They should be cleared away because their presence represents a threat to those values of "civilized living" deemed to be virtually synonymous with modernity: "middle-classness," neatness, and social order. At least one can take a bit of comfort from the fact that this syndrome is not, as noted earlier, confined to Vietnam but is, to the contrary, global in its reach. One thinks, for instance, of how Brazil's street kids

staked out sophisticated urban neighborhoods that stood in stark contrast to their appearance and social status, only to thereby bring on social rejection, confinement, and the elimination of their presence (Scheper-Hughes & Hoffman, 1998). So too, the impoverished migrant residents of the Thanh Ninh area are continually confronted by the impulse of better-off, middle-class residents to disperse or better yet banish them. And just as Brazil's street children were labeled as "*a class of people [who] were considered dangerous and untrustworthy, a blight on the urban landscape [,]*" (Scheper-Hughes & Hoffman, 1998, p. 356), so too the low-income residents in the Thanh Ninh area are stigmatized as constituting the disorderly, distrustful poor, a "class" that is the root cause of virtually all social problems. In the end, mounting distrust and heightened exclusivity will only serve to further undermine the social integration of urban residents by exacerbating class divisions.

Implications of Social Segregation

This chapter has sought to show how the migrants' various networks of social relations serve as valuable cultural resources but also present them with challenges as they strive to build new lives in the city. While migrant families establish and maintain multiple networks throughout the migration process, I have, in order to highlight their varying degrees of collectivity and reliance, classified them into two primary groups: village-based networks and non-village-based networks. While the former type has rigid social boundaries in the sense that membership normally is restricted to people from the same place of origin, the latter type's membership is more amorphous, even including loose connections to migrant neighbors and fellow migrant workers from different places of origin. Both types provide the migrants with support by facilitating their reciprocal exchanges of both material and non-material forms of assistance. Still, the crucial difference exists that the village-based networks often are turned to in a spirit of unqualified trust, whereas the non-village-based networks are perceived as being strictly a last resort and thus are apt to be deficient in a sense of communal unity.

What appear to underlie the strong sense of solidarity and fellowship observed in village-based social relations are those moral foundations of communalism that have been nurtured in the rural village societies of northern Vietnam. The pervasiveness there of such communal institutions as communal land and village rituals, as well as the emphasis on *quan he tinh cam* or sentimental relations, tell us that an attempt has been made to foster a sense of social unity and equity despite preexisting socioeconomic

differentiation within the village. And yet the tight-knit communal relations have not only elicited mutual obligations of help but also have spawned a sense of the exclusivity of membership.

In urban residential neighborhoods such as those within the Thanh Ninh area that are comprised of local permanent residents and migrants from different places of origin and of different backgrounds, the formation of such closely knit but closed-off social relations can serve to limit migrants' interactions with people outside of their inner circles, impeding their integration into the local community. Both anecdotal evidence drawn from my field observations and existing studies show that migrants, adults and children alike, have only limited social contacts in their daily lives. Even though the residential status of migrants in the city does not directly affect migrant families' access to cultural resources per se (unlike their restricted access to economic and social resources due to the residence-based policies), their mere presence as non-permanent migrant residents allows the public discourse to cast a shadow of blame and guilt on them and thereby implicitly condone the mistreatment of them by their local non-migrant counterparts.

The loosely connected social relations with neighbors that we have noted in the Thanh Ninh area seem to have some commonality with Xom Chua Van Tho, a poor neighborhood in Saigon (currently Ho Chi Minh City) studied by Hoskins and Shepherd (1965) in the 1960s. The then up-and-coming urban quarter contained approximately eight hundred households and an estimated four thousand inhabitants. It attracted people of very varied ethnic, religious, and regional affiliations (Vietnamese, Chinese, northerners, southerners, Catholics, Buddhists) and economic levels; about 43 percent of its household heads had originated from northern Vietnam. What the researchers found to be characteristic of this neighborhood is its fairly loose social ties and the lack of community spirit among the residents. They were divided into small, intimate groups and would interact only with those of similar backgrounds. Hoskins and Shepherd reasoned that the extensive networks, reaching well beyond their residing area, that the resident families, and especially those from the North, had forged were largely responsible for the absence of feelings of community membership. Though of different epochs and regions, Xom Chua Van Tho and the Thanh Ninh area are strikingly similar in this: the non-corporate nature of people's social relations with their neighbors, and a consequent lack of solidarity and integration. All of that chiefly

derives from residents' propensity to interact mostly with those of similar backgrounds via close relationships forged by preexisting networks—in the case of the Thanh Ninh area, the village-based ones.

At any rate, there can be no doubt that the social exclusion and discrimination that pervade the Thanh Ninh area precipitate social divisions among its residents. Mutual distrust and a sense of segregation arise both between migrants and non-migrants and among the migrants themselves, and these have demographic, conceptual, social, and moral impacts. While we are speaking of categories, let us remind ourselves that this study has categorized its participants within four complementary pairs: migrants and non-migrants; villagers from the same place of origin and those from other places of origin; permanent residents and non-permanent residents; middle-class residents and lower-class residents. The differentiations between migrants and non-migrants and between middle-class and lower-class residents are somewhat arbitrary when compared with the classifications of residents according to village connections and residential status, both of which have stricter criteria for inclusion and exclusion. The only factor that all of the preceding categories have in common is their mutual exclusivity produced by the Thanh Ninh area residents' disinclination to socially interact with members of different groups. This hampers the social integration of neighborhood residents and serves to further marginalize the migrants, who already have scant access to economic and social resources.

The question that future studies doubtless will keep trying to answer is this: What, then, are the implications of such social collectivity/exclusivity for structuring a social hierarchy and shaping power-relationships in an urban residential neighborhood such as the Thanh Ninh area? For the time being we must simply stay aware of the paradox that even though close-knit social networks often provide migrants with a solid support system as they struggle to cope with adversities, their very closed nature works against the better social integration of migrants in the destination area and their upward social mobility. As Agergaard and Thao (2011) rightly noted in their study of Hanoi's female migrant porters, "while migration networks can be seen as valuable resources, they may also act as reproducers of social inequalities and power relations" (Jellinick, 1997; Silvey and Elmhirst, 2003; Resurrection, 2005, as cited in Agergaard and Thao, 2011).

Looking closely at the dynamics of relatedness among the various networks that migrants have access to, in relation to their very unequal access to economic, social, and cultural resources, could shed

some light on precisely what social elements serve to facilitate or hamper the social integration of particular groups. One such view already has been taken via the research done by Gardner and Ahmed (2006) on both the interconnecting dynamics among the in-migrants living in a *Londoni* (“a village with high levels of transnational migration to the UK”; p. 4) village fictitiously named Jalalgaon in Biswanath, Bangladesh, and their differentiated relationships with their overseas (out-migrant) employers. These researchers have shown that the degree of closeness and patronage among connected parties is intimately intertwined with the poor’s livelihood strategies, thereby illuminating the highly contextual and differentiated nature of “the poor” as a social category. Permanent laborers and seasonal or temporary migrants in Jalalgaon, acting as caretakers for the empty houses of absent *Londonis*, forge kinship links and longstanding relationships with their *Londoni* relatives/employers; colony residents who landed their jobs not via any immediate link but rather strictly through the grapevine remained outsiders, regardless of how long they resided in the village. The close kinship ties that the former two groups retain with their *Londoni* relatives/owners grant them generous social protection in times of hardship, but such protection emerges strictly out of the unsavory patron-client relationship that obtains between the powerful *Londoni* and their powerless relatives/employees and that imposes some heavy moral obligations on both parties. The colony residents are blessedly unburdened by such patron-client relations but the blessing is mixed, for their lack of insider connections prevents them from accessing the strong forms of protection available to their counterparts and from gaining access to the *Londoni* village society.

Bringing these points of discussion back to the context of the present study, it can be seen that the migrant families’ minimal amount of relatedness to others outside of their village-based connections and thereby their limited access to resources serves to sustain their status in the Thanh Ninh area as outsiders. We would do well to keep it mind, however, that just as the meanings of “the poor” vary in Jalalgaon depending on “*who* the local poor are, and what relationships they have with *Londoni* households” (Gardner& Ahmed, 2006, p. 33), so too it is unwise to lump together all of the “poor migrant families” in the Thanh Ninh area. There are migrant families with and without access to various social connections ranging from village-based relations (including kin) at the destination area and/or their places of origin, NGO contacts and foreign individual benefactors, connections to local school personnel or other education providers, and migrant neighbors of similar backgrounds. While each of these types of social

relation can bring a migrant forms of support or protection, the degree and nature of the relatedness, and the amount of the associated resources, vary widely. The bottom line is that the migrants left most vulnerable are those with the fewest accessible social relations. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the key to survival for the residents of Vietnam's urban neighborhoods seems to be securing an optimal combination of the three resources: disposable funds (economic), permanent residency (social), and reliable and trustworthy social networks (cultural). Evidently most migrant families have great difficulty securing them all, even though migrants with solid, extensive social connections, forged largely via the village-based networks, tend to do better than those without them. Gardner and Ahmed (2006, p. 20) have summed this matter up perfectly: "One's relationship to place, as well as who one knows (the two are inextricably linked) are therefore central social resources in accessing forms of protection and/or livelihoods that are key for survival amongst the poor."

The chapter that follows takes a closer look at the processes of social change in their relation to migrant families' attempts at resource mobilization in the context of post-*doi moi* Vietnam. By identifying the continuities and changes that cut across the patterns of their access to the three resources, the chapter will illustrate how (i) spontaneous urban-ward migration in Vietnam has not been able, in and of itself, to provide underprivileged migrant families with paths of upward mobility and (ii) the State's reluctance to restructure its institutional structures in ways designed to upgrade its officials' urban-management skills is playing no small part in perpetuating the marginalization of migrants.

CHAPTER VII: SOCIAL CONTINUITIES AND CHANGES

Based on the findings of the three preceding chapters with respect to migrants' access to economic, social, and cultural resources, this chapter points to the continuities and changes that may be observed in their patterns of resource mobilization in the context of post-*doi moi* Vietnam. On the one hand, increasing "wiggle room" in certain public domains, and the growing circulation of cash within the education sector, signify the emerging bargaining power of money. On the other hand, despite the migrant families' efforts to cope with instability by diversifying both their income-generating activities and their social connections, these people who largely constitute "the poor" in Vietnam, its notably "second-class citizens," are to a great extent deprived of their rightful sense of social cohesion by the State's failure to make those structural reforms that would facilitate more equitable resource allocation.

For the time being, survival in the city can be achieved by expanding one's disposable income (making it abundant enough to circumvent regulatory obstacles when necessary), by obtaining permanent residency in the city, and by establishing multiple, dependable social networks both inside and outside of village circles. But of course the vast majority of migrant families have trouble reaching just one, let alone all of three, of those goals. This means we are likely to see, if the State blindly persists in implementing its residence-based policies without making some fundamental changes that enable a greater social integration of migrants and redress the rising inequality among the city's residents, just a further peripheralization of underprivileged migrant families.

Increased Negotiability and Role of Money

The rapid expansion of the market economy after *doi moi* has, as just noted, created more space for flexibility and negotiability within certain public domains. Then too, the rapid growth of spontaneous migration from rural to urban areas, undertaken by people in search of economic opportunities, has led to the relaxation of state regulations on population mobility, thereby diminishing the role of *ho khau* as a population-control device. As a result, an increasing number of migrants flow into the city for a temporary or an indefinite period of time without bothering to get their paperwork done (i.e., to obtain a temporary-residence permit). It is rather remarkable that even though many such migrants must know that their lack of permanent-resident registered status in the urban destination will impede their access to public social

services, that awareness does not stop them from taking on the challenge of moving to the city in the hope of thereby improving their lives.

The growing cash economy also has heightened money's glamour as an essential "trump card," as the magic wand allowing one to circumvent regulations in the post-*doi moi* society. The broad range of the examples cited in this study—admission to schools outside the locality of one's place of residence; early release of street working children from detention centers; late but successful registration of a child's birth; reinstatement of birth certificate, marriage certificate, or even *ho khau*; preferential processing of one's "red book"—itself attests to the fact that now more than ever, cash is perceived as making things work for one's purpose even while allowing one to sidestep the protocols.

This trend holds true for the transformation presently under way in the education sector as well. As discussed earlier, the state's adoption of a "socialization" policy as a way of scaling back its role as the sole and full-scale service-provider while giving a larger role to market-oriented incentives in the sphere of education delivery has resulted in augmented financial responsibilities for households. Not only do public schools openly charge tuition fees and other school fees despite the legal stipulation of "free education," they also levy higher admission fees from incoming students who wish to attend a public school outside the locality of their permanent residence. Although such an option is not affordable by many migrant parents having little disposable income, some migrant parents can afford and are willing to pay the extra fees. Thus some public schools, with an eye toward increasing the sources of their funding, have in recent years started to offer admission to non-permanent residents more readily. An interview I conducted with a ward administrative officer in 2013 (personal communication, September 21, 2013) indicated an increased presence of migrant children in some of Hanoi's public schools. In those schools the accelerating rate of migrant children's enrollment was such that more than 50 students were crammed into one classroom that normally would hold 20 to 30 at most.

