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ISSN 2300-1682

Editorial office: Centre of Migration Research, Banacha 2b, 02-097 Warsaw, e-mail: ceemr@uw.edu.pl

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Vol. 4, No. 1, June 2015

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The Vietnamese Communities in Central and Eastern Europe as Part of the Global Vietnamese Diaspora

The Vietnamese are one of the most numerous migrant communities in the majority of the countries of former Soviet Bloc. In such countries as Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia they form the largest communities of migrants originating from Asia. In Poland, the Vietnamese are probably the second most numerous group of foreigners. According to Piłat and Wysieńska (2012: 65) their number equaled around 30,000 people in 2012. However, although their presence has been noticed by scholars and policy-makers dealing with the issue of immigration to particular countries of Central and Eastern Europe, so far this category has very rarely been analysed as a distinctive part of the global Vietnamese diaspora, worth attention as an example of a particular and weakly investigated kind of transnational mobility, shaped by Cold War era politics.

During the communist period, the inflow of foreigners into such countries as East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Poland was limited and carefully controlled by the state (Kicinger 2011; Nenicka 2012; Alamgir 2014). As a result, when communism collapsed, the Soviet Bloc countries were inhabited by relatively small immigrant populations compared to the countries of Western Europe. In the literature dedicated to the issue of migration, therefore, the fall of communism is often associated with a point when international mobility on a noticeable scale had just begun. For example, describing the case of Poland, numerous authors indicate that in the post-war history of Poland the collapse of communism was the moment when the significant immigration to this country started. It is stressed that after the political transformation symbolised by the year 1989 immigrants came to Poland attracted by the opportunities provided by a developing free-market economy. While the bustling economy was undoubtedly an important pull-factor encouraging the immigrants, it must also be remembered that an important factor – if not a crucial one – determining which particular migrant groups settled in the former Soviet Bloc countries was the ethnic networks already established during the communist era.

The case of the Vietnamese diaspora inhabiting such countries as Poland, the Czech Republic and Germany indicates that the picture of socialist societies as lacking transnational mobility is to a large extent simplified, as transnational movements of people existed during the Soviet Bloc era on a quite significant scale. From the 1950s until the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, symbolised by the year 1989, tens of thousands of Vietnamese people arrived in such countries as the Soviet Union, Poland, Czechoslovakia and the former GDR in order to study and gain occupational training. Hundreds of thousands worked in factories as ‘guest workers’ in the 1980s – especially in East Germany, Czechoslovakia and the USSR (Alamgir 2014; Schwenkel 2014). Their work was profitable for the Eastern European countries, in need of a cheap labour force, but also played the role of developmental aid to Vietnam, as the workers commonly helped their families living in impoverished Vietnam by sending remittances (mainly consumer goods) (Schwenkel 2014).

Susan Bayly (2007) introduced the notion of ‘global socialist ecumene’ to describe the transnational flow of ideas, knowledge and cultural artefacts transmitted by students and specialists circulating among particular communist countries. Particular categories of Vietnamese – assessed as loyal to the communist authorities and promising in terms of educational outcome – participating in governmental exchange programmes were enabled to participate in the transnational mobility taking place within the area of ‘ecumene.’

Considering the importance of this communist era transnational movement for further establishment of migrant groups, it must be remembered that, according to the principles of government programmes, ‘socialist mobility’ was intended to be only of a temporary nature. After completing education or work, the Vietnamese were supposed to return to Vietnam. Students were subjected to the strict control of the Vietnamese authorities and were not allowed to maintain closer relations with representatives of the receiving society. The control was especially strict until the mid-1970s – the end of the Vietnam War. Settling in Eastern European countries was very difficult for them – although not completely impossible, as isolated cases of people staying in Europe have happened since the beginning of the emigration. In the case of students from Poland, changing temporary immigration into a permanent state gradually became more available as early as the 1980s due to the relaxation of the policies of both states – Vietnam and Poland. However, the ‘guest workers’ in such countries as East Germany and Czechoslovakia were subjected to strict control until the end of communism.

This pattern of ‘socialist mobility’ did not come to an end at the same time as the period of socialism, as in the first years of capitalism in Central and Eastern Europe immigration from Vietnam continued on a large scale. The vast majority of the people came to such countries as Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia to engage in trade of consumer goods imported from Asia – mainly clothes and shoes – becoming part of a complex transnational trade chain (Halik, Nowicka 2002; Williams, Balaz 2005). Post-socialist immigration was of a different nature to that of the socialist movements, which were organised and arranged due to the demands of the policy of communist Vietnam and particular countries of the Soviet Bloc. However, the continuity of migration patterns indicates the important role played by migration networks, established by former students and workers from the communist era.

Until recently, the Vietnamese residents of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe have gained relatively little attention in the literature concerning the global Vietnamese diaspora. Emigrants from Vietnam dispersed around the world number – according to official estimates of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam – around 4 million people.¹ The overall sum of remittances sent by the diaspora members to the country of origin in 2014 reached 12 billion USD, accounting for around 8 per cent of the GDP of Vietnam.² Various problems connected with the presence of a large diaspora, such as social integration in the recipient countries, economic activity of migrants or political involvement of diaspora members, are phenomena that are important from the point of view both of the Vietnamese state and of receiving countries. However, so far the academic discussion over the *Việt kiều* (‘overseas Vietnamese’) has mainly been focused on the case of the Vietnamese residing in the United States. This is not surprising taking into account the fact that the American Vietnamese community is the largest overseas population, accounting for around 1.7 million people,³ and being the source of the majority of remittances sent to Vietnam.

However, the case of the American Vietnamese community does not represent the experiences of the whole Vietnamese diaspora dispersed around the world. Vietnamese immigrants residing in various countries differ in many aspects, most of which result from the diversity of historical contexts of emigration from Vietnam to these countries. Following the distinction introduced by Sheffer (2003), Vietnamese people residing in various places can be described either as members of a ‘stateless’ or ‘state-linked’ diaspora (this useful distinction was applied to the Vietnamese diaspora by Long Le; see Le 2014). The Vietnamese American population that has so far become a model for discussing the issue of emigration from Vietnam is predomi-

nantly a group of refugee origin, consisting of the people who left the areas of South Vietnam after the end of the Vietnam War. Although the characteristics of this group has evolved throughout this time, including newer waves of immigrants arriving in the USA for economic or educational purposes, it can still be described as an archetypal example of stateless diaspora (see Le 2014).

Contrary to the American–Vietnamese community, the migrant communities from Central and Eastern European countries have a visibly distinct history, connected with the cooperation among the Soviet Bloc (Comecon) countries. Although later waves of migration to such countries as Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia can be described as spontaneous migration, motivated largely by economic factors, the genesis of formation of the migrant communities was a result of state policy. To this day, the communities in the former Soviet Bloc countries tend to maintain strong connections with the authorities of Vietnam. This is exemplified by the activity of migrant associations, the majority of which cooperate closely with Vietnamese embassies in particular countries and relevant institutions in Vietnam (such as societies of friendship) and impose a noticeable level of control over the migrant community.

While the literature dedicated to the issue of Vietnamese Americans can be described as abundant, involving numerous books and articles dedicated to such issues as social integration, political involvement of the diaspora and its transnational connections, there is a significant gap concerning the literature dedicated to the communities residing in the former Soviet Bloc countries. Although in each country of Central and Eastern Europe inhabited by Vietnamese migrants some works – academic books and papers or social policy reports – have been published, the vast majority of them are available only in the national languages (see more on this issue in Schwenkel’s paper in this volume).

The thematic issue of the CEEMR journal aims to fill the significant gap in the literature dedicated to the issue of the Vietnamese global diaspora.⁴ We intended to compile a collection of papers authored by specialists dealing with issues connected with the presence of Vietnamese migrant communities in Central and Eastern Europe, in order to enable a comparison between the migrant communities residing in various countries, with different backgrounds and various patterns of engagement in transnational politics. In order to place the problematic of the former Soviet Bloc communities in the broader context, we also present one paper dedicated to the issue of a model Vietnamese diaspora group – Vietnamese Americans.

The issue consists of six articles, including case studies of Vietnamese groups residing in such countries as Germany, Slovakia, Poland and the United States. A very special place in the issue is occupied by the paper of Ewa Nowicka – an obituary to Dr Teresa Halik, a prominent Polish specialist on Vietnamese culture and language who regrettably passed away in January 2015. Her death is a great loss both for scholars researching the Vietnamese migrant community and for the community members itself, as for many years she was a great friend to the Polish–Vietnamese diaspora, also acting as a bridge between the migrant community and the Polish authorities.

Three of the six articles presented in this volume discuss the issue of the Vietnamese diaspora in Poland. The Vietnamese migrant community, the second-largest in Poland, has been described in some depth in Polish sociological and anthropological literature (with the most general descriptions being books by Halik and Nowicka 2002; Halik 2006; Górny, Grzymała-Kazłowska, Kępińska, Fihel, Piekut 2007; Szymańska-Matusiewicz 2013). However, the literature in English has so far been very scarce. Contrary to such countries as Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union and East Germany, the Vietnamese arriving in Poland during the communist era were almost exclusively students. However, the political transition, due to economic opportunities in the sector of trade, made Poland the most attractive country for Vietnamese migrants, attracting newcomers not only from Vietnam, but also from other former Soviet Bloc countries, such as former contract workers from East Germany and Czechoslovakia. Currently, the community inhabiting Poland is an interesting case worthy of attention among the Soviet Bloc countries due to its internal differentiation. The Vietnamese population in

Poland includes such categories as former students from the communist era, economic migrants who arrived in Poland after the political transformation, former contract workers from East Germany and Czechoslovakia, and – last but not least – representatives of the 1.5 and second generation. Therefore, analyses dedicated to the case of Vietnamese from Poland provide an insight into various categories of migrants present in the former Soviet Bloc countries.

The opening article, authored by Christina Schwenkel, offers an introduction to the subject of socialist mobility. Schwenkel discusses the various waves of migration of the Vietnamese to the fraternal countries of Soviet Bloc taking place from the mid-1950s until the collapse of the Soviet Union. The paper aims to provide a more detailed and nuanced perspective of the Vietnamese diaspora by abandoning the dominant discourse, based on the bipolar distinction between the West and the East.

The second paper, by Gertrud Hüwelmeier, discusses an important aspect of the situation of the Eastern European Vietnamese population – the peculiar institution of bazaars (markets) where they concentrate their economic activity. Analysing the case of the Wólka Kosowska ‘commodity centre’ situated near Warsaw, Poland, the author indicates the impact of socialist and post-socialist migrations on the creation of ethnic and cultural diversity in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Hüwelmeier also points to the growing role of global interconnectness, describing the trade centres as both the places where the homeland culture of the migrants is practised and where global cultural phenomena – such as specific religion movements – are being developed.

The third paper, written by Miroslava Hlinčíková, describes the Slovakian Vietnamese community. Based on ethnographic research conducted in a neighbourhood in Bratislava inhabited by Vietnamese migrants, Hlinčíková analyses the process of migrant integration, describing the internal diversity of the community. She also examines the attitude of the majority Slovakian society, pointing to the fact that the Vietnamese are accepted by their majority neighbours as long as they remain ‘invisible’ – for example, speak the Slovakian language and do not articulate demands as a group.

In her paper, Grażyna Szymańska-Matusiewicz describes the internal division of the community, based on the case of two ethnic *Tết* (Lunar New Year) festivals – one organised by the representatives of official Vietnamese organisations and the other by members of the pro-democratic opposition. This case illustrates the complex nature of the transnational connections of diaspora members, focusing on the political dimension of their activity. While the official organisations, cooperating with the institutions of the Vietnamese state, try to depict the Vietnamese community living in Poland as unproblematic and easily adapting to Polish society, pro-democratic activists use ethnic festivals as a means of encouraging the Polish spectators to act for political change in Vietnam.

Ewa Nowicka’s paper is dedicated to the problematic of a specific group of Vietnamese people – young women brought up in Poland (1.5 and second-generation migrants). The author concentrates on the issue of the psychological problems and internal conflicts experienced by those researched, describing the difficulties resulting from the fact of growing up in two cultural surroundings: the Vietnamese one, represented by their own families, and the Polish one, represented by the school and peer group. Apart from describing the widely discussed problem of adaptation of the second generation of migrants, the article also provides a gendered perspective, describing the problems experienced by Vietnamese girls and young women.

The last article, authored by Hao Phan, provides readers with further context by looking at the issue of the Vietnamese diaspora residing in the United States. Using data from qualitative research, Phan examines the intricate issue of the political involvement of Vietnamese Americans. As the author argues, although as representatives of the ‘stateless’ diaspora, Vietnamese residing in the US in general present an anti-communist attitude, their level of hostility towards the current Vietnamese government varies significantly. Phan focuses

on the transnational connections shaping the political attitude of the diaspora community, stressing both the impact of the painful past experiences and the current situation in Vietnam.

The thematic issue of CEEMR aims to provide readers with a collection of articles discussing the most prominent problems connected with the presence of Vietnamese migrant communities in Central and Eastern Europe. Although not all Central and Eastern European countries hosting Vietnamese communities are covered in the issue – Russia and the Czech Republic, for example, where Vietnamese populations are relatively numerous – the volume is the first publication in English offering a comparative perspective on the Vietnamese communities in Central and Eastern Europe. By covering the topics such as social integration, migrant economy and diaspora politics, the issue enriches the discussion concerning Vietnamese migration, which has so far focused mainly on the refugee diaspora.

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Acknowledgments

I would like to offer particular thanks to Dr Lê Thanh Hải, editor of *Phương Đông* newspaper, who inspired the preparation of this thematic issue and contributed significantly to the conference ‘The Global Vietnamese Diaspora’ in Warsaw.