In a similar vein, some schools have become more accommodating to those who do not meet the two-year principle stating that only children who are within two years of the class-entry age are eligible for admission to mainstream education. While this is a welcome trend for children who have been out of school for more than two years, the greater flexibility actually bespeaks no greater sympathy or compassion for those lacking access to school because of their age. As one schoolteacher put it, "the

age issue is not as important as how much you can afford to pay to get your child into school and any personal connections may you have with the school. In other words if you meet both of these conditions, your child will have a high chance of getting into a school regardless of his or her age.” In brief, a combination of money and social connections can put the icing on the cake.

Moreover, the growing pervasiveness of “extra study” and of monetary offerings to schoolteachers demonstrates that money has become intimately associated with moral obligations in the realm of education. We have seen that students and their parents often are under pressure, even if not actually forced, to attend the extra-study sessions provided by their teachers. The session fees not only serve as a valuable source of additional income for low-paid schoolteachers; students’ participation in extra study also demonstrates their own, and their parents’, commitment to receiving supplementary education from their teachers, regardless of the cost incurred. In exchange students learn what sometimes was not covered in class, which in some cases includes vital exam-preparation materials.

By the same token, the practice of making monetary offerings to schoolteachers (with or without non-monetary gifts on the side) sends the morally dubious messages that money can influence the intensity of a teacher’s stewardship of a student and that the provision of such money is one of a parent’s inherent obligation to her/his child. The net result of this practice is that the student who attends a mainstream school and whose parents can afford to “grease the wheels” is in that favored educational position which the average migrant child can only dream about attaining.

Lingering Influence of *Ho Khau*

Despite the changes brought about by the growing influence of the market economy, there is a certain degree of continuity in the way preexisting social structures determine people’s degree of access to, and ability to mobilize, resources. The most notably stabilizing influence in this regard is the state’s continued adherence to the *ho khau* system. Even though the level of sanctions against those not abiding by its regulations (i.e., migrants relocating without obtaining formal permission) has been significantly reduced, the system continues to dictate one’s degree of access to public services: those with permanent residency in the current place of residence are granted a maximal level of privileged rights and social protection while those lacking it must pay a price if they wish to access services in a locality outside the address registered in their *ho khau*. Lack of permanent residency also makes it hard for migrants to

pursue stable employment and to benefit from government-financed programs targeting the poor in their urban destinations (Dang et al., 2003). According to Vietnam's Institute of Social Sciences Information (*Vien Thong tin Khoa hoc Xa hoi*, as cited in Hardy, 2003b, p. 131), under Vietnam's current constitution "free circulation and residence throughout the country, as well as the right to leave the country and return from abroad" has been stipulated as its citizens' entitlement since 1992. In reality, the state's observance of the archaic *ho khau* system not only overrides the law but sustains preexisting administrative structures designed to restrict population mobility (Hardy, 2003b).

Some critics have proposed that the government recognize the legal status of migrants in the city so as to allow them more equitable access to social services (Le et al., 2011), but no major action to alter the prescribed course of migration policies has yet been taken by policymakers. To the contrary, the government consistently reinforces its position that discourages spontaneous, urban-ward migration. As we saw earlier the Capital Law, which came into force in 2013, includes regulations that significantly raise the bar of eligibility for permanent residency in Hanoi ("Ha Noi tightens residency criteria," 2013; "Hanoi to tighten immigration rules," 2012; "Migration to Hanoi to be restricted from 2013," 2012; Thao, 2012). Meanwhile, security officials who endlessly deal with day-to-day urban-management problems as they seek to regulate some migrants' disorderly activities bemoan the lack of clear regulatory guidelines, beyond just *ho khau*, to administer the incoming migrants (Hardy, 2003b). The fact remains that as of yet no institutional measure designed to streamline or integrate the management of spontaneous migration has been initiated. Worse yet, there is no government agency whose exclusive mandate it is to manage matters related to spontaneous migration (Le et al., 2011).⁸⁵

It can no longer be denied that the state's stance of sticking to the preexisting migration policy, with its emphasis on restricting free migration, has proven itself ineffective over the years. In the absence of much-needed inter-ministerial administrative restructuring to enable the improved management of rural-to-urban migration, not only will the ongoing migration inflow put an even greater strain on urban infrastructure but the lives of the migrant poor will also likely become harder. The State's blind adherence to residence-based policies and its "clean-up campaigns" designed to crack down on street business and

⁸⁵ The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) is in charge of matters relating to organized migration but not spontaneous migration, and the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) "does not have a policy tailored to the particular risks posed to [spontaneous] migrants" (Le et al., 2011, p. 5).

“social evil” amount to little more than an attempt to sweep emerging social problems under the rug by dealing with them strictly on an ad hoc basis.

For migrant families who are at a disadvantage when it comes to resource mobilization achieved through formal channels, one way to cope with social and economic adversity is to reach out to informal sources of support. Such support may be obtained from various internal social networks, with the village-based networks being regarded as the most reliable and trustworthy. Given the increased financial instability under the unpredictable market conditions, some migrant families strive to diversify their social connections outside of their village circles, reaching out to, among others, migrant neighbors with different places of origin, NGOs, and individual foreign benefactors. Still, not all migrant families have such a broad range of social connections to count upon. And unlike seasonal migrants and other migrant parents whose children stay in the countryside, longtime migrant families are less likely to maintain close contact with village-based networks or to ask for their support, financial or otherwise.

Moreover, the mutually exclusive nature of migrant networks and those formed by non-migrant city residents, due in part to the state’s ongoing endorsement of residence-based policies, continues to inhibit the social integration of migrants in the city. On top of that, the public discourse on migrants not only shifts attention away from the state’s lack of institutional capacity for effective policymaking that addresses the trend of burgeoning spontaneous migration by portraying migrants as undesirable social presences in the city; it also seeps into mundane narratives in such a way as to intensify the social segregation and stigmatizing portrayals of migrants as the disorderly, distrustful poor. As a result, migrants whose access to formal resources already is limited are facing an ever greater risk of marginalization.

Coping Strategies of Migrant Families

Observation of the environment surrounding migrant families living in post-*doi moi* Hanoi reveals how the market economy, the government’s residence-based policies, and cultural dynamics combine to shape the very different ways in which resources are accessed by migrant families and by their non-migrant counterparts. While the heightened influence of market forces has transformed people’s modes of securing their resources, it also has widened disparities both between migrants and non-migrants and among migrants having very varying degrees of resource-access.

The continuities and changes manifested in the patterns of resource-access and -utilization reveal the growing bargaining power of cash, the lingering influence of the permanent-resident preferential policies, and the continued importance of social connections in providing people with channels through which they can negotiate access to resources. Thus, migrants confronted by an intrinsically unfair social system must somehow summon up sufficient economic, social, and cultural resources to improve their chances of survival in the city: enough funds to circumvent regulatory constraints as necessary; permanent residency; and multiple and dependable social networks.

The harsh reality is that in the new atmosphere of increased flexibility and negotiability, the State's transition to a "socialist-oriented market economy" is prompting greater self-reliance in resource mobilization, with people essentially being forced to turn to whatever individually oriented coping strategies they can muster. As Hardy (2001) simply puts it, people are "increasingly [required to] take matters into their own hands," (p. 207) with that fact sadly being exemplified by both the proliferation of "hidden costs" or "bribery" lurking within the administrative process and the growing financial burden borne by households in the education sphere. Migrant families must somehow dynamically cope with all such challenges by exercising "their own ingenuity to negotiate [the State's policies and their corollaries]" (Hardy, 2001, p. 207). And even though financial constraints rarely enable them to get their way, they do constantly seek ways to expand their channels of access to resources and opportunities.

The most basic of such ways is that of diversifying one's income-generating activities (Berry, 1993). Some migrant families who make their living by street-selling work at several different locations, shift locations regularly, and/or work separately with other family members on certain occasions (e.g., sending the children to a pagoda on particular dates of the month to beg worshippers for mercy). Many migrants certainly are on the lookout for the latest market trend, and they never hesitate to change their products or to work multiple jobs. Chi Huong, a widow and the mother of four sons, has long been working as a street-seller targeting foreign and Vietnamese tourists in the city center. When I met her during my return visit in September 2013 she was about to embark on her new business: selling bundles of incense sticks and fake bills. "I'm pretty excited about this new job I'm starting!" she exclaimed. "At first, I'm trying to stay flexible, maybe working a couple days a week at the temple, aside from my regular street-selling, and we'll see how it goes." The sticks and bills are used by worshippers when making an

offering to the altar at a temple. Built in 1070 and renowned for being the first university in Vietnam, the temple attracts tourists, Vietnamese and foreigners alike, as well as local worshippers. A number of Vietnamese students and their families also visit the temple as a ritualistic way of praying for good luck in getting into college; as the announcement of the test results approaches in the fall, the number of worshippers increases even more.

In another case, a pair of migrant parents who used to work as a street-seller (mother) and a *xe om* driver (father) started working together, as roving street-vendors, after their eldest daughter had left for Hai Phong to find work in 2012. They said this when I spoke with them: “These days we are roaming across the city, from one tourist spot to another, instead of sticking around in the same location. That way, we can improve our chance of generating more income. We even go to peddle as far as Bac Ninh City.⁸⁶ Over there, there is much less competition than in Hanoi.” After thus shifting their work-style, the couple changed their product-line as well: previously the mother and her eldest daughter had sold small touristic items such as postcards, folding fans, and logoed caps; the couple now are selling name-brand-imitation T-shirts, wallets, and clutch bags, which, they say, sell better. Their three other children are attending public primary and junior secondary schools with financial support in the form of tuition fees coming from an NGO and an American benefactor; even then, the parents still need to make money to finance their children’s non-tuition school fees and to meet their family’s living expenses.

Yet another way of diversifying one’s channels of access to social and economic resources and opportunities is to build multiple social networks that one can count on. Migrant families having few remaining village ties need to explore those non-village-based networks of which they must become part, if they wish to hedge their risk and better cope with income insecurity. NGOs constitute one of the relatively accessible and reliable sources of support. Several street children whom I interviewed during my initial fieldwork when they were attending the charity class are now enrolled in a public primary school, full-time, with administrative and financial support from an NGO. This NGO also helped their family to move to a suburb of Hanoi where the living costs are lower but that still is within commuting distance and thus allows the parents to travel to the city center to peddle. Some other migrant families I met also were

⁸⁶ Bac Ninh City, the capital of Bac Ninh province, is situated about 36 km to the east of central Hanoi.

receiving assistance, both funding in support of their children's schooling and some cash for living expenses, from more than one NGO.

In these two ways, then, migrant families try to cope with the implicit demand for increased self-reliance in a time of economic instability: by expanding their income-generating activities in the informal sector and by forming multiple social networks. In the best-case scenario, the diversification of such new informal networks allows them to devise more flexible and autonomy-favoring survival strategies. Too often, however, the remaining demarcation of membership between permanent and non-permanent residents in the formal sector, and their mutual exclusivity when building social contacts, seem to hinder migrants' social integration. And with few work opportunities available outside the bottom of the informal sector, migrant families continue to struggle to escape poverty.

The next section will examine how and why migration movements in Vietnam have not generated social transformation at the structural level, despite plenty of elemental changes occurring down on the grassroots level.

Lack of Structural Transformation

While migrant families dynamically engage themselves in trying to open up channels of access to fuller resources, the social changes occurring within the context of the post-*doi moi* reforms do not appear to be either entailing structural transformations on the societal level or enabling increased social mobility. People's changing patterns of resource mobilization, as well as the emergence of new social meanings of money vis-à-vis the negotiation of social relations and of legitimacy, illustrate how endogenous and exogenous stimuli can generate processual changes in the fluid contents or segments of social institutions, without giving rise to substantial changes on the structural level (Smith, 1998). The stigmatization of migrants in both public and mundane discourse, and the continuing struggles of the migrant poor as non-permanent residents, bespeak their continuing positioning as "social outcasts." The growing bargaining power of money as that serves to structure social relations, when it is combined with the inequitable resource distribution all but mandated by the residence-based policies, has increased social differentiation among Hanoi's residents while further relegating impoverished migrants to the margins.

That migration does not necessarily enhance social mobility or induce fundamental alterations in the larger social structure is a truth that applies not only to the current context of Vietnamese society but to other social contexts as well. It is worth noting in this regard that Georges (1990), in her account of the experiences of migration, development, and cultural change in the community of Los Pinos village in the Dominican Republic, demonstrated how the international, circular migration between Los Pinos and New York City was not leading to any restructuring of the village's social hierarchy or alteration of preexisting gender roles. Georges grants that the migration movement did involve those processes whereby social relationships are dynamically formed and reformed in the transformation of family organization and household structure (i.e., an increase among migrant households of female household heads and of non-nuclear families), and the expansion of a middle-income sector resulting from the remittances to migrant households of money and consumer durables. Nevertheless, the fact that little structural transformation had taken place despite the elemental social changes is revealed by the lack of social mobility within the community itself among most Pineros migrants, who tend to have higher levels of education and thus higher economic status than do the non-migrants who predominantly are the landless poor, as well as by the continuance and reinforcement of gender relations whereby women typically serve as homemakers, housekeepers, and caretakers while the men hold more decision-making power within the household as the breadwinners and senders of remittances.

That example of how migration has affected, but all the more so has not affected, the preexisting social institutions in the village of Los Pinos may help to shed some light on the factors underlying the continuing disintegration and marginalization of migrant families in the Thanh Ninh area. On the one hand, some contextual differences between Los Pinos village and the Thanh Ninh area are evident. First and foremost is the difference in types of migration: transnational as opposed to domestic (rural-to-urban) migration. Second, the social settings and sites of the study populations also differ in certain respects: while Georges' (1990) study was concerned with the impact of circular migration experiences on Los Pinos households in the village, the current study focuses on the circumstances of migrant families living in the city of Hanoi. In Los Pinos village, the men as breadwinners migrated more whereas the women, due to the limited opportunities available to them to become wage-earners in the village, usually stayed on as homemakers. In notable contrast to this, not only has it been customary for Vietnamese village

women to migrate to the city, or even overseas nowadays, as seasonal migrants without their husbands, but migrant mothers in the Thanh Ninh area also wear both hats—income-earner and housekeeper—due in part to their city lives where more economic opportunities are available to them, particularly in the informal sector, than is the case in their villages.

Nonetheless, some important commonalities of experience emerge from these two study areas. Georges (1990) argued that the government's lack of substantive policies to assist migrants in channeling their savings and newly acquired skills into productive resources and economic opportunities resulted in an absence of social mobility. In consequence Pineros migrants tended to take matters into their own hands, using the socioeconomic skills they had acquired prior to their migration and making the best possible use of their informal networks as a safety net. So too in Vietnam, the State's increasingly *laissez-faire* approach to spontaneous migration, implicitly adopted in exchange for withholding potential benefits from incoming migrants to the city by reinforcing preferential policies for permanent city residents, has forced the migrants to rely heavily upon whatever resources they are able to glean from their informal social connections. Then too, neither in the Dominican Republic nor in Vietnam have initiatives been advanced by policymakers designed to put migrants' assets to use in ways that spur upward mobility, address rising inequalities among residents, or redress rural-urban disparities. Without a major shift in the state's approach to spontaneous migration the migrant poor will likely continue to be adversely impacted, as the constant stream of migrants flowing into the city swells with each passing day.

Sad as such thoughts are, there is some consolation to be found in the fact that the State is not a hegemonic entity. To the contrary, and as we have seen, different groups of people with different agendas—ranging from migrant and non-migrant residents to schoolteachers to NGO workers—are actively negotiating with the State to see to it that their needs are better met. And yet the fundamental problem remains: when residence-based policies are used as an instrument of population control by a government that makes no effort to alter the underlying structural inequalities that drive people to migrate, they empower some people and not others. If one takes a careful look at the recent changes in the patterns of resource mobilization in the wake of Vietnam's market reforms, one sees that even with all of the seemingly increased negotiability on the side of non-state agents, their relationship with the State has

not changed at the structural level but has merely turned into “commercialized clientelism,” as Hardy (2001, p. 207) put it.

There has been a notable absence of debate in the socialist regime as to the best approach to building an urban society whose members, regardless of their residential status, can enjoy the benefits of urban living, above all by having equitable access to public services and gladly participating in civil society. That absence can largely be accounted if we will simply take note, yet again, of the State’s propagation of discourse that emphasizes how the incoming flow of the “disorderly migrant poor” needs to be curbed in order to achieve modernization and “civilized living” in the city. The all-too-successful propagation of the idea that migrants are social burdens and threats to public security has garnered support from non-migrant residents, and fomented mutual distrust between migrants and non-migrants, while allowing the government to dodge its responsibility to come up with better approaches to urban management.

We seem to be learning, not just in Vietnam but globally as well, that opening up the market to abet the country’s economic growth is one thing, opening up a regime so as to make it first transparent and then capable of enacting needed structural transformations is quite another. As Hayton (2010, p. 45) acutely pointed out, “development is both enriching people and tearing apart the old structures which gave them security and gave their lives meaning and purpose.” The CPV has kept itself in power, without subjecting its existing administrative system to major restructuring, by using a carrot-and-stick approach whereby the carrot is fewer regulations and thereby heightened economic prosperity and the stick, in present theory and past practice, is strict surveillance of population movements and thereby of many other human activities as well. Taylor (2004) has criticized the State’s lumbering response to widening inequalities, suggesting that its primary concern has been not to achieve social equity but rather to minimize any perceived threats to Vietnam’s becoming a strong, ideologically coherent, socially integrated nation. In other words, as long as exacerbated forms of social exclusion do not put the party’s control over the society at risk, those inequalities most likely will be sustained. As of now, gaining the support of Hanoi’s permanent residents in particular and Vietnam’s well-off individuals in general is conceived of as being a better way to secure social cohesion than would be the granting of a voice to the city’s administrative officers who face daily frustrations arising out of the cities’ unmanaged migration-influx or the expanding of migrants’ access to urban public services. The result of this *laissez-faire* or, more

accurately, do-nothing approach has been the perpetuation and indeed the exacerbation of social differentiation and the smug toleration of the present inequitable access to, and distribution of, economic, social, and cultural resources.

In the next and final chapter, the major points of discussion and findings of the preceding chapters will be restated, and the implications of those findings and discussions for policymaking will be considered. The chapter then will address the methodological and topical limitations of this study and point to some likely areas of future research.

CHAPTER VIII: CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters, this study has explored how (i) the resource-mobilization process of migrant families in Hanoi is intertwined with the State's continuing endorsement of residence-based policies and (ii) their dynamic responses to the challenges imposed by the State's policy practice of giving preferential access to rights and services to permanent residents demonstrates the lack of structural changes at the societal level in the face of widening inequalities after marketization. This chapter begins by summarizing the chief findings and discussions laid out in the previous chapters. It then attempts to draw out whatever policy implications they bear for creating an environment in which the residents of the city can, regardless of their household registration or socioeconomic status, more equally benefit from living there while acquiring a sense of belonging and mutual trust. The chapter concludes by addressing the limitations of the study and pointing to some likely areas of future research.

Summary of Findings and Discussions

Amidst the increased commercialization and ongoing globalization characteristic of post-*doi moi* Vietnam, the nation's residence-based approach to monitoring and controlling the influx of migrants into its cities has had a notably adverse impact upon migrant families' attempts at resource mobilization. Three major issues pertaining to the patterns of migrants' access to, and use of, resources were identified: *de jure* and *de facto* discrepancies in enjoyment of rights and access to social services; migrants' heavy recourse to informal channels because the formal ones are largely blocked to them; and migrants' enforced need to be more self-reliant and to devise individually-oriented coping strategies. The burgeoning number of migrants moving into the city has in recent years been correlated with the declining viability of the *ho khau* system as an institutional apparatus for population control. Despite the legal stipulation of universal access to compulsory education and the constitutional acknowledgement of people's free choice of residence, the system continues to operate as a mechanism promoting social differentiation, essentially by restricting migrants' entitlements to those social services and other resources that flow through formal channels at the place of destination. To cope with their economic and social adversities, migrant families turn to a variety of informal networks that offer ways of enhancing their productive resources and optimizing their economic opportunities. The fact that migrants are forced to strategize their survival by

taking matters into their own hands is attested to by their endeavors to diversify their income-generating activities and social connections, by the new “wobble room” of negotiability with the State (which often comes with hidden costs), and by the rising bargaining power of money in structuring social relations. All of that is both being driven by, and further exacerbating, the increasingly differential access to, and distribution of, resources among the city residents, and thus is intensifying the already existing tendency to peripheralize Hanoi’s underprivileged migrant families.

Within the economic domain, marketization in Vietnam has generated both opportunities and challenges for internal migrants. A fast-growing economy in the urban centers, coupled with increased mobility due to a top-down relaxation of sanctions against migration effected without the approval of local authorities, has boosted rural residents’ incentives to improve their income and standard of living by seeking new opportunities in the cities. Existing studies point to how both a rural-urban income gap and the limited rural availability of wage labor outside of farming have encouraged people to move urbanward in the hope of sharing in the benefits of economic growth and getting a taste of what city life has to offer (GSO & UNFPA Viet Nam, 2005; UNFPA Viet Nam, 2007; Guest, 1998).

While such spontaneous migration has indeed allowed many migrants to achieve income-increases (GSO & UNFPA Viet Nam, 2005; UNFPA Viet Nam, 2007), unskilled and low-skilled rural migrants often end up working in small trading and service-related jobs within the informal sector. Before, during, and after migration, people turn to their informally-arrived-at social connections, with the latter serving as, among other things, resourceful information-providers vis-à-vis the migrants’ ongoing quest for jobs and housing. By contrast, when it comes to financial matters such as information available from government or private employment agencies (UNFPA Viet Nam, 2007), government schemes targeted at the poor (e.g., NTP, the Social Policy Bank), and bank loans and other formal credit sources, the migrants for the most part act as if those formal financial services did not exist. This does not mean that they also do not *know* that they exist. Many indeed do not, but the real impediment in most cases is that migrants’ temporary or unregistered residential status in the city means that they are, so to speak, last in line at the cafeteria, with the preferred resources having been allocated to the holders of permanent residency in the city.

Given this limited access to formal financial resources, families who migrated to the city with their children, intending to settle for an indefinite period of time, do what any of us finding ourselves in comparable circumstances would do: they try to improve their economic security by expanding their income-generating activities. As we have seen, some migrant children who work on the street alongside their parents make substantial contributions to their family's survival. The relative ease with which they elicit the sympathy of foreign tourists and other onlookers is, in the eyes of their parents or guardians, too important an asset to be thrown away lightly.

In times of economic adversity, migrant families rarely borrow or lend money among themselves, beyond their immediate family members. They also seldom ask their own relatives for help, mainly because the latter generally are incapable of lending a financial hand. Moreover, longtime migrant families, as compared to seasonal migrants and other migrant parents who left children behind in the countryside with their grandparents, are not likely to have maintained close ties with their home villages, and thus there is little reason to look for help in that direction.

The remaining options available to these families in great financial need include pawning their possessions, resorting to "hot loans," and seeking help from NGOs and foreign benefactors who are willing to provide assistance with such expenses as children's tuition and other school-related fees and the family's living expenses. Some families do manage to secure help from one or more NGOs and/or supporters but most migrant families have no such luck, and soaring indebtedness resulting from using non-formal credit sources renders some migrants even more financially vulnerable than they were before (Save the Children, U.K., 2006).

We also have seen that migrants often are prevented from accessing decent social services in the city. The first fact to be pointed to as bearing much of the blame here is that of the significant disjunction between the *de jure* and the *de facto* education deliveries. Legal provisions guarantee access to learning opportunities regardless of a citizen's social status or economic condition, with the most basic such opportunity, a public primary education, being free of charge. In practice, however, regulatory and financial barriers often block migrant children from gaining access to public primary schools. On the regulatory front, temporary-registered and unregistered migrant children have more difficulty securing the documents (birth certificate and *ho khau*) normally required for official admission to the public schools in

the locality of their current residence. But even when the *ho khau* requirement is waived, the overloaded capacity of state education facilities sees to it that children without permanent residency are not guaranteed a seat in a public primary school if it is already full (Save the Children, U.K., 2006; UN Viet Nam, 2010a; UNDP, 2011). On the financial front, the process misleadingly dubbed “socialization” by those in control of public discourse has entailed the introduction of market-oriented incentives into the social services, thereby just imposing even more financial responsibilities upon individual households. The impact of socialization upon the education sector has meant that public schools not only have openly started to charge tuition fees and other school fees but also levy higher admission fees upon incoming students whose permanent residence is not in a school’s locality.

In addition to the fees charged directly by the school, the growing pervasiveness of extra-study sessions and monetary gifts to schoolteachers take their toll on migrant parents and guardians who can allocate only a limited amount of money to their children’s schooling. My interviews with migrant parents who once had managed to send their children to public schools revealed that their inability to pay for extra-study sessions or to buy gifts for teachers had resulted in some teachers’ failing to give adequate attention to their children, and in other cases to overtly discriminatory behaviors directed toward the parents and their children. Equally dispiriting has been the revelation, via both cash-strapped non-migrant parents and those having more financial capacity, that these financial aspects of the education process are now conceived of as being mandatory, despite their being presented as if they were voluntary and spontaneous in nature.

Given the thicket of both legal and extra-legal obstacles that underprivileged migrants have to try to hack their way through, it should not surprise us that their children, denied access to mainstream education, tend to seek educational opportunities in the informal sector outside the gamut of state services, as typified by “charity classes” or “affection classes.” Often provided free of charge by NGOs, these alternative educational venues offer only the most rudimentary sort of education, one that purveys basic (primary level) literacy and arithmetic skills. Something is assuredly better than nothing, but the fact remains that the unreliable quality of teaching in these classes, and the lack of breadth and depth in the education offered, have served to impede migrant children’s reintegration or transition into mainstream education (Save the Children, U.K., 2006). In short, the notably deficient educational environment

surrounding migrant children points up a growing social inequality between them and their non-migrant counterparts.