Notes

¹ Consular Department, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vietnam: http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/vietnam/documents/eu_vietnam/vn_migration_abroad_en.pdf (accessed: 27 June 2015).

² World Bank data: <http://econ.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTDEC/EXTDECPROSPECTS/0,,contentMDK:22759429~pagePK:64165401~piPK:64165026~theSitePK:476883,00.html> (accessed: 27.06.2015).

³ United States Census Bureau, *Race Reporting for the Asian Population by Selected Categories: 2010*, available at: http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=DEC_10_SF1_QTP8&prodType=table (accessed: 27 June 2015).

⁴ The inspiration for the special issue came from the international conference ‘The Global Vietnamese Diaspora,’ which was organised in March 2014 by the Institute of Sociology, University of Warsaw and the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Polish Academy of Sciences.

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In Commemoration of Dr Teresa Halik

Teresa Halik, an eminent scholar in the field of Vietnam studies known for her extensive research in Vietnam and among the Vietnamese diaspora in Poland, passed away on January 4, 2015 at the age of 65. For more than 30 years she had been the greatest Vietnamist in Poland, having achieved expert status internationally. In both intellectual and practical terms, Dr Halik was a bridge-builder between the Polish government and academic institutions on one side, and the Vietnamese community in Poland on the other. She was also the most important expert and interpreter working for the Polish Ministry of Justice, government agencies, border guards, and many other offices and non-governmental organisations, e.g. the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights and the Council for Overseas Vietnamese.

Teresa Halik was very knowledgeable about the history and culture of Vietnam, China and the countries of South-East Asia, in particular the Indochina Peninsula. Her depth of knowledge included historical and cultural and social conditions of the economic transformations in the region, social and linguistic policy; the problems related to migrations within and outside the region; experience in the studies of the reasons and scale of migration and the type of migration and migrants' strategies.

A sober assessment suggests that, with the passage of time, she will be recognised as the greatest Vietnamist in Central and Eastern Europe.

In 2004 Dr Halik became an assistant professor of Vietnamese and Thai philology at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. From 2001 she had been deputy head of the Intercultural Relations College at the Institute of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw. Starting in 1973, she was a lecturer at the Institute of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw, and from 1996 an assistant professor in the Department of Extra-European Countries at the Polish Academy of Sciences.

Teresa Halik was born in Biała Podlaska 23 September 1949. In 1968 she began studying at the Institute of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw, receiving an MA in 1973. From 1977 to 1980 she was also an MA student at the Department of History, University of Hanoi. In 1983, she was on three-month research placement at Birkbeck College, London School of Economics and Political Science. The following year, she received her PhD at the University of Warsaw, with a doctoral dissertation on Chinese cultural patterns in the tradition of Vietnam. The same year, she also received the Indochina Studies Programme Award from University of Sussex (for her research on Vietnam).

In late 1987 and early 1988, she participated in a course on linguistic policy of the state towards ethnic and cultural minorities in the People's Republic of China at the Beijing Institute of Foreign Languages. In 1989 in Amsterdam, she participated in seminars and workshops on ethnic and cultural minorities – a new approach to social disparity problems – at the Institute of Social Science. In 2000, she participated in workshops and seminars on economic transformations after 1986 and their social consequences (migrations) at the Centre of Scientific Studies and Humanities in Vietnam (Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City).

Dr Halik was co-creator of the master's and postgraduate studies programmes at the Intercultural Relations College, Institute of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw, co-organisator of the Laboratory of South-East Asian Countries Languages and Cultures and a co-organisator of the Historical Laboratory at the Department of Oriental

Studies, University of Warsaw. She supervised numerous bachelors and masters theses in the history and culture of the countries of South–East Asia and migration-related issues (University of Warsaw, Adam Mickiewicz University), and also supervised postgraduate theses (University of Warsaw, Polish Academy of Sciences). A Vietnamese language teacher, she was the author of the only textbook in Poland. Moreover, she published numerous books and articles on the culture of Vietnam and the Vietnamese diaspora in Poland. Dr Halik’s deeply reflective and eloquent writings often provided profound and cogent insights on the scope of Vietnamese migration in Europe.

Together with her academic career, Teresa Halik was a wonderful daughter, wife and mother of two sons, always engaged in family life. She is remembered and loved by her friends and colleagues as a lively, joyful, optimistic person, full of positive energy and helpful.

Her absence will be felt not only by her friends, but also by the larger community in Vietnam and Poland. Dr Halik was a woman-institution, with an unusual competence in the area of Polish–Vietnamese relations. Her relationship with and understanding of the functioning of the Vietnamese community were profound, and she enjoyed huge authority among Vietnamese immigrants in Poland.

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Socialist Mobilities: Crossing New Terrains in Vietnamese Migration Histories

Christina Schwenkel*

This paper examines the waves of migration between Vietnam and fraternal socialist countries in the Eastern bloc from the 1950s until the collapse of the Soviet Union. Arguing for a collectivist migration framework, it compares and contrasts the various generations of architecture student migrants, their multidirectional movements, and, for most, their repatriation to Vietnam. There is no single uniform narrative of socialist mobility. Each wave was driven by different war and postwar exigencies, and the groups of migrants who left Vietnam confronted a range of unique challenges related to such factors as location, gender and assignment overseas (i.e. student or worker). This paper has two objectives: first, to decentre the West from hegemonic discussions of Vietnamese diasporas in order to advance a broader understanding of the historical development of overseas Vietnamese communities in what are now post-socialist countries; and second, to complicate the story of Vietnamese migrants in Central and Eastern Europe by arguing that past socialist mobilities are constitutive of much capitalist-driven migration today. An examination of different socialist migration trajectories and experiences of living overseas across generations provides important insights into how socioeconomic and political changes that came about in Vietnam with the fall of the Berlin Wall shaped the personal lives and professional futures of returnees and their kin. It also serves to bring the study of socialist migration histories more deeply into the epistemological and methodological fold of contemporary Vietnamese studies.

Keywords: Vietnam; socialist migration; architectural training; educational exchanges; international solidarity; Vietnamese studies

Vietnam in the world, the world in Vietnam

In February 2013, the scholar Anh Thang Dao commenced her talk at the University of California, Riverside entitled, *‘Vietnamese People Don’t Die’: Discourses about Undocumented Vietnamese Immigrants in Poland* with an off-the-cuff remark: *Yes, there are Vietnamese people in Poland*, she joked with a smile. Although the audience chuckled, Dr Dao, who spent several years in Poland in her youth and went on to receive her PhD from an American university, was right to assume that most of the US academics and scholars of Southeast Asia present in the room might not be privy to the Cold War history of ‘socialist mobilities,’ as

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I term them, that preceded the formation of vibrant Vietnamese communities beyond the Iron Curtain. Of course, for Central and Eastern Europeans, this observation is hardly new or extraordinary. It is also not wholly unknown to Western Europeans, despite their greater familiarity with Vietnamese diasporic groups whose radically different migration trajectories are more akin to those of the United States (refugees, mainly from the south). Especially for Europeans living close to the once heavily militarised border with the Eastern bloc, the visible presence of this *other* group of migrants, mainly from northern Vietnam, is hard to miss today. Crossing the former frontier between Bavaria (Germany) and Plzeň (Czech Republic) at Furth im Wald, for instance, one encounters an active border market catering for German shoppers run by Vietnamese traders. Their linguistic flexibility – shifting between Vietnamese, Czech and German with an occasional smattering of Russian or English – speaks to a dynamic, transnational history of migration and trade beyond and across former Cold War divisions. And certainly for visitors to Hanoi, it is impossible to ignore the influence that socialist-era circulations of people, goods and technologies have had on the Vietnamese landscape – from languages spoken to ‘friendship hospitals’ built to commodities produced, consumed and traded, many of them imported before the collapse of the Soviet Union, while others are produced with imported technologies for today’s emerging middle-class consumers.

As an anthropologist of Vietnam based in the United States researching the material, social and infrastructural legacies of transnational exchanges between East Germany (GDR) and Vietnam during and after the Vietnam War, I cannot help but ponder: where do socialist mobilities fit into epistemological frameworks and methodological practices for studying Vietnam and its diasporas? Why have such histories been overlooked in the rapidly expanding field of Vietnamese studies, especially as it continues to engage more critically with issues of transnationalism and with more complex and multifaceted notions of diaspora?¹ In the United States, literature on the Vietnamese diaspora focuses almost exclusively on Vietnamese Americans and their historical experiences of war, migration and resettlement. Perhaps this is to be expected, given the large numbers of Vietnamese who fled the south and settled in the United States (today totalling approximately 1.5 million). In other Western countries where Vietnamese refugees and migrants resettled, including France, Australia, Canada and West Germany, similar trends can be found among the respective populations.² And yet, this tendency to study Vietnamese settlements in one’s own society – even in ‘transnational’ form (i.e. including relations with the homeland) – risks reproducing the problem of methodological nationalism insofar as it naturalises the nation-state (or two of them, for that matter) as a standard and bounded unit of analysis (Wimmer, Glick Schiller 2003).³

In Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) where widely networked communities of overseas Vietnamese formed as a result of Cold War socialist (and post-socialist) mobilities, this methodological trend in the literature is also apparent.⁴ A critical factor in the fairly limited circulation of such research, including, as Dr Dao suggested, among US-based scholars, is language: most studies of the diaspora in the former Eastern bloc and Soviet Union are not published in English for an English-speaking readership (in and beyond the United States), and translations are not always forthcoming.⁵ On the other hand, those studies that *are* published in English appear more often than not in European studies or migration-focused journals (cf. Alamgir 2013, 2014; Hüwelmeier 2013a, 2013b; Zatlin 2007; Williams and Baláz 2005). Very few studies of overseas Vietnamese in CEE have been published in venues associated with Asian studies,⁶ and none to date has been published in the flagship *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*. A further important reason why scholars might not position their work in relation to the study of Vietnam is that their research on Vietnamese migrants is subsumed under broader comparative examination of ‘foreigners’ in a particular post-socialist country (cf. Dennis and LaPorte 2011; Iglicka 2008; Behrends, Lindenberger and Poutrus 2003). Nonetheless, it is disquieting that such work continues to exist outside the canon of Vietnamese studies despite a commitment to rethinking and broadening the field. Knowledge of the diaspora thus remains strikingly bifurcated along

a Cold War-inflected, East–West axis: while ‘transnational Vietnam’ addresses networked flows between Vietnam and the West (and, increasingly broader Asia), the former socialist East remains largely off the grid.⁷

The extraordinary events of 1989 radically altered the lives of tens of millions of people around the world. And yet a quarter-century after the collapse of the ideological and geographical border once known as the Iron Curtain, other kinds of epistemological barriers remain. This paper seeks to advocate a more truly global approach to studying and analysing the ‘Vietnamese diaspora,’ to include alternative pathways of migration and repatriation linked to socialist mobilities that were constituted through *multiple temporalities* (i.e. over several phases or for various periods of time) and transnational geographies beyond the hegemonic West. There is no uniform story to tell here; thus, I choose to use mobilities in the plural.⁸ I maintain that if we are to acquire a more complex understanding of Vietnam today – its socioeconomic and political transformations and its renewed relations, particularly with the West (including with refugees and migrants who fled after 1975), it is imperative that these voices – reflecting a range of social backgrounds – be heard. To do so would contribute to the unravelling of persistent binaries in knowledge of Vietnam’s global diaspora, while recognising the unique characteristics and historical conditions that led to the formation of vastly different communities across time and space (as well as political-ideological divisions). It would also reveal important points of intersection in networks of trade and sociality, frequently tied to kinship, that span much of the globe today and have contributed historically to the marketisation of Vietnam in the postwar years through Soviet goods and Western gifts sent back to the homeland to supplement shortages and improve low standards of living (Beresford, Đặng 2000: 76). Socialist mobilities are thus revealed to be the bedrock of many capitalist forms of contemporary mobility, especially across generations, as parents transfer their technical skills, social competencies, and cosmopolitan sensibilities, as well as their political connections, to their next of kin.

Waves of emigration from Vietnam over the 70 years that have passed since its declaration of independence from France on 2 September 1945 reflect specific geopolitical histories and geographies of power bound up with colonial, imperial and national projects of modern nation building. As international relations between countries fluctuate, so too do the flows and directions of migrants. During the Cold War, for instance, several hundred thousand Vietnamese went abroad to socialist countries in organised groups under solidarity agreements as workers, students, apprentices and trainees. The collectivist nature of these mobilities encourages us to think beyond migration as the individual (family-based), self-interested initiative that the literature tends to describe.⁹ The collapse of the Soviet Union, however, prompted the end of such programmes and the compulsory return of temporary migrants (though many chose to remain, if illegally). Likewise, the normalisation of diplomatic ties between the United States and Vietnam in 1995 has led to a gradual strengthening of social and economic relations between Vietnamese Americans and the homeland. The fear of return (and retaliation) that was once widespread is less tangible today as large numbers of overseas Vietnamese who fled the communist regime now travel back and forth with relative ease.

This paper focuses on socialist mobilities linked to higher education opportunities across three generations of students sent abroad to train and study between the 1950s and 1980s: postcolonial, wartime and postwar.¹⁰ Notions of *đi Tây* (going West) to study changed radically over the course of the war and postwar years as unofficial networks of transnational trade and informal markets in Vietnam offered new economic opportunities to students. Destination countries and educational programmes – which hinged closely on diplomatic relations – also changed over time.¹¹ Student migrants did not intend to stay overseas; on the contrary, they were sent abroad with the objective of returning and applying their expertise to rebuilding the war-torn homeland into a modern socialist nation-state. On the other hand, for advanced socialist countries, fellowship programmes under the banner of international solidarity were a means of displaying their intellectual

and technical superiority through the transfer of ideas, skills and technologies to newly independent socialist (and socialist-friendly) states in the Third World. On completion of their studies, graduates returned with professional experience, international knowledge and a global worldview, in addition to material goods (especially for the later generation) that transformed Vietnam's social, political and economic landscape. Many of these specialists from the earlier waves of socialist migrations are still in government positions today, though as I outline at the conclusion of this paper, their hold on power has waned with the rise of a younger generation trained abroad in a new knowledge economy that, in Vietnam, is likewise shaped by the mobilities of their predecessors.