The study also has looked at how migrant families build various social networks in their places of destination and how they ascribe to them varying degrees of trust and collectivity, as well as cultural meanings and assumptions. The two primary groupings of such informal affiliations are the village-based networks, comprised of migrants having the same place of origin, and the non-village-based networks, comprised of migrants of different places of origin. Each can serve as a support system for migrants, providing them with ways to reciprocate material and non-material assistance when needed, but a significant difference exists between the two. The village-based networks, as one might expect, given their more rigid membership boundaries, tend to be imbued with unqualified trust (Smith, 1998). The non-village networks, which extend out to migrant neighbors and work-related acquaintances, are more loosely connected and thus fail to foster any great sense of communal unity and mutual trust. Given that most of Hanoi's migrants originate from northern provincial villages, the study reasons that the village-based networks draw their strength from the cultural practices and moral foundations historically characteristic of rural northern Vietnam—hence the consequently strong sense of internal collectivity and external exclusivity. Such practices and foundations include, among other things, a high degree of village endogamy, the largely egalitarian ideology to which the communal land and village rituals attest, and a strong emphasis placed on *tin h cam* (social sentiment) in building relationships with fellow villagers (Luong, 2003; Malarney, 1996; McElwee, 2007). By contrast non-village-based relations, despite their less exclusive nature, are confined to the exchange of material and moral support, an exchange that has as its basis no deep, organizing principle, centered upon fostering social solidarity and equity among the parties involved.

What the village-based and non-village-based networks have in common is that their members essentially consist of migrants. Not only seasonal migrants, who tend to retain a tightly-knit community with their fellow villagers, with whom they stay and work during their short-term relocation to the city, but also longtime migrant families, who are inclined to stay in low-cost rental accommodations on their own and have only limited social contacts with people outside of their inner migrant circles, and even fewer

with non-migrant city residents in their localities. The underlying reason for the social segregation appears to be that social unity and exclusivity are two sides of the same coin. People's full confidence in their village-based networks and their relatively closed-off associations with those having a migration background similar to their own are inextricably linked to their chariness when it comes to approaching those outside of their inner circles. This propensity, in turn, seems to hamper migrants' ability to cultivate a sense of belongingness in the urban destination or to integrate themselves into the social life of the city. When they are viewed in this equivocal way, non-village-based and village-based networks are seen as cultural resources that provide an important safety-net for urban migrants while nonetheless sometimes "also act[ing] as reproducers of social inequalities and power relations" (Jellinick, 1997; Silvey and Elmhirst, 2003; Resurrection, 2005, as cited in Agergaard and Thao, 2011, p. 624).

It was never the intention of this study, however, to allege that migrants' internal connectedness is to be blamed for their peripheralization in the city. Rather, it sought simply to understand what underlies the growing social segregation among Hanoi's various groups of residents and thereby stumbled upon the finding that, as the other side of the collectivity coin, mutual distrust and exclusivity are displayed both among the migrants themselves and between migrants and non-migrants. In order to identify what lies at the root of the ongoing interplay between inclusion and exclusion and to discover why it ends up abetting the increasing stigmatization of migrants, the study looked at how power-dynamics play out in the contexts of public discourse and quotidian narratives in such a way as to benefit one group at the cost of marginalizing another. Taking the primary research site of this study, the Thanh Ninh area, as a case study, the study also examined the ways in which residents in the area are classified into groups characterized by distinctive yet interrelated cultural presumptions.

The first and most generic classification of the residents is that based upon their social positioning as migrants or non-migrants. Regardless of their places of origin migrants are a frequent target of discrimination, with the latter's forms ranging from associating migrants with the unsavory social phenomena lumped together as "social evils," slurs directed against working children that call them "poor and illiterate," and sly allusions to migrants as *nha que* (country bumpkins), a term that connotes repugnant qualities with respect to personal appearance, demeanor, mannerisms, and speech-patterns. Because of such social stigmas attached to rural migrants, a sense of embarrassment naturally prevails

among their children. Even those attending local public schools alongside their non-migrant Hanoian peers keep a low profile at school, rarely hanging out with non-migrant classmates or neighborhood children for fear of being teased or called a “bad influence.”

Public representations of migrants generally center on their being an undesirable social phenomenon because of their supposedly antisocial behaviors and disorderly conduct: robbery, alcohol and drug abuse, gambling, swindling, prostitution, littering, frequent disputes and fights. Such representations were implicitly present in: the negative tone of an online news article which suggested that the soaring numbers of “in-migrants in Hanoi” (“Nhập cư vào Hà Nội,” 2009) were prompting the need for stringent measures to curb migrants’ inflows; security personnel’s concerns about the deterioration of social order and frustration over the lack of clear regulatory guidelines for more effective population management (Hardy, 2003b); and government-initiated “clean-up campaigns” aiming to crack down on street business and “social evils” (both of which often are linked to migrants) by pulling the “culprits” of disorderly conduct off the streets (Cohen, 2003) and reeducating them by sending them off to detention centers or prisons (Hayton, 2010). Governmental discourse of this type serves to quickly undermine the migrants’ social position in the city by all too glibly portraying them as a social burden, while disregarding the patent fact that they are one of the driving forces of urban development.

What is intriguing, but also dismaying, is the way governmental discourse which problematizes the presence of rural migrants in the city has filtered into everyday contexts and led people to talk about “others” in a falsely “knowing” way. All the more ironically, it is migrants themselves who can most readily classify those “others” into such groups as those from different places of origin, those without permanent residency, and those of a supposedly lower social class. Just as non-migrants besmirch migrants’ reputations by accusing them of being impoverished, uneducated, disorderly rural folks who exert a bad social influence, so too migrant residents express distrust of, and maintain a vigilant stance against, other migrants from different places of origin, especially those who fall outside the boundary of their close-knit inner circle. We have seen that keeping dogs is a common practice among migrant families living in proximity to other migrant inhabitants from different home villages and intent upon keeping unwanted people out and scaring off burglars; migrants habitually assert that they do not trust some of their migrant neighbors and the people they hang out with, because they are shady and probably disseminating “social

evils.” So too, the demarcation of residents according to possession/non-possession of permanent residency in the locality effectively pushes non-permanent migrant residents aside as social outcasts. For given the ongoing impact of the residence-based policies, non-permanent residents not only are largely excluded from participating in social activities organized in the locality (Le et al., 2011; UNDP, 2010) but also are likely to experience hostility and exclusion at the hands of permanent residents—witness that earlier-cited case of migrant children being chased away by permanent-resident parents so that they would not get near their children during recreation activities catering to the local community kids (Save the Children, U.K., 2006).

Class-consciousness, yet another classificatory device that produces social differentiation, also plays its baleful part in structuring the power-dynamics among the residents of the Thanh Ninh area. Lower-class residents, who typically live on tiny alleys bordering the river, are the target of complaints and accusations leveled by their middle-class neighbors. They express both their discomfort with the lower-class residents’ unhygienic practices (e.g., littering, leaving their dogs’ messes on the street) and their concerns about security issues. Brown-village residents are perceived as dwelling at the very bottom of the area’s social pyramid, and thus are always rumored to be engaging (or previously to have been engaging) in “social evils.” Brown-village residents cited neighbors’ references to them as *bui doi*, a pregnant term that simultaneously alludes to their unwanted presence in the society, bespeaks the landholders’ and local authorities’ longstanding animosity toward them, and reveals the unwillingness of migrant parents who live on the opposite riverbank to get their children involved with the latter’s brown-village counterparts. Not surprisingly brown-village residents, like most of Hanoi’s lower-class residents, are by and large migrants who come to the big city from villages in the neighboring northern provinces.

Thus we see how governmental and everyday discourses intertwine to negatively depict and thereby segregate certain groups of people. Lacking supportive presences that would help to buttress their weaker position within the power-dynamic of local discourse, the spontaneous migrants can only watch helplessly as the State’s take on them prevails: that their massive influx is placing excessive strains on urban infrastructure, leading to a deterioration of social order, and undercutting the city’s “beautification project” designed to give Hanoi an image of urban modernity and “middle-classness.” Worse yet, the internalization of the public discourse by the migrants themselves—as demonstrated in

their expressions of distrust against, and disdain for, other less-well-off migrants who are glibly linked to “social evils”—has led not only to more pronounced social differentiation among the residents in the same locality but also to increased stigmatization and marginalization of migrants as a whole. At one’s bleakest moments one feels that all the worst aspects of this problem are assembling themselves before one’s eyes, as the mistrust and social tensions rife within and among mixed groups of residents are heated up to such a degree that a cool-headed determination to create a sense of community and belonging is nowhere to be found.

The study also has pointed to the social continuities and changes that have been observed in the context of post-*doi moi* society, the enduring and yet shifting patterns that are formed as migrant families mobilize the three types of resources: economic, social, and cultural.

On the one hand, marketization has brought increased flexibility to certain public domains, which in turn has given people more capacity to negotiate the State’s policies (Hardy, 2001). The relaxation of the legal sanctions pertaining to the formalities required in order for people to relocate from their permanent domicile has enabled those on the move to migrate more freely and to seek new opportunities, in urban destinations, to improve their economic security. The rapid expansion of the cash economy has also intensified the bargaining power of money, and people have increasingly made use of it as a way to circumvent regulations and to structure social relations in such a way as to suit their own purposes. This new trend has however imposed greater burdens on migrants of weak financial capacities. In the education sector in particular, the financial burdens on parents and guardians have been getting heavier due to the proliferation of “extra study” and monetary gifts to schoolteachers, as well as to the de facto imposition of a wide range of school fees on individual households in the wake of the State’s introduction of the “socialization” policy. Even though some public schools’ acceptance of children without permanent residency in the locality, in exchange for higher admission fees than are required of their permanent-resident counterparts, has made it possible for some migrant children to access mainstream education, other children whose migrant parents and guardians cannot bear all those expenses are prone to be resented by their teachers or to attend one form or other of alternative education. Both the remaining hurdle of trying to transfer from alternative to mainstream education and the State’s toleration of non-

compliance with its own laws' stipulations as to charge-free public primary education and citizens' equal rights to access school education inevitably raise the issue of social inequity.

Despite the relaxation of certain aspects of their enforcement, the State's adherence to and, just within the last few years, intensified commitment to residence-based policies continues to restrict migrants' access to the resources available through formal channels. Quite simply, their non-permanent residential status in the current place of residence prohibits them from gaining access to public social services or formal credit sources equal to that enjoyed by permanent residents. As they try to cope with social and economic adversities migrants continue to resort to informal channels which include, among others, village connections, migrant neighbors, NGOs and individual foreign benefactors, and informal loan-providers and pawn shops. They also strive to improve their financial stability by diversifying their income-generating activities in the informal sector and by tapping into social networks that may help them open the door leading to economic and social resources. While their dynamic responses to social and economic challenges illustrate the migrants' greater self-reliance and admirable exercise of ingenuity (Hardy, 2001) in resource mobilization, the lack of any structural transformations that could facilitate more equitable resource allocation among the city residents, regardless of their residential status, continues to hamper the social integration of the migrant poor and dims their prospects of upward mobility. As a result they are left to settle for the status quo, that of "second-class citizens."

The study then sought to understand what underlies the state's enduring endorsement of residence-based policies, despite the obvious ineffectiveness of the *ho khau* system as an instrument for controlling population mobility. Not only has the government yet to take the initiative in introducing some major institutional schemes designed to integrate and thereby streamline the management of spontaneous migration; it has consistently propagated discourse suggesting that (i) the soaring number of migrants needs be curbed at all costs by tightening regulations so as to discourage urbanward relocation, and (ii) their presence in the city is putting intolerable strains on urban infrastructure and undermining social order. Some critics and intellectuals have contended that a mere reinforcement of existing regulations of the kind seen in the Capital Law which came into force in 2013 is not feasible, while also citing migrants' substantial contributions to the development of urban centers and thereby the growth of the economy via their inexpensive labor (Bao, 2012; Hayton, 2010); others have proposed the provision

of equal entitlements guaranteeing migrants equal access to decent social services (Le et al., 2011; Save the Children, U.K., 2006). Nonetheless, little progress seems to have been made when it comes to reforming the residence-based policies or leveraging an inter-ministerial administrative restructuring that would bode well for improved management of rural-to-urban migration.

The study has speculated that the State's continuing reluctance to undertake any such institutional restructuring can be traced back to two factors. First, the dissemination of discourse in which migrants are portrayed as the disorderly perpetrators of "social evils" has helped the government to dampen public debate that otherwise might have heatedly taken it to task for its failure to address the problems associated with rapid urbanization and the ever-widening urban-rural gap. Indeed, the idea that migrants are social burdens and threats to public security has permeated Hanoi so thoroughly that it frequently is invoked by non-migrant city residents as a way of justifying the discomfort they feel about associating with the migrants in their neighborhood. Thus the trend toward the stigmatization of underprivileged migrants has in turn served to deplete the stock of trust between migrants and non-migrants. Second, the State's current priority is to keep the CPV in power and the economy growing—goals as opposed as can be from launching some radical administrative reforms designed to redress widening inequalities at the possible risk of undermining the State's rule (Hayton, 2010). One has to grant the State the logic of its position, for if its self-perceived mission is to excise any conceivable trend or unpleasant fact that could prevent it from building a strong, ideologically coherent, socially integrated nation (Taylor, 2004), then maintaining its preexistent institutional structures and currying the favor of Vietnam's permanent and better-off urban residents clearly is a better way of securing social cohesion than is eliciting strong resentment from them by taking away their preferential rights for the sake of some impoverished migrants. These are the sociopolitical facts of life that help one to understand, if by no means also to defend, the State's stubborn adherence to the existing residence-based policies. For the sour aspect of the latter *seems* to be offset by the sweet fact of the rising influence of market forces, and never mind that the sourness means the perpetuation of social differentiation and inequitable resource distribution!

The next section seeks to throw a bit of light on the implications of the study's findings for policymaking. More specifically, it considers what operational modalities can be proposed that might create an environment in which underprivileged migrant families become better integrated into, and less stigmatized in, their urban destinations. It also addresses the need for policymakers to go beyond the elimination of the technical barriers presently keeping migrants from reaching their goals. That would be no inconsiderable achievement, but their ultimate goal should be to build a society that encourages its inhabitants to share more or less equally in the benefits brought by city life and thereby to develop a sense of belonging and of mutual trust.

Policy Implications of the Study

Given the patient fact that migrants, and especially those falling within the population's unskilled and impoverished sub-groups, are used as a scapegoat so as to divert the public's attention from the State's failure to manage rapid urbanization and its corollary, social phenomena, the State is likely well aware that a mere reinforcement of residence-based policies, via more stringent measures such as the Capital Law of 2013, is not a fundamental or long-term solution to the problem. For it is clear that tightening regulations to discourage urbanward in-migration has proved to be largely ineffective in keeping Hanoi's swelling population under control; enhanced regulations have made migrants' lives in the city more difficult, but they have not held migrants back from seeking opportunities by moving out of rural areas.

The most basic and yet also far-reaching questions that must be asked at this juncture are these two: Will tomorrow's Vietnam still be a place where urban-dwellers have hugely differential access to economic, social, and cultural resources? What would be a critical starting-point for dismantling discriminatory social institutions so as to build a more inclusive and cohesive society, one in which groups of urban residents with different sets of resources and needs can nurture mutually accepting and supportive relationships?

I believe the logical first step is to enhance policy coherence,⁸⁷ so that all issues pertaining to migration become integral aspects of the State's policies designed to spur economic growth and lift people's standard of living. It is high time that the government moved beyond its currently piecemeal, ad

⁸⁷ Policy coherence, a notion that has emerged in the context of international development, generally is construed as a process that seeks to integrate policymaking across different social sectors in order to maximize a synergy-effect

hoc approach to migration; that mindset could be changed if the government officials could be brought to see how a greater degree of integration of the migrant population in the destination areas could, if all the potential benefits of migration were facilitated via multi-sectoral policy coordination, lead to poverty alleviation and sustainable growth over the long term. Such a shift of policy direction would have to occur on two levels, via (i) a restructuring of institutional mechanisms and tools to enable policy coherence and thereby address all issues relating to migration; and (ii) a working with all relevant parties to alter the currently negative prevailing perception of migrants and to foster a sense of solidarity among all of the residents of all of Vietnam's major cities.

Thus, policymakers must be encouraged to achieve the fullest possible inter-ministerial policy coordination, with the newfound consistency between migration policies and other public policies helping to uphold the rights of the migrant population. A top priority should be to erase the current discrepancies between the legal prescriptions pertaining to migration and its associated arenas (e.g., education, health, housing, labor and employment) and the actual practices that are not in conformity with them and thereby place constraints on migrants' access to resources. Scarcely less important would be the integration of the administrative management of migration, both spontaneous and organized, and the mounting of a coordinated effort to create a more cohesive approach to the interventions targeted at migrants in the place of destination and at candidate migrants in the place of origin. Some concrete measures that could be put in place include but are not limited to: "decoupling the registration status of citizens from their access to services" (UN Viet Nam, 2010a, p. 47); abolishing the *de facto* practice of excluding non-permanent residents from communal activities; opening to all residents, both migrant and non-migrant, eligibility for government programs targeting the urban poor; reforming the budgeting and planning processes at the district, provincial, and national levels so as to ensure that sufficient funds are allocated to all residents regardless of their registration status (UN Viet Nam, 2010a); setting up information kiosks at both departure and destination points so as to provide migrants, and especially those with limited contacts at the place of destination, with information that will help them to orient themselves in the city (e.g., finding suitable accommodation and employment opportunities, familiarizing themselves with their rights associated with labor and access to social services, gaining the vocational training that is offered to

and thereby achieve the ultimate goal of sustainable growth (OECD, n.d.; OECD Office of the Secretary-General Unit

unskilled and low-skilled migrants, coping with the financial and other difficulties that migrants often face upon their arrival) (Save the Children, U.K., 2006; UN Viet Nam, 2010a); introducing measures designed to minimize the impedance of low-income migrant children's access to formal education by the growing informal economy in the education sector (e.g., extra study, monetary gifts, imposition of arbitrary non-tuition fees and thereby "provid[ing] pathways for [children who were once placed in alternative education] to reintegrate into mainstream education" (UNICEF & MOLISA, 2009, p. 57); and capacity development of the relevant government agencies and local authorities to put these new measures and initiatives into practice.

It must be stressed, however, that such policy coordination, plus substantive governmental interventions, will fail to open up opportunities for migrant residents to become integrated into their urban communities unless they are implemented in tandem with awareness-raising campaigns designed to show that both migrants and non-migrants are integral to the state's growth and development. In other words, fostering social cohesion in relation to migration ought to "go beyond anti-discrimination measures" (OECD, 2011, p. 24). And that means, in my view, replacing the current regime's vision of a cohesive society with one that takes into account the citizens' divergent needs and priorities and their highly variable amounts of economic and social capital. I can only interpret the regime's reluctance to dismantle its residence-based policies centered upon the *ho khau* system, despite Vietnam's ever-widening social segregation, as revealing the CPV's determination to build an ideologically coherent, modernized society that inevitably favors the insiders (in the context of this study, permanent city residents), while further marginalizing and suppressing the resentful voices of those (e.g., migrant residents) whose diverse, non-homogeneous makeup is in fact, when viewed rightly, precisely what Vietnam needs more of, if it is to remain both economically and socially vibrant. In other words, policymakers seeking to build a cohesive society should begin by heeding the perceptions of all relevant parties (OECD, 2011), regardless of their differences in terms of residential and economic status, place of origin, ethnicity, affiliation with the government or lack thereof, and so forth. Only thus will they create that a climate conducive to bonding, one that fosters a sense of trust and thereby reduces the social exclusion of particular groups.

for Policy Coherence for Development, 2012).

One way to work toward such enhanced social cohesion might be to consider the applicability to urban communities of the formation of *tin h cam* or social sentiment. As we have seen, *tin h cam* has long served as the mortar, so to speak, binding together the social relationships in Vietnam's tight-knit village communities (Mcelwee, 2007). Along with the prevailing practice of endogamy and the pervasiveness of communal institutions in northern and central Vietnam, as the two other notable sources of strong village collectivity (Luong, 2010), the maintenance of congenial relationships with one's fellow villagers, the vital process of nurturing social bonds, trust, and *tin h cam*, has been found to be an equally vital component in both southern and northern Vietnam. Hickey (1964), in his study of Mekong Delta villages in the late 1950s and early 1960s, where close neighbors often are treated as kin, pointed up the importance of such proximity of residence when it comes to forming social bonds. Similarly Mcelwee (2007), in her study of five different villages in Ha Tinh province, showed how keeping up good relations and feelings of *tin h cam* with their neighbors has served these villagers as an organizing principle, even though their village societies are quite socially differentiated; at one point she refers to "a common saying that one ought to 'sell distant kin, and buy close neighbors'" (p. 71). Thus I would argue that precisely because Vietnam is blessed to have a solid historic tradition of fostering cohesive social relations, there is no reason why that tradition cannot be invoked at the present time to help heal the wound created by modern Vietnam's vastly, and inequitably, differentiated urban communities.

If one postulates that children are the building-blocks of a country's future, school education should be expected to play a crucial role in building a more inclusive and cohesive society. And yet the school experiences of some of this study's migrant children have made it all too clear that the differential treatment of migrant students, in both regulatory and monetary terms, has brought them low self-esteem and a sense of embarrassment and has thereby adversely affected their interactions with their non-migrant peers. Conversely, schools could be turned into life-venues fostering inclusiveness and compassion for others of different socioeconomic backgrounds if steps were taken to enable more equitable participation of children from marginalized groups in both classroom and extracurricular activities and if a learning environment was constructed that helped students to mutually develop "positive perceptions of others within the [education] system and society" (OECD, 2011, p. 23).

Given the massive influence of public discourse in shaping people's interactions with others as well as in stigmatizing certain groups, a combination of elimination of the institutional obstacles presently impeding the migrants' social integration and renovation of the discourse so as to lead the Vietnamese to see urbanward migration as a prompter of the state's growth and integration instead of a detractor from it, might help to counteract the social exclusion of underprivileged migrants and allow urban residents to incrementally develop more trust of "the other," regardless of the latter's place of origin, migratory status, or socioeconomic condition.

Certainly there is no guarantee that a restructuring of the institutional mechanisms and tools that affect migration, even to the extent of demolishing the existing residence-based policies that bind one's residential status and right to access service-delivery, or the *ho khu* system itself, will in and of itself dramatically alter discriminatory perceptions of migrants or boost their upward mobility. As noted earlier, policymaking is not a neutral or one-way process; rather, it is often ideologically nuanced (Shore & Wright, 1997) and is subject to appropriation, interpretation, and re-interpretation in the process of policy formulation and implementation by all of the stakeholders. This fact reminds us that the future of those social relations that affect the dynamics of the wider society is still unknown. Smith (1998) held that "individual perceptions of one another and of social relations continuously develop and change" (p. 53) and that "beliefs and ideas about the world, society, individuals and interests" (p. 53) are susceptible to testing, adjustments, affirmation, or modification through social interactions. I for one find highly compelling that vision of the interactive and fluctuating nature of culture and society, and I believe we are entitled to deduce from it that new policies and a new discourse could jointly work to elicit people's interest in, and renew their perceptions of, how they relate to one another. Those stimulated interests and refreshed perceptions could ultimately create, or at least help to usher in, a society whose members are so intent on sharing a sense of belonging both to each other and to their nation that differences with respect to migratory status, place of origin, and socioeconomic condition would pale into insignificance.

Limitations of the Study

There are some limitations to this study. Before elaborating upon those limitations, however, I first will address the study's methodological shortcomings, plus a topical one.

One of the major methodological shortcomings of this study is its focus on just a limited segment of the migrant population in Hanoi and thus its small sample size and selection. As described in Chapter II, not only was the number of migrant research participants fairly small at 33; the lack of consistency in interviewing both the children and the parents/guardians in a household, as well as the overlap of households to which the migrant participants belonged, also resulted in a reduction in the number of participating migrant families to 21, in relation to the total number of migrant participants living with their families (33). While the migrant participants who were selected all met the study's criteria by being socioeconomically disadvantaged migrant families with school-age children, they all were working in the informal sector, predominantly in small trading. Thus although the study reflects the overall reality of the situation, wherein few opportunities are accessible by unskilled and impoverished migrants, it has failed to systematically assess and compare with the different occupations of migrants working in the city. These include domestic helper, bootblack, scavenger, factory worker, and industrial/construction worker. As Dang et al. (2003) rightly pointed out, the components of Vietnam's migrant population are highly diverse and have very different needs and priorities. Thus the findings of the study will be best understood when viewed in the context of how disadvantaged migrant families cope with their day-to-day and educational challenges, and how Vietnam's residence-based policies adversely affect their attempts at resource mobilization. They cannot be well applied to the circumstances of other segments of the migrant population.

Yet another of the study's failings is that while it did highlight the tendency of longtime migrant families to draw apart from their home villages, it never made a concerted effort to assess the degree and nature of migrants' ties with their home villages. As examples of weakening village ties the study cited the infrequency of remittances sent from migrant families to their relatives still living in the villages, their few homecoming visits, some families' losses of land and/or *ho khai* status in their villages, and their preference to get their own rental place in the city in contrast to seasonal migrants who usually migrate without their immediate families and typically stay in *nha tro* with other fellow villagers. My argument would have been strengthened if I had been able to offer a better clarification of, and a more sufficient amount of data on, the matter of how the extent of one's bond with one's home village can be determined not only in numerical terms (e.g., amount of remittance, frequency of remittances per year, number of

homecoming visits per year, proximity of fellow villagers in the city, frequency of their meetings with fellow villagers in the city, possession of land properties in the village) but also in descriptive terms (e.g., recourse to financial, material, and/or moral support from their relatives and other fellow villagers, prior to and after migration to the city; types of responsibilities involved, and sense of obligation to repay a person who did one a favor).

The third of the study's weaknesses that must be pointed to pertains to its assertion that migrants need to be construed as playing an important part in the development of the city and the country, as opposed to coolly dismissed as "the disorderly poor" (Hayton, 2010, p. 48) or "social burdens." That argument would have been more convincing had it been backed up by quantitative data corroborating migrants' contribution to the state's economic growth.