Postcolonial mobilities: studying architecture in the Soviet Union

The establishment of official diplomatic relations between the Democratic Republic of (North) Vietnam (DRV) and the Soviet Union in January 1950 (and, weeks later in February, with the rest of the Eastern bloc) generated the first wave of socialist mobilities across Central and Eastern Europe. As the anti-colonial war against France came to a close, with victory achieved in May 1954, officials in Hanoi sent a first group of Vietnamese students overseas to train in technical fields identified as critical to the development of a modern and independent nation-state, including engineering, chemistry, physics, architecture, mathematics and aeronautics. Other groups of students soon followed. In 1955, a cohort of approximately 30 students left for the Soviet Union. This cohort included the first class of five students who were assigned to study at the Moscow Academy of Architecture, one of whom was 19-year-old Nguyễn Trục Luyện.¹²

Nguyễn Trục Luyện did not choose his field of study, nor did he select the academic institution that granted him the fellowship. Such decisions were made by the state according to rational calculations of the anticipated need for national reconstruction, which involved estimates of how many scientists and technicians were necessary and in which highly specialised fields. It was no accident that Mr Luyện was sent abroad to study architecture, however. His professional training would continue the legacy of his father, Nguyễn Cao Luyện (1907–1987), one of Vietnam's first and most prominent architects, known for his modernist, colonial-era villas across Hanoi, including what is today the Cuban Embassy at 65 Lý Thường Kiệt Street. Nguyễn Cao Luyện's training was the product of an entirely different knowledge economy from that of his son. Educated at the Indochina Art School under the French (L'École des Beaux-arts du Việt Nam), in 1933 he travelled to France to study with Le Corbusier and Auguste Perret. A year later he returned to Hanoi to co-found a private Vietnamese architectural firm at 42 Tràng Thi Street – the first of its kind in Hanoi (Đoàn 2008). That officials chose Trục Luyện to train in the same field as his father, a product of French education, demonstrates how the postcolonial state chose to build on the technological expertise of the colonial era to advance the cause of socialist nation building, rather than dismiss such knowledge legacies on ideological grounds.

When I asked Nguyễn Trục Luyện to reflect on the differences in the overseas training in architecture that he and his father received – Cao Luyện trained in 1930s Parisian internationalism and Trục Luyện in post-Stalin Soviet modernism – he suggested there were continuities and overlap in form, but differences in theory and application. *My father was trained in an era when architecture was used to serve individual interests, while in the USSR we were trained to apply architecture to the service of the people*, he explained. Nguyễn Cao Luyện, his father, went on to apply his valuable skills to serve the revolution, however. Through his architectural contributions to the anti-French resistance (designing the Việt Minh base at Việt Bắc, for instance) and to postcolonial nation building, he came to occupy a high position in both the Party and the government, as a member of the National Assembly and Deputy of the Ministry of Architecture. Nguyễn Trục Luyện was a beneficiary of his father's legacy, as was his own son who studied architecture in Moscow be-

fore the collapse of the Soviet Union, showing how socialist mobilities could continue across generations depending on one's professional and social standing. Though a family's political connections brought them many privileges, they were not enough to secure a fellowship to study abroad, I was often told by former students: both *ân nghĩa* (the state's gratitude for contribution to the revolution) and a strong academic performance were necessary. As Mr Luyện explained, *I was chosen not because of my lineage*, – which he admits was an advantage – *but because of my high grades in school*, showing how cultural and political capital worked in tandem to give certain students an advantage.

The early years of the postcolonial state saw an urgent need to expand the number of technical experts in the fields of architecture and city planning to assist in the project of socialist urbanisation. According to the architect and architectural historian, Đặng Thái Hoàng, there were fewer than a dozen skilled architects in Hanoi after independence, all of whom had been trained by the French.¹³ As such, students and trainees were sent overseas to architectural programmes across the Eastern bloc – including to Poland, Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria – as well as to China. Nguyễn Trục Luyện spent eight years in the Soviet Union, from 1955 to 1963. He remembers the time as one of exciting changes taking place in the arts and architecture following the death of Stalin two years earlier. After Mr Luyện's arrival in Moscow (by train from Hanoi through China and across Siberia), he spent a year in an intensive language programme before relocating to Leningrad for a year to study electrical engineering. He then returned to the Academy of Architecture in Moscow, where six years later he received his degree from the Department of Civil Architecture (*kiến trúc dân dụng*). Mr Luyện's programme of study focused on housing and public works (*nhà ở và công trình công cộng*). In the first two years, he took courses on the basics of architecture, including introductions to accounting, architectural theory and world architecture (with content on the United States and other capitalist countries). Over the next three years, he delved more deeply into the topic of public housing (*nhà ở công cộng*). With his cohort and professors, he visited cities around the USSR as examples of 'old' architecture and 'new' cities built after the war. Mr Luyện completed his coursework by the end of the fifth year. His last year was spent gaining practical experience as an intern at a state design agency while writing his graduation thesis.

Life in the USSR was challenging (only a decade after the end of the Second World War), but the former students I spoke with considered living conditions better than they were in Vietnam at the time. They also reported homesickness and crowded housing. Mr Luyện, for example, lived in a dormitory room at his academy with four other Soviet students. There were few international students at the time, so he learned the language quickly. His scholarship provided him with 50 rubles a month – enough to live on and, if frugal, to save between 5 and 7 rubles. He worked on a farm during the summer to earn extra money and his internship also provided him with a small grant. There were no informal networks of trade in Soviet and Vietnamese goods at the time; these developed much later. As Beresford and Đặng (2000: 74–75) have observed, students of this generation had limited resources (saving only a few rubles a month) and could only afford small-scale purchase of goods, largely for their own consumption back home. Mr Luyện's recollections confirmed this. Before returning home, he used his savings to purchase a bicycle, radio and sewing machine – three commodities students commonly shipped home for family use. When I asked Mr Luyện about the presence of a Vietnamese market in the Soviet Union while he was overseas, he laughed and shook his head: *Not yet. At that time there was no buôn bán (trading of goods); we were there only to study and learn.*

Like many of his generation who studied abroad, Nguyễn Trục Luyện aspired to return to Vietnam and apply his expertise to nation building – in his case, to designing new models of social housing. Yet, the knowledge and experience he brought with him proved difficult to apply. The subtropical climate in Hanoi differed greatly from that in Russia (affecting construction techniques and durability of materials), and economic conditions did not allow most of the principles of urban planning he had learnt to be implemented. There was simply not enough money to build high-quality public housing in integrated neighbourhoods (*mi-*

crorayon) based on the Soviet ideal of one family per unit (though this was an unrealised ideal for many in the USSR). Space was another critical issue. The criterion in the USSR was 9 square metres per person. This proved too high for Vietnam, where the goal was an average of 4 square metres, according to Luyện. In reality, living space per capita was frequently much lower, given that postcolonial dwellings in Hanoi were based on collective forms of housing, such as the Nguyễn Công Trứ blocks (considered modern for the time) or the colonial villas confiscated by the state and allocated to separate households, usually with one family per room.

Despite these challenges, this cohort of students returned to Vietnam to occupy coveted government positions in the 1960s as war with the United States loomed. When Mr Luyện arrived home in 1963, he was assigned to the Division of Civil Construction Design at the Ministry of Construction, a mid-level cadre position commensurate with his training. In 1967, he was promoted to Deputy Director of Design, remaining in this post until 1987. From 1983 he served concurrently as president of the Vietnamese Association of Architecture until his retirement in 2005. His successor, who is still in post, came from the next generation of architects who were trained overseas; in this case, in Cuba during the American War years.

Wartime mobilities: studying architecture in the GDR

Though the first cohorts of architects trained abroad returned to government jobs in a period of postwar renewal (*khôi phục*) that could use their expertise, they also returned to a divided country and an escalating war, this time with the United States. As bombing commenced in 1964, another generation of architecture students was preparing to travel overseas, also by train. Their numbers, however, far exceeded previous groups, as collaborative architectural programmes expanded to academic institutions in Cuba, Romania, Hungary, Albania, and, most influentially, the GDR. Because of mounting Sino-Soviet tensions, academic exchanges with China largely ceased at this time. Only the best and the brightest in the DRV, those students thought to emulate the progressive ideals of scientific socialism, were selected for overseas study; this was a great privilege (and a relief to their families), given the protracted war that raged on. The high death toll in Hanoi due to aerial attacks made overseas study highly desirable. Moreover, from the perspective of the state, it became imperative to train – as well as protect – a new generation of young professionals and future leaders who could return to the DRV to rebuild a unified country after the end of the war.

Mr *Trần Văn Lãng* was one of the more fortunate young people of his generation.¹⁴ Born in a border province in 1946, he did not come from a prominent family background as had Nguyễn Trục Luyện, but he proved to be a good student who worked hard and earned high grades at school. Due to his academic achievements, he was one of the few from his region selected for an overseas study programme. Mr Lãng reflected on the process that led to this golden opportunity: *While in theory, any good student could be chosen to go abroad, regardless of connections (quan hệ), the reality was that connections often played a role. But not always, and not in my case.* In an attempt to distribute opportunities for overseas studies more widely, the Ministry of Education awarded scholarships to promising students across the provinces of the DRV according to the number of students agreed with each Eastern bloc (or other) country. Similar to Mr Luyện's experience in the 1950s, students in the 1960s could not choose their field of study or which country they preferred. *The government decided one's destination*, Mr Lãng explained, switching from Vietnamese to German. As luck would have it, he was assigned to study in East Germany (a much coveted destination due to its perceived wealth).¹⁵ In 1966, he set off for the College of Architecture and Civil Engineering in Weimar (now Bauhaus University), where he remained until he received his diploma in 1972.

Like their predecessors, studies were the priority for this generation of student migrants. As the war back home intensified and casualties increased, students like Mr Lãng felt emotionally compelled to focus exclu-

sively on their university work. It was their duty, he explained, not only to the country, but also to friends who had stayed behind to risk their lives on the battlefield:

We understood that each of us had a different role to play in the war. We were all working for the revolution and for victory; we could never lose sight of this while abroad. We were being trained to be the future leaders, scientists and technicians of the country. Each person had something to contribute to the war effort. Those whose paths took them to the army knew that they had a different purpose to serve. This was the same for students who studied abroad.

Commitment to their studies was not only driven by a strong sense of solidarity with compatriots back home; it was also the directive of the state. Mr Binh, who was sent to the Soviet Union to study aeronautics, also emphasised studying as a duty during the war. Unlike Mr Lãng, Mr Binh came from a prominent line of Nghệ An revolutionaries and members of the Communist Party. The decision to send him overseas, he explained, had largely to do with the state's policy of *ân nghĩa*. Though he failed a college entrance exam in Hanoi, he was considered *ưu tiên đi nước ngoài* (priority to go overseas) because of his *lý lịch* (family background). Mr Binh took this opportunity seriously:

We were advised to study diligently and warned against going out to have fun (đi chơi) in public. The Vietnamese government did not want an image of its students enjoying themselves abroad while their schoolmates were dying on the battlefield. We were told that we would be sent home immediately if it seemed we were not serious enough about our studies.¹⁶

This was not an empty threat. Mr Binh related a story that circulated widely at the time about the daughter of Lê Duẩn, General Secretary of the Party, who was caught having an affair while studying in Moscow. She was promptly sent back to Vietnam, a signal to other students that unacceptable social, including sexual, behaviour – particularly for women – would be disciplined by the state. This urban tale carried much weight with Mr Binh, who feared being sent home and the shame it would bring to his family: *These orders [not to đi chơi] were applied even to the highest levels*. Thus, in the GDR, Mr Lãng – fearful of the watchful eyes of his fellow students who might report back to the embassy – was careful not to be seen too often in the presence of local students.

Since there was virtually no informal Vietnamese trade network at the time (this developed more extensively in the late 1970s and 1980s),¹⁷ there were few economic opportunities to distract students from their studies. Moreover, profiting from socialist mobilities during the war was likely to spark hostility back home. On their return, students had to be careful about displaying the material wealth and economic benefits of their studies abroad, few as they were. Like the previous generation, students received a monthly stipend from the government: Mr Lãng received 270 GDR marks per month. He recalled spending approximately 100 marks on food and 30 marks on housing (in a dormitory). He also put aside money regularly for clothing, supplies and other essential goods. The rest he saved, yet he dipped into his reserves to travel around the country on holidays (though he was not allowed to enter West Germany). Like Mr Luyện's generation, he earned extra money in the summer harvesting potatoes or strawberries. Yet he was able to save – and buy – much more than the previous generation. These were years of relative abundance in East Germany, and Mr Lãng recalled the ease with which he could buy an array of goods at the market, including salad, bananas and other foods imported from fraternal countries. At the end of his stay in 1972, he used his savings to purchase commodities to take back to Vietnam, including a radio, two bicycles and yards of fabric, all of which travelled with him on the train. Most items were kept for use in his family, with the exception of one bicycle and

some pieces of fabric, which he sold discreetly from his home to neighbours and relatives who heard he had returned and inquired about overseas goods for sale.