In addition to methodological weaknesses, the study has a topical limitation. I refer to its inadequate explication of the increasingly diversified concept of "village" and, more broadly, the social changes occurring in northern Vietnam. As a way of underscoring the characteristically strong collectivity and profound sense of trust that pervade the village-based networks of migrants hailing originally from the northern provinces, the study pointed to the historical pattern there of structuring social relations in relation to communal approaches to land and village rituals and to the lingering but real influence of endogamy and *tin h cam* or social sentiment. There is an emerging awareness among some scholars, however, that Vietnam's rural villages have shifted away from being socially autonomous administrative units, imbued with a sense of moral and spiritual communality, as traditionally they have been conceptualized by those specializing in village studies, to being mere territorial congregations of people (Nguyen, personal communication, September 23, 2013). In other words, this new perception of rural villages raises questions about the validity of the village as a unit of analysis. Moreover, just as more and more economic, social, and cultural changes are taking place in the city via the marketization process, so too villages are undergoing transformations. Shibuya (2000) suggested that the increasingly important role of the family as a basic social unit, as indicated by its rising economic responsibilities, has, ever since the *doi moi* reforms were launched, been correlated with a weakening of the nation's socialist-oriented social foundations. The glimpse I gained through my interviews with some of the migrant participants of such social changes transpiring in the rural villages has convinced me that while the practice of

endogamy continues in many northern villages, those who have migrated most frequently, for an extensive period of time and from a young age, are more likely to meet someone outside of her/his village and to marry her/him. Some migrants also attested verbally to a declining value placed on endogamy among the members of the younger generations in their villages. For instance, the 32-year-old mother of two sons from Hung Yen said, “As I grew up, my parents would often tell me and my siblings that we should marry someone from the same village. All four of us got married to people from the same village eventually, but I would say that our generation doesn’t care as much about that as our parents’ generation did. It’s very much up to our children to decide.” Another 25-year-old new mother of a baby boy, also from Hung Yen, got married to a man from Bac Giang province after she was introduced to him by her brother-in-law, a coworker of his. After engaging in a series of short-term seasonal migrations as a street-seller during her primary school years, she migrated to Hanoi semi-permanently. She told me that marrying someone outside of her village and province has been like exposing herself to a foreign culture. “One of the things I love about my husband’s village is that people are open and accommodating. They frequently invite their neighbors to share meals or drinks. In my village, we don’t get that a lot. It doesn’t mean that my village people are mean or anything, but it’s a bit more closed and people gossip about each other all the time.” She added that not only was the level of education attained by her husband’s fellow villagers higher, but there also was more wage labor to be found, outside of farming, than there was in her native village. There only a handful of people went to upper secondary school, whereas in her husband’s village more than 80 percent of lower secondary students move up to upper secondary school. Then, too, because of the relatively high industrial level of the village and its vicinity, members of the younger generation—those born after the late 1980s—as well as some of the oldsters are inclined to stay in the village instead of migrating to Hanoi. In the case of her husband’s immediate family, his father and younger brother are working for the local television network and his older brother as an engineer, while his mother is a retired accountant. Her remarks suggested that there are varying degrees of both industrialization and openness among the northern villages. To sum up the third of this study’s failings: A more extensive examination of the social changes taking place in some of Vietnam’s northern villages, in the wake of marketization, would have helped to expose, and to explain, the interrelationship between

ongoing societal transformation and the extent of solidarity among the village-based networks of migrants in the city.

Areas for Future Research

There are several areas pertinent to this study that would benefit from further research in the future. First, a systematic comparison of parents who migrated accompanied by their children and those who chose to leave their children behind in the countryside would do much to help us understand the particular socioeconomic and cultural conditions that prompted the two different choices, as well as the needs and priorities that these two different groups of migrant parents share and do not share. As briefly noted earlier, children who did not follow their parents to the city normally are under the tutelage of their grandparents on their father's side during their parents' absence. An oft-made assumption is that migrant parents who bring their children along are from a more underprivileged group in the home village. As for actual reasons given by the migrant parent participants in this study who moved to Hanoi together with their children, they included a lack of guardians who could take care of their children due to weakened physical condition, an estranged relationship with their parents as a result of elopement or common-law marriage, and non-possession or loss of land in the native village. In some cases children are considered to be part of the family workforce and work on the street with or without the supervision of their parents. By contrast some migrants, though very limited in number in this study, those who moved to the city without their children, emphasize that leaving their children behind in the countryside helps them to stay in school and thus to have a better future; others said they would have loved to bring their children to the city to live with them, but their income was not sufficient to cover all the school fees incurred by attending mainstream schools there.⁸⁸ Little is known to date, however, as to how children who migrated with their parents, and those who were left behind, fare with their school educations and with their long-term outcomes. Further investigation of such questions might tell us much about how family migration affects children's educational futures, and thereby help us to fashion policies and interventions better tailored to each migrant group's needs and priorities.

⁸⁸ According to the 2004 VMS (as cited in UN Viet Nam, 2010a), approximately one in five migrants responded that they send remittances intended for their children's education.

Second, it would be invaluable to gain a better understanding of the dynamics of inequality seen across a wider historical context, and their implications for migrants' attempts to cope with inequitable resource allocations in the post-*doi moi* period. In his careful study of the challenges confronting the Vietnamese state in this era of yawning inequalities, Taylor (2004) contended that the hierarchical modes of authority favored by the CPV have been profoundly affected by the structural inequalities imposed via France's (indirect) colonial rule. Just as the colonial government reigned over its colonial population by way of local institutions premised on social hierarchies (e.g., the royalty, the mandarin, the council of elders at the village level), so too the post-colonial socialist state exerts its sway over Vietnam's citizens by promoting a paternalistic structure of political authority. Taylor reasoned that such an ironic colonial legacy, a virtual reprise of the earlier governing mechanism, must stem from the fact that many of the revolutionaries and leaders of the anti-colonial movement who laid the foundations of the current CPV-led State (among them being Ho Chi Minh) "came from collaborating mandarin families or had trained in schools set up for colonial era civil servants" (Taylor, 2004, p. 21). Thus, enhancing our historical understanding of previous times spanning from the pre-colonial to the pre-*doi moi* periods could help us to build on Taylor's work by tracing some specific impacts on differential resource distribution back to the lingering colonial social influence, with all of it deepening our knowledge of the structural dynamics of the various inequalities, especially those related to people's access to school education prior to marketization.

Third and last, obtaining a wider view of how various different NGOs with varying missions, objectives, programs, and activities are helping to ameliorate the living conditions of socioeconomically challenged migrant families is essential, given their growing presence as social-service providers, especially to those migrants lacking access to formal sources of help. While my field observations identified several NGOs operating in the Thanh Ninh area, and while some of the migrant participants were receiving assistance from more than one NGO, my interviews with both NGO workers and migrant recipients of their support confirmed my impression that these NGOs fail to work together even when some of their activities happen to overlap. Thus a more rigorous investigation of how NGOs having very varied organizational and project goals, project spans, targeted populations, and budgets are providing assistance to migrant families in the Thanh Ninh area, and of how their interventions are assessed by the

migrant recipients, might help officials to coordinate their efforts and thereby upgrade migrants' standards of living by facilitating their access to resources and opportunities.

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Appendix A: Research Methodology

This appendix delineates the process whereby the research was designed and implemented, and points up the methodological limitations of the study.

Identifying Research Participants

Research Sample

The research sample of this study is comprised of the following: migrant children and their parents and guardians; their non-migrant neighbors; and individuals who have had direct interactions with the migrant families via governmental and/or non-governmental interventions. The last group included schoolteachers, aid workers, and local and government personnel working in the areas of migration, child education, and urban poverty. As spoken about in greater detail in Chapter III, the definition of “migrants,” found in Vietnam’s censuses, limits itself to those who moved from one district to another in the five years before the survey was conducted. That definition therefore leaves out both long-term migrants who migrated more than five years prior to the survey and seasonal migrants who come and go within a short timeframe, and above all those who reside in the city without obtaining temporary permits (i.e., unregistered migrants), regardless of duration of stay. In this study, however, migrants are defined as those who reside in their current place of residence without gaining permanent-resident registration, regardless of their possession of temporary permits or length of stay.

The study’s participants consisted of 16 children (3 boys and 13 girls) aged between 8 and 18 years old,⁸⁹ and 18 parents and guardians (4 men and 14 women) aged between 32 and 66 years old. Thirteen out of 16 child participants were recruited in the charity class. Two girls out of the 16 children were not receiving formal or non-formal education class at the time of the interview. Prior to their migration to Hanoi, both of these girls had attended school in the provinces where they were born; after their migration, they were working full-time as street-sellers. One girl was attending a state primary school, but not the charity class. All of the migrant participants belong to the *Kinh* ethnic group, with the exception of one female student who is *Tay*. All of the migrant participants originated from provinces in northern Vietnam, among them being Bac Giang, Hai Duong, Hung Yen, Lang Son, Nam Dinh, Ninh Binh, Thai Binh, and Thanh Hoa, except one participant who was born in Hanoi but later lost her permanent-resident status due to the loss of her property and her vagrant life. All of the migrant participants were

non-seasonal migrants (i.e., those intending to stay in the city for an indefinite period) residing in the city with their families, except for one seasonal female migrant who comes to work in the city without her family only for short periods of time (two weeks to a month) during the slack seasons on the farm.⁹⁰ All of the migrant participants were residing in the Thanh Ninh area at the time of the interviews. Except for the seasonal migrant who was renting a room in a *nha tro* along with three other women from the same village, all the other migrant participants were living in self-contained housing units with their families. Eight migrant families out of the 21 whose members I interviewed were living in their own property: 6 families in the brown village and 2 families in other parts of the Thanh Ninh area. Thirteen migrant families were residing in a rental property.

In addition, 6 non-migrant neighbors, all of them women and all holders of permanent residency in their current place of residence, were interviewed; within this group were the manager of a neighboring wholesale market, a resident landlord of *nha tro*, the owner of a small grocery shop, a woman working for the People's Committee in one of the wards of the Thanh Ninh area, a college student, and a woman who recently obtained permanent residency in the Thanh Ninh area after her husband purchased a piece of land and built a new house on it. All of the non-migrant neighbors interviewed were living in their own property.

Aside from the abovementioned participants, 24 individuals (13 women and 11 men) who previously had been or currently are working within the education or social-service sectors were interviewed. Among these were school personnel and NGO staff members involved in the charity class, local social workers working with the poor, staff members working at international NGOs sponsoring programs designed to improve education and sustain the livelihood of underprivileged children in Vietnam, and government personnel at the provincial and ministerial levels who are concerned with education and labor issues pertaining to migrants and disadvantaged children. Three of the aid workers were foreign nationals (two American and one British) while the rest of the individuals were Vietnamese. While all 21 of

⁸⁹ In this study, when referring to a person's age I will follow the Vietnamese tradition of counting age from the first day of the year in which the person was born, with that year being numbered one. Thus a child with the age of eight in Western terms will be identified as a nine-year-old child.

⁹⁰ While the target group of the study was migrant families intending to stay in Hanoi over the longer term, this one seasonal migrant was contacted with a view to observing firsthand the living conditions in a *nha tro*.

the Vietnamese interviewees had permanent residency in Hanoi, none of them was a resident of the Thanh Ninh area and thus I have not counted them as neighbors of the migrant participants.

Sampling Strategy

The study employed as its main sampling strategy a combination of purposive sampling and convenience sampling. I began by locating socioeconomically disadvantaged and migrant residents of the Thanh Ninh area,⁹¹ considered one of the most heavily migrant-concentrated areas within the central part of Hanoi. In order to better understand how migrants' lives have changed since their relocation to Hanoi from their places of origin, I selected families who had chosen to migrate for a longer period—that is, semi-permanently or permanently, as opposed to just seasonally. While several “repeaters” among the participants previously had migrated to Hanoi with or without children, all the participating migrant families had left their places of origin intending to settle in Hanoi for an indefinite period of time.

It also must be noted that research participants occasionally were recruited on the spot in the Thanh Ninh area, after I had learned from informal conversations that they were rural migrants who had come to work in Hanoi with their families. All these individuals who agreed to participate were either migrant adults living with their school-age children or migrant children residing with their parents and/or guardians in the Thanh Ninh area.

In addition to the purposive and convenience sampling, snowball sampling was used in order to identify people engaged in the education and social-service sectors. Particular emphasis was placed on finding and interviewing those people who have had direct interactions with migrant children and families through governmental and/or non-governmental interventions.

Collecting Data

The primary research methods employed in this project were participant observation and non-structured and semi-structured interviews, but these methods were combined, in a complementary manner, with such methods as informal conversation, life history interview, and documentary research.

Participant Observation

Participant observation was conducted throughout the field research process in a variety of settings: interactions with the charity-class children both inside and outside the classroom; visits to participants'

homes and to the streets where some participants work; and activities organized by the NGO for the charity-class students and their teachers. The aim of participant observation was to observe and experience social encounters and activities within natural settings so that I, as the researcher, could better understand the norms and values embedded within everyday interactions and activities.

During my visits to the charity class I would observe and often participate in the activities that the students were engaged in. Since the time I spent in the class was restricted to recess, I would sometimes join them in playing games. In so doing I would pay close attention to who participated in which kind of activity, and to the manner of interaction among the students themselves and between the students and the teacher. During the first month of my visits to the class I focused on becoming a familiar face to the students and having informal conversations with them. Gradually, however, as we were playing games, children began to ask me questions about my family, what had brought me to Vietnam, why I was studying in the United States, how to write their names in Japanese, and so on.

Visiting participants' homes also formed an important part of my fieldwork. Initially, Huyen and I started to visit a handful of migrant families residing in the Thanh Ninh area. In search of potential research participants, we gladly chatted with the migrant street workers who approached us as we roamed around the Hang Dau lake area. My preliminary research indicated that many of the street-sellers working there resided in the Thanh Ninh area, which is about two kilometers from the city center where the lake is located. Thus soon we found ourselves spending even more time in the Hang Dau area, getting to know them better and learning about their daily lives as street-sellers. As we would spend more time with them they would invite us to come to their homes, so that we could see firsthand how they were living.