Like members of earlier cohorts, Mr Lãng returned to Vietnam to take up a position in the government. From 1972 to 1974, he worked at the Institute of Democratic Design under the Ministry of Construction in Hanoi. As Mr Luyên found, applying specialised knowledge acquired overseas proved challenging, but for other, more critical reasons. *Nobody listened to us*, an architect trained in the GDR in the same cohort at Mr Lãng opined. *This was a huge mistake on the part of the state. We talked and advised [how to rebuild the country], but in the end we were ordinary people with little worth, so nobody paid attention.*¹⁸ Frustrated, this architect eventually quit his government job and went on to become an independent consultant on international projects, a move that was initially seen as imprudent by his colleagues, but proved lucrative in the long run. Mr Lãng (who like this colleague was not a Party member) had a radically different career trajectory. In 1974, he was sent to Vinh City, Nghệ An, an industrial centre demolished in the war, to work with the provincial Department of Construction as the chief translator and contributing architect on the seven-year *Wiederaufbau* (reconstruction) project by East Germany (Schwenkel 2013a). Unlike his colleagues, Mr Lãng was thus able to put his technical and linguistic skills into practice, working closely with GDR advisers to redesign and rebuild the city. His academic training in the GDR proved indispensable, as it enabled him to culturally navigate and translate very different ideas of urban planning (Schwenkel 2015). As he reflected, this time contributed in unforeseen ways to the development of his career:

I didn't want to go. Nghệ An? I thought, oh god. But I was young and single and had just returned from my studies in architecture and civil engineering in the GDR. So I was sent to work on the reconstruction project. When I first arrived I was astonished by the extent of the destruction from the war – the city was hoàn toàn phẳng (completely flattened). At first, I lived in collective housing (khu tập thể) until I was allocated an apartment in Quang Trung [microrayon built by the GDR]. My income at the time was only 93 đồng. I never thought that I would spend the rest of my life here!

Lãng eventually married, and he continued to work for the Department of Construction until the Ministry of Labour selected him in 1987 to return to the GDR as a *Gruppenleiter* (group leader) for a Vietnamese labour unit in a textile factory in Pausa.¹⁹ He held this position until 1990, when the reunification of Germany brought his contract to an end. The opportunity to take up a three-year job overseas distinguished the second generation of students from the first. As the Vietnamese government negotiated a number of bilateral labour agreements with Soviet bloc countries in the 1980s (chiefly the USSR, the GDR, Czechoslovakia and Poland), trained professionals who spoke the language fluently and knew the culture intimately travelled back to their countries of study, this time by plane. A position as group leader proved to be fairly lucrative: Mr Lãng earned 850 GDR marks monthly, and needed only half that amount to live. By this time, an increase in the scale of socialist mobilities had facilitated the development of an extensive, informal trade economy between Asia and CEE as the number of Vietnamese workers and students travelling back and forth increased dramatically. Moreover, new policies allowed migrants to send goods home on a regular basis, and not just in their suitcases. Against this backdrop of new economic opportunities, Mr Lãng used his savings to send packages regularly to his family, with the intention of reselling the goods on the market – no longer only from his home. Socialist commodities soon flooded markets throughout Vietnam, mitigating shortages and helping to pull families with relatives overseas out of postwar poverty, while contributing to new forms of socioeconomic inequality between neighbours (Schwenkel 2014: 251–252).

The atmosphere in the GDR had changed significantly for Mr Lãng since the time of his studies, however. Everyday life had become more strained. Markets had a more limited selection of foodstuffs, compared to

the diversity he had enjoyed previously. The spirit of international solidarity, so strong during the war years, that had made him popular with local students and student organisations, had also diminished. Racism, as he experienced it, seemed to be on the rise as solidarity waned and competition for goods increased: for example, Mr Lãng recalled hearing the derogatory term '*Fidschis*' more often.²⁰ In general, growing resentment against foreigners was more tangible, particularly against the Vietnamese, whose transnational traffic in overseas goods was thought by GDR citizens to be contributing to their own mounting shortages (Zatlin 2007; Schwenkel 2014: 245–246).

Despite these growing difficulties, Mr Lãng focused on his job, which he and other group leaders described as stressful due to the constant negotiations between Vietnamese workers and GDR managers regarding illness, absenteeism, pregnancy, and complaints about taxes and the salary system. He continued to put money aside, diligently recording his monthly savings in a *Sparbuch* (savings account book). After the Berlin Wall fell and his contract was annulled, the Bundesrepublik provided him with 3 000 Deutschmarks (DM) and a return ticket home. Many of the workers in his unit chose to remain illegally. Mr Lãng used the collapse of the GDR to his economic advantage; for instance, he was able to profit when the East–West Mark exchange rate, in anticipation of reunification, dropped to 1:1 (from 5–10:1). Mr Lãng cashed in his savings at once: *When the rate changed, I converted all of my East Marks, and had a lot of money to bring back to Vietnam – almost 10 000 USD!* After returning, he invested this capital in land and construction materials, which were still difficult to acquire in Vinh at that time. He built a house and moved out of his apartment in the housing blocks soon after. For many of Mr Lãng's generation, the opportunity to first study overseas during the war and then work abroad (and engage in small-scale trade) provided access to a standard of living that had not been attainable by the first generation of Vietnamese students. The next generation, however, engaged in a range of tasks simultaneously – work, trade and study – that made overseas education even more lucrative.

Postwar mobilities: combining study with trade

By the time that Lê Quốc Huy²¹ travelled to Weimar in 1983 to study architecture at the College of Architecture and Civil Engineering, patterns of socialist mobility to and from the Eastern bloc had changed considerably. 'Mutual aid' labour agreements authorised a workforce of nearly 300 000 Vietnamese to go abroad in the 1980s (Tran et al. 2010: 21), as well as hundreds of translators and *Gruppenleiter* like Mr Lãng. A complex network of cross-border trade emerged, dominated by the Vietnamese. For students, the burgeoning black market offered a range of economic possibilities to supplement their low monthly stipends and to support needy families back home. Central planning and a subsidy system had inflicted severe hardship on the Vietnamese population in the postwar years. Shortages and hunger affected much of the nation. Involvement in overseas trade could potentially propel families out of poverty to a condition of relative prosperity, with imported goods resold on the black market in Vietnam, as the example of Mr Lãng's 'care packages' above showed. As informal marketisation moved into full swing in the socialist world, the era of total commitment to one's studies became a relic of the past.

The shift in priorities from education to trade has been noted in the literature. Beresford and Đặng (2000: 95), for instance, have observed that earlier generations of students *saw study as their main purpose, while getting rich was only incidental... [F]rom the mid-1980s, studying became the minor activity and a rather large number scarcely studied at all, but plunged straight into trading*. While certainly not true of all students, this pattern represents the *Geist* of the time, especially as employment prospects after return seemed less promising than before. Mr Lãng summed up the changed attitude of migrants that he witnessed over two generations of socialist mobilities: in the later years, going abroad meant '*mehr Sachen und mehr Geld*'

(more stuff and more money). Economic, rather than political connections (or, ideally, both) became a way for ‘ordinary people of little worth,’ as the disgruntled architect referred to himself, to secure upward mobility.