Later on, we had a great number of opportunities to visit the households of families living in the Thanh Ninh area, especially those of the charity-class students. On our visits to participants' homes I would pay close attention not only to their living conditions but also to the family dynamic within each household. While chatting with and interviewing parents/guardians I would observe the ways in which the children behaved around their parents/guardians and other household members, who sometimes were

⁹¹ A more detailed description of the area where the research was conducted may be found in Chapter III.

present, such as their siblings, grandparents, uncles, and aunts. In addition I would look, as closely as politeness allowed, at how personal and social spaces were organized within a home.

While most of my fieldwork revolved around my meetings with the charity-class children during the class breaks⁹² and my after-class visits to their homes to meet their parents and/or guardians, Huyen and I also were invited to participate in various activities organized by the NGO for the students. These included health checkups and gift-giving at the end of the school year and the graduation ceremony. We also had the opportunity to join an evaluation exercise held at the end of the school year, in which the class teachers and the NGO staff members discussed ongoing and emerging issues related to their class activities and to the students' learning situations.

In addition to the observations in school and home settings, Huyen and I also, as noted in passing a moment ago, spent a fair amount of time on the streets where some of the participants were working. (When the participants said that they were “working on the street” that generally meant street-selling, but in some cases it entailed begging.) This observational exercise helped me to see if the participants' patterns of behavior varied across different situational contexts and various social attributes such as gender, age, kinship, and socioeconomic status. Spending time with working children outside of their homes as well as in the classroom also allowed me to observe and compare their modes of communication and their mannerisms when they were with their families, their peer groups, and surrounding adults in their workspaces.

In summary, observations of the multiple places where the participants engaged in their daily activities, aside from classroom settings, gave me some idea of how the children behaved in various social settings and also depending upon whom they were with—be it their classmates, other working children, siblings, parents, guardians, relatives, or neighbors. It is worth noting in this connection that our inability to spend almost any time observing actual classes turned out to be a blessing in disguise, for our exclusion from that one space granted us admittance to that wider social context in which the participants lead their daily lives and build their relationships with others.

⁹² One of the conditions of my being granted access to the charity class was that my observations be limited to the class breaks.

Interviews with Research Participants

Upon the conclusion of this study's initial phase of field immersion and observation, I developed an interview guide containing a set of questions, some structured and others more open-ended, for use during my interviews with children and their parents or guardians.⁹³ The structured questions were intended to draw out children's and their family's demographic and other information which would identify who they were (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, place of origin, years of schooling/non-schooling, familial background in light of their socioeconomic status, familial composition, occupational structure of the family). Open-ended questions, on the other hand, were set out in order to discover the following: children's educational circumstances; children's and parents'/guardians' attitudes toward the education the children have access to, and what it might mean for the children's future; their immediate concerns, interests, and needs; the children's, and their family's, daily routines, and the children's activities and responsibilities inside and outside of the house; benefits and challenges the children and parents/guardians see in juggling their activities and responsibilities inside and outside of the house; support system in time of need (financial or otherwise); access to public and private social-service providers; groups of people they associate themselves with in their daily lives, and their ways of interaction.

In addition migrant participants were asked about: their migration history; their reasons for migration and their household status; any changes they have experienced in their daily lives and their relationships with their families, kin, peer groups, and neighbors, and the visions of the future they have had since migrating to Hanoi. Whenever possible, both children and their respective parents/guardians were interviewed. This interview strategy helped me to see if their (children's and parents'/guardians') answers to the same questions overlapped or differed, and to seek further for causes of the discrepancies, if there were any. As my understanding of the situations of the participants and their families grew, some questions were revised to draw out the solicited information more effectively, while new and supplementary questions were added to aid further investigation of the issue concerned.

⁹³ The interview guide is Appendix B of this dissertation. It was used in a reasonably consistent manner at all of the semi-structured interviews with the migrant research participants. I say "reasonably consistent" for at times, in keeping with the flow of the interview, the sequencing of the topics and their associated questions were flexibly changed and some questions were added or deleted from the list.

In my interviews with aid workers, government officials, and schoolteachers who have had interactions with migrant children, including those individuals involved in the charity class, emphasis was placed on gathering information about existing services and interventions targeted to migrant children and their families and about their experiences in, and perspectives on, such service provisions and interventions. The collected data then were compared and analyzed to see how those individuals' views and attitudes toward the lives of migrant children and families overlapped and/or differed. In addition, the solicited information was used to identify any factors tending to hamper their efforts to upgrade the livelihoods of migrant children and families.

The interviews took place at various locations, depending on the convenience of the participants: at the participant's home, on the street, in a classroom or an office. In the case of aid workers and government officials, the interviews typically took place in their offices. Interviews with the charity-class teachers and NGO staff members working with the charity class were held in the classroom or at a nearby café. I usually set up an appointment with the aid workers and government officials in advance. I also offered, verbally or in writing at some point prior to our meeting, a brief self-introduction, description of my research, and statement of the purpose of the forthcoming interview.

Interviews with students attending the charity class were conducted in the classroom, on the street, or in their house. Due to the brief amount of time typically available to us (on average, 15-20 minutes per visit), we often would conduct an interview across several separate sessions. At times interviewing students during the class break was not easy, given that some students would be running around playing games while others were falling asleep. In order to mitigate the disadvantage of interviewing during the recess, we asked some students who were willing to participate in the study if we could interview them when the class was over. When they were not available immediately after the class but agreed to meet us elsewhere, we would make an arrangement to meet them at a particular time and place which usually was within walking distance of where they lived or worked. Moreover, in order to make our child participants feel more at ease, my interpreter and I strove to create a less intimidating and more inviting environment for them. We did this by, wherever possible and appropriate: sharing drinks or meals with them; doing a bit of chatting before moving on to the interview; interviewing several children at the same time.

In the course of identifying and recruiting children who were willing to participate in the study, I would explain upfront to them—and also to their parents and guardians, if they were present at the time we were visiting their homes or working alongside their children—what issues were being explored and how the study was to be done. I also would assure the children and their parents/guardians, prior to obtaining their informed consent, that they had the right to say “no.” Throughout the research process I would stress that I wanted to learn from them, and that there was no right or wrong answer to any question I would ask.

Most of the parents and guardians we interviewed for the study were introduced to us by their children whom we had met in the charity class or on the street. During our class visits Huyen and I would ask various students if we could come by their house to meet their parents and guardians to learn about their families' lives. Some students were willing to take us to their home with them when the class was over. Although normally we would visit the parents and other family members without having made any appointment, they would kindly invite us in and agree to participate in the study. In the case of the parents and guardians who work on the street, typically we would have informal conversations with them first, then ask about their willingness to participate in the study and their availability for an interview on the spot; occasionally, I scheduled an appointment for a different date and time, agreed upon by them.

When we tried to interview people without personal referrals, as through introductions from children, NGO workers, or schoolteachers, we first would approach them by making small talk and asking noncommittal questions so that we would not scare them away. For instance, if they were street-vendors we would ask what they were selling and how their business was going these days. Only after having such interactions did we explain what we were doing and ask if they could share with us their views and experiences. Catching the attention of some people, especially those working on the street, was not easy. Even when we were in the middle of our conversation or interview they would, understandably, seize any presented opportunity to sell their things to passersby. If they caught a glimpse of the police they would run away at once, so that they would not get their products taken away and be charged high penalties for street-vending.

A flexible approach was taken to recording the interviews with participants. In the case of aid workers and government officials, I would explain to them the purpose of my study and would ask them

up-front for their permission to audio-record the interview. I would add that if audio-taping caused her/him discomfort at any time during the interview, recording would immediately be stopped and the interview would be discontinued altogether. I also would tell them that any portion of the audio-taping could be deleted at her/his request at any time. Occasionally participants looked a bit nervous at the outset of the interview, speaking in a low tone and carefully choosing their words; as the interview went on they would speak more spontaneously and volubly, and most of them told me that they had even forgotten about the recording by the time we finished the interview. None of the participants whose interviews were tape-recorded asked to discontinue recording at any point. My interviews with the migrant participants, on the other hand, were not tape-recorded, in order to minimize the risk of arousing their wariness or inviting unnecessary attention from onlookers on the street.

With respect to the semi-structured interviews, several interviewing methods were used in a supplementary manner so as to gain a better understanding of the situation of migrant children and their families. These methods included life-history interviewing and “daily routine” questioning, whereby the interviewer asks respondents to describe a typical day (Spradley, 1979).

After each interview, Huyen and I reviewed it and discussed all issues and questions that had emerged from it. Based on my notes and Huyen’s translations of the interview, I would ask her about participants’ remarks that I did not quite understand or that had prompted my interest. She would then fill in the gaps in my understanding. These post-interview meetings helped me tremendously, not only to heighten the clarity of the data collected from each interview but also to better achieve a more nuanced, contextualized view of the participants’ attitudes as those emerged from their remarks and behaviors.

Furthermore, our meetings were used to exchange our views on how each interview had gone and to identify areas that needed to be worked on or followed up on in the forthcoming interviews. The information collected from the interviews with the migrant participants was triangulated with the data drawn from the interviews with aid workers, schoolteachers, and local authorities, and vice versa, as well as with existing research studies, reports, and news articles on such issues as urban poverty, migration, family, and education in Vietnam. In some cases the children were secretive about their backgrounds in the beginning, and would make things up to disguise their age or familial background. While Huyen and I would try not to place any pressure on them by questioning them too closely, we would be open and

truthful whenever they asked what we were doing and what we would like to learn from them. As they saw us keep coming back to where they were working, studying, playing or just hanging out, those children who initially were closed gradually opened up, becoming more willing to talk to us. Moreover, the efforts we made to come and see the participants on a regular basis paid off, for the visits not only helped us to build rapport with them by having follow-up meetings, conversations, and interviews, but also made me more conscious of any misunderstandings that might have occurred in the course of sharing each other's intentions and ideas; that consciousness might, or might not, have surfaced in our initial encounters and/or interviews with them. In short, the ongoing process of checking and comparing different sources of data helped me to see where the commonalities and discrepancies were, and to decide whether those served to corroborate or disprove my interpretations and findings.

Throughout the study, pseudonyms are used for my research site, the names of the participants and the individuals with whom they are associated, their affiliated organizations and/or schools, and any and all other identifying characters. Because of the personal nature of the information obtained about and from participants, it was imperative to disguise their identities and respect their confidentiality.

Documentary Research

Documentary information was collected from a broad range of sources: government and NGO publications and reports; census data; conference proceedings and academic publications pertaining to migration, child and urban poverty, and education issues in Vietnam; NGO project documents on the charity class; newspaper and magazine articles; video clips; and email correspondence with contact persons involved in the sectors relevant to the study. The documentary research served two primary purposes: to outline the current state of, and changing circumstances surrounding, the livelihood and educational environment of impoverished migrants living in Hanoi; and to examine how the urban poor and migrants are portrayed in various media.

Analyzing, Interpreting, and Synthesizing the Collected Data

Analysis, interpretation, and synthesis of the collected data occurred in three steps. The first step was to draw out, from my ethnographies, observational and descriptive notes encapsulating the many impressions that had struck me during my fieldwork (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). After the notes had been extracted they were lumped together according to keywords and topics, so as to form a list of

tentative categories; these included social segregation and distrust among migrant and non-migrant residents; social collectivity among migrants of the same place of origin; coping mechanisms and strategies employed by the migrant families, and discrepancies between policy and practice in the spheres of migration and schooling. Second, the dataset of each category was reclassified according to the three types of resources, economic, social, and cultural, that appear to operate as a mutually interactive organizing principle, structuring the everyday lives of migrant families. Using a conceptual framework predicated on the premise that patterns of resource access and mobilization shape the processes of social change, an analysis was made of how each type of resource has been accessed and used by migrant families and what opportunities and obstacles they have encountered in the context of post-*doi moi* Vietnamese society. Third, the findings on each resource were synthesized so as to illuminate the continuities and changes that cut across the patterns of migrants' resource mobilization and to reveal how such patterns have been impacted by larger institutional and cultural dynamics.

Methodological Limitations

Three major methodological limitations that are specific to this study need to be addressed in closing: its small sample size, its sample selection, and its unequal gender ratio of participants.

First and foremost, the sample size of the study was fairly small: 64 participants in total, of whom 33 were the main target population of the study: non-seasonal migrant children of school age and their parents/guardians residing in the Thanh Ninh area with their families. The challenge of gaining access to educational institutions, combined with the general cautiousness vis-à-vis "outsiders" that one tends to encounter in northern Vietnam, was overcome via the participants' willingness to cooperate with us on the research project, as well as by the researcher's, and the research assistant's, efforts to get close to the target group/institution and build rapport with them. Still, a larger number of participants drawn from the target group could have afforded the reader more insights into the social worlds of the population concerned.

Secondly, and related to the first limitation, there is the sample selection. As noted earlier, most off the child participants, 13 out of the 16 children, were recruited in the charity class. While the association I had with the charity class facilitated my access to the families whose children were attending the class, the research would have benefited from a more selective choice of participants outside of the

charity class. These individuals would have included families and their children who did not attend the charity class but instead received some other types of informal or formal schooling, as well as children who did not attend any type of school. Such a selection of participants might have enabled me, for instance, to investigate any differences that might have been discovered between the children attending the charity class and those not attending in terms of their educational challenges, familial backgrounds, and relationships with families, peers, teachers, and neighbors.

Another limitation in relation to the sample selection has to do with the level of consistency in interviewing migrant participants who share the same family household. Given the nature of this study it was necessary to gain the broadest possible view of the livelihoods of migrant families, and thus both migrant children and their parents/guardians were interviewed to solicit their perspectives. And yet the lack of consistency in sometimes, and sometimes not, interviewing both children and parents/guardians from the same family household, as well as the overlap of the households to which various migrant participants belonged, resulted in the reduction to 21 of the number of migrant families, when the total number of migrant participants living with their families was 33. The ultimate objective of qualitative research is not to generalize about the social phenomenon in question, backed up by a representative sample; rather, it is to facilitate the transfer of useful, in-depth, context-specific research to other social settings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Thus both a larger and more selective sample of migrant children and families, beyond the bounds of the charity class, as well as a higher level of consistency in interviewing the family households, could have more compellingly underscored the usefulness of the research findings and their possible applicability to the contexts of other migrant-concentrated, low-income areas in the cities of transitional societies.

The third methodological limitation of this study lies in the gender imbalance of its participants. Among the 64 participants, 43 were women (67 percent) and 21 were men (33 percent). This imbalanced gender composition was most pronounced for non-migrant neighbors, because all 6 of the people interviewed were women, followed by migrant participants, of whom 24 were female (71 percent) and only 10 were male (29 percent). With respect to parents and guardians, it often was the case that mothers and female guardians were more available at feasible interview times. The interviews often took place at participants' homes during the day; fathers and male guardians often were out of the house, working until

late at night. Moreover, there was a high ratio of female-headed households.⁹⁴ Among the 21 family households that the participating parents and guardians represented, 8 women (38 percent) responded that they were the heads of their households. These individuals included 5 widows (two of whom were grandmothers living with their grandchildren as guardians), 2 divorcees, and 1 woman whose husband has been reported missing. This high proportion of woman-headed households may indicate that woman-headed households are more susceptible to poverty. Nevertheless, a more conscious recruitment and representation of male participants, in particular boys and male parents/guardians, would have helped us to understand the role played by gender in forming the dynamics of social relationships and support systems, as well as in mobilizing monetary and other resources from both within and outside the migrant community.

⁹⁴ In this study, *household heads* are defined as individuals who house their children and/or grandchildren and who are in charge of feeding and rearing them in their current place of residence (i.e., in Hanoi). Among the eight female-headed households seven were single-parent/grandparent households, while one female household head was residing there with her male partner, who was the father of one of her children, along with her two other children from her previous marriages.

Appendix B: Interview Guide for Migrant Children, Parents, and Guardians

Basic Questions for Children, Parents, and Guardians

- Age: (Year, Date)
- Places of origin: Where were you born? Where did you grow up?
- Household registration (*ho khau*) status: Where is your *ho khau* registered? What is your residential status in Hanoi (e.g., temporary resident, unregistered)?
- Living arrangement: Where in Hanoi do you live at the moment? If you have lived in different places in Hanoi, where did you live previously?
- Household structure: Whom do you live with? Who is the head of the household? What does the head of the household do?
- Family structure: Tell us about your family structure: parents, grandparents, siblings (who attend which school), their ages and places of residence.
- Occupation of parents/guardians: What do your parents/guardians do? (Multiple answers possible; If parents/guardians are present at time of interview, ask them directly.)
- Level of schooling attained by parents/guardians: What is the highest level of schooling your parents/guardians have attained? (If parents/guardians are present at time of interview, ask them directly.)

In-Depth Questions for Children

Education

- Are you currently receiving any form of education?
- If no, have you dropped out of school, or have you never received any form of education?

If yes:

- What type of school are you attending (e.g., state school, charity class, evening class)?
- Who pays your school/education-related fees?
- Who in your household makes the decision as to whether you should go to school/which school you should go to?
- What do your parents/guardians say about school?
- What do you like about school? What do you *not* like about school?
- How do you think the knowledge you have gained at school/charity classes helps your current life?
- How do you think schooling could help your future life?

If no and dropped-out:

- Where did you study previously (e.g., state school, charity class, evening class)?
- Who paid your school/education-related fees?
- Who in your household made the decision as to whether you should go to school/which school you should go to?
- When did you stop going to school? What grade were you in when you last attended school?
- Why did you leave school?
- Do you wish to return to school? Why?
- What do your parents/guardians say about school?
- What did you like about school? What did you *not* like about school?
- What did your parents say about school?
- How do you think the knowledge you gained at school helps your current life?
- How do you think schooling could help your future life?
- Considering your experience, what do you think can or needs to be done, to help children like you stay in school?

Peers

- With whom do you often play (e.g., siblings, neighborhood children, other migrant children, non-

migrant children, friends from school)?

- What do you play?
- What kinds of issues/problems do you talk about with your friends?
- What kinds of issues/problems do you talk about with your parents/guardians?

Work and Household Chores

- What kind of work do you do *outside of the house*? (Multiple answers possible)
- Where do you work *outside of the house*?
- How much do you make per day?
- What do you do with the money you earn?
- For how long have you been working *outside of the house*?
- Why do you work *outside of the house*?
- How did you choose the work you do *outside of the house*?
- What kind of work do you do *at home*? (Multiple answers possible)
- What do you like *and* dislike about your work *outside of the house* and *at home*?
- Have you experienced any difficulty balancing your work and your schooling? If yes, what kinds of difficulty have you encountered?

Leisure

- What do you do during your leisure time?
- Where do you hang out?

Typical Day

- Can you describe your typical day? Any difference between weekdays and weekend?

Life of Migration / Life-Changes

- Migration history: When did you first emigrate from your place of origin? If you have migrated to more than one place, where did you live before coming to Hanoi?
- Migration pattern: daily, circular, seasonal, or year-round migration?
- Status of household registration: *ho khai*? (If the child does not know, ask her/his parents or guardian.)
- How often do you go back to your place of origin?
- How has your life changed since you migrated to Hanoi?
- Would you like to continue to live in Hanoi, return to your place of origin, or move to other places? Why?
- How do you identify yourself (*người ở đâu*)?

Social Network and Support System: Availability and Accessibility

- What are your immediate concerns and/or needs?
- What kinds of problems/issues do you have?
- If you have problems or need help, who do you talk to: friends, family members, relatives, neighbors, NGO officials, and other children's welfare/service-providers, local authorities? (Multiple answers possible.)
- When in trouble, how do you help each other?
- Have you ever been caught by the police? If yes, what happened exactly?
- Have you experienced being discriminated against or felt discrimination coming at you from community members, neighbors, schoolteachers, friends, classmates, etc.? If yes, can you tell us about your experience or your feeling?
- Have you ever accessed any social services and activities offered by local authorities and mass organizations? If yes, can you tell us about your experience? If no, why?

Support from Children's Welfare and Other Service-Providers

- Do you know of any children's welfare or other service-providers?
- If yes, what type of support (e.g., educational, health, nutritional, vocational) do they provide?

- How did you find out about their services?
- What type of support (e.g., educational, health, nutritional, vocational) do you seek?
- On what occasions, and how frequently, do you seek support from the children's welfare and other service-providers?
- How well are you satisfied with their support? Why?

Future Aspirations and Long-Term Goals

- What are your long-term educational and career goals? (For younger-aged children: What do you want to be in the future?) Why?

In-Depth Questions for Parents and Guardians

Life of Migration / Life-Changes

- Migration history: When did you first emigrate from your place of origin? If you have migrated to more than one place, where did you live before coming to Hanoi?
- Migration pattern: daily, circular, seasonal, or year-round migration?
- Status of household registration: *ho khai*?
- Why did you decide to migrate to Hanoi?
- Who made the decision to migrate to Hanoi?
- When did you first migrate to Hanoi with your child(ren)? Why?
- How often do you go back to your place of origin?
- How has your and your family's life changed since you migrated to Hanoi?
- Would you like to continue to live in Hanoi, return to your place of origin, or move to other places? Why?
- How do you identify yourself (*người ở đâu*)?
- What have you done with your land/house in the countryside (e.g., sold it, kept as it is, left it to be taken care of by someone else such as relatives)?

Education

- Is your child currently receiving any form of education (e.g., state school, charity class)? If you have more than one child and not all of them are attending school, which children of yours are attending school? Why? What type of school are they attending? (e.g., state school, charity class, evening class)? Why?
- Did your child receive any form of education (e.g., state school, charity class) in the past? If you have more than one child and not all of them were attending school, which children of yours were attending school? Why? What type of school were they attending (e.g., state school, charity class, evening class)?
- If your child(ren) attended more than one school, what was the reason for transferring schools? Have you experienced any problem with your child's school transfer? Can you tell us about your experience?
- How much per month do you pay for your children's school/education-related fees?
- What do such school/education-related fees include (e.g., tuition fees, exam fees, extra classes, PTA fees, lunch fees, contributions to school restorations, textbooks, notebooks and other learning materials, school uniforms)?
- Who pays for school/education-related fees? Do you receive any financial support (e.g., government subsidies, NGOs, relatives, etc.)?
- Who in your household makes the decision as to whether *and* which of your children should go to school, and which school they should attend?
- What benefits *and* costs do you see in sending your children to school? Any difference by gender?
- How are you involved in your children's schooling (e.g., helping them with their homework, attending PTA meetings)?
- How satisfied are you with the school and other forms of education your children are receiving? Why? What complaints, if any, do you have?

- How do you think that school education will benefit your children?
- What do you expect or wish your children to become in the future?

Children's Work and Household Chores

- What is the amount of your average family expenditure per month?
- What is the amount of your average family income per month?
- What do you spend the money on?
- Who manages the finances in your household?
- How *and* to what extent do your children contribute to the family income?
- How *and* to what extent do you rely on your children for domestic duties and activities?

Social Network and Support System: Availability and Accessibility

- What are your immediate concerns or needs in relation to your children?
- What kind of problems/issues do you have?
- If you have problems or need help in relation to your children, who do you talk to (e.g., friends, family, relatives, neighbors, NGOs and other children's welfare/service-providers, local authorities)? (Multiple answers possible.)
- When in trouble, how do you help each other?
- Have you felt or experienced being discriminated against by community members, neighbors, schoolteachers, friends, etc.? If yes, can you tell us about your experience or your feeling?
- Have you and your children ever accessed any social services or activities offered by local authorities and mass organizations? If yes, can you tell us about your experience? If no, why?

Support from Children's Welfare and Other Service-Providers

- Do you know of any children's welfare or other service-providers?
- If yes, what type of support (e.g., educational, health, nutritional, vocational) do they provide?
- How did you find out about their services?
- What type of support (e.g., educational, health, nutritional, vocational) do you seek?
- On what occasions, and how frequently, do you seek support from the children's welfare and other service-providers?
- How well are you satisfied with their support? Why?

Remittances

- To whom do you send the money (e.g., immediate family members, relatives or others in the countryside)?
- How often do you send remittances?
- For what purpose(s) do you remit the money?
- How do you remit the money (e.g., hand-deliver on your own, ask someone else to hand-deliver, send by mail)?
- How much on average do you remit per month?
- How much on average do you make per month?

Loan Sharks

- What is the common term used for loan sharks?
- How long is the loan period?
- What are their average interest rates?
- When was the first time you borrowed money from loan sharks?
- Before you started to borrow money from loan sharks, to whom did you turn when you needed some extra cash?
- If you have borrowed money from loan sharks, how much did you borrow? How did you repay the money? What happened if you failed to repay?
- Who *are* the loan sharks, exactly? Are they migrants, too? What are your connections with them? (They often are referred to as *ban* or "friend," but what is the true nature of the relationship between lender and borrower?)

- If the lender is a *ban* who is engaged in the same or a similar job in the informal sector as you, the migrant borrower, how does s/he manage to lend such an amount of money?
- Have you ever lent money to your friends with high interest rates?
- How do you define “friends” and “loan sharks,” respectively? For instance how are regular “friends,” without any money being involved, and those who lend money at high interest rates different?

Social Relations in Hanoi

- Who do you interact with most frequently outside of your immediate family while in Hanoi (e.g., neighbors, fellow workers, relatives, people from the same village), and why?
- Who do you feel is most trustworthy outside of your immediate family while in Hanoi (e.g., neighbors, fellow workers, relatives, people from the same village), and why?
- What is the nature of your interactions with different groups of people (e.g., neighbors, fellow workers, relatives, people from the same village), and how are the interactions different?
- Where are your neighbors and fellow workers originally from? What is their *ho khai* status (e.g., permanent residents, migrants with permanent-residency permits, unregistered migrants)?
- Do you have emotional ties to where you now live, and why?

***Tinh Cam* (“Social Sentiment”) in Urban vs. Rural Settings**

- On what kinds of occasions do you show and/or feel *tin h cam*?
- How are the manners of expression of *tin h cam* similar or different in Hanoi and in your home village?

General Perception of Hanoi Life

- What is your general perception of living in Hanoi in comparison with your home village?
- What is your take on the saying “*Giàu nhà quê không bằng ngồi lê thành phố*” (“It is better to be poor in the city than rich in the village/countryside”)?