In the 1980s, there was less pressure from the state to publicly demonstrate student excellence than there had been during the French and American war years (that is, for both of the earlier generations). Rather, pressure now came from families to provide them with support, as contract workers with much higher earnings were doing. Yet monthly grants were not enough for students to save money and send regular packages of re-saleable goods home. Consequently, they found creative ways of supplementing their stipends by tapping into the trade networks that were developing around them. Nguyễn Thị Hoa,²² for example, studied veterinary medicine in the Soviet Union from 1981 to 1987. In her free time, she and her Vietnamese friends earned money by making clothes to sell to Russians on the black market. Gradually, they expanded their social networks to include other groups of Vietnamese migrants (workers) and began to participate in the transnational trade in blue jeans – a highly desirable commodity purchased in Thailand and shipped to Russia *via* Vietnam. With her additional earnings, Ms Hoa purchased a range of goods to send home to her family who, in turn, sold them for cash on the market. While her studies remained important, she was deeply committed to securing a decent living for her struggling family back home.

Unlike previous generations, student migrants in the 1980s returned to a radically different playing field after the introduction of economic reforms, referred to as *Đổi mới*, in 1986. As a result, many highly trained scientists and technicians came to occupy an intermediate position in society, betwixt and between two knowledge economies. The specialised training that Vietnamese students had received in a centrally planned system of socialist education was suddenly obsolete and deemed incompatible with a global market economy. Ms Hoa, for example, faced unemployment at home: the state had no use for her expertise in collective husbandry as cooperatives were dismantled and livestock returned to private family ownership. Her skills for building a modern socialist society had no place in a market-driven economy that failed to recognise her cultural capital and university degree (Schwenkel 2013b: 60). Lê Quốc Huy, on the other hand, who received his degree in architecture from Weimar, was more fortunate. He returned to a position at the University of Civil Engineering, where he continues to teach today. And yet, like Ms Hoa, who went on to work with international non-governmental organisations, Mr Huy expanded his profile to work with multilateral institutions, such as UNESCO, on urban conservation projects. While his training proved sufficiently flexible for him to update and apply his skills to new market trends (such as his current collaboration with German architects on green urbanisation), for Ms Hoa, her training proved largely useless. Indeed, unlike earlier cohorts of students trained abroad, few specialists of her generation, now middle aged, work in the fields in which they received their overseas qualifications.

Socialist and post-socialist mobilities: expanding Vietnamese diaspora studies

The three waves of student migrations outlined above – postcolonial, wartime and postwar – reveal subtle shifts in the historical conditions of socialist nation building and state formation following Vietnam’s independence from France through to the end of the Cold War. There were significant differences in the advantages of an overseas education for each generation of Vietnamese students. The first generation enjoyed sociopolitical stability (i.e. state employment) but generally lacked economic mobility. They did, however, attain some limited material gains over others because of the commodities they brought back for household use. Many in the second generation were able to achieve both sociopolitical stability and economic mobility, particularly for repeat migrants who travelled overseas again in higher management positions in the 1980s. The last generation experienced greater economic gains than they did sociopolitical mobility. As Vietnam’s

political economy transformed radically with *Đổi mới* and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the value of knowledge followed suit. The last generation of Vietnamese students in socialist countries felt these changes most acutely after they returned home to find their degrees devalued, with little relevance to a market-oriented society.

Over the past 25 years, Vietnam has seen broad changes in its patterns of student migration, with the internationalisation of its higher education system. The collectivist framework for such mobilities – from bilateral solidarity agreements to group travel and joint study – has largely disappeared, replaced by individual models of ‘choice.’ Scholarship opportunities in a market-driven economy have likewise shifted remarkably (now spanning Europe and Asia), as have the disciplines studied. Economics and international relations remain two of the most popular fields of study at home and abroad. Business administration degrees (including MBAs) have also risen to the top of the list. While the emphasis on ‘educational and cultural exchange’ remains the same (even the Fulbright programme uses this phrase), the ideological objectives underpinning international support have changed radically. Today, fellowships represent a way of training a new generation of Vietnamese professionals and upcoming leaders in the merits and workings of global capitalism, *not* socialist internationalism. In this era of *post*-socialist mobilities, families aspire to send their children to English-speaking countries like Australia, Singapore, the United States and the United Kingdom – often at their own expense. These returnees are slowly changing the political landscape of Vietnam as they move into state (and non-state) positions once occupied by cadres trained in the Soviet Union or elsewhere. English, not Russian, is now the international *lingua franca*.

There are certain continuities between socialist and post-socialist mobilities, however. While a post-reform knowledge economy has reconfigured education-based migration, it has done so by building on the legacies of mobilities in the socialist era. Shifts in international education are not about a rejection or abandonment of the past, which was also true for the postcolonial state building on its colonial knowledge foundation. On the contrary, for many young people, international education would not be possible without the skills, knowledge and credentials of their parents, which derive from their diverse experiences of studying (or working) in the Eastern bloc. Mr Dũng, for example, studied chemical engineering in East Germany from 1969 to 1975. He then returned to work as a *Gruppenleiter* in a tannery from 1987 to 1990. His daughter now studies architecture in Dresden, not far from his *alma mater* in Leipzig. Ms Vân, a former contract worker who married her East German supervisor, sent her two children to the United States. So did Mr Son, who received his degree in nuclear physics from Czechoslovakia. Likewise, Mr Minh, who studied economics in Kiev, sent his son to London to study finance. Most of these students received scholarships; their families would be considered middle class, but not wealthy. Yet their parents do have the advantage of a broader worldview and a cosmopolitan sensibility – social capital that allows their children to move across national and cultural borders with more ease. The integration of socialist mobilities into the broader canon of Vietnamese studies thus becomes essential to expanding the horizons of the discipline for it reveals a critical point of intersection in the histories of Vietnamese migration across the globe: the ways in which migrants and their families (including returnees) mobilise their economic and social resources to obtain better educational and professional opportunities for future generations.

Notes

¹ See, for example, 2013 (vol. 7, no. 3) special issue of the *Journal of Vietnamese Studies*: ‘Alternative Voices and Histories of the Vietnamese Diaspora.’

² Examples include Bui (2003) and Kien (2012) on Germany, Bousquet (1991) on France, Thomas (1999) and Carruthers (2008) on Australia, Dorais and Richard (2007) and Dorais (2009) on Canada.

³ As a result, movements between and among diasporic groups, where people, goods, ideas and technologies cross *multiply constituted borders* (national, cultural, political and economic), typically remain beyond the scope of most research identified as ‘transnational.’ For an exception, see Nyíri (2002).

⁴ Though this literature provides less of a postcolonial perspective than is found in Nguyen (2012) on the US and Kien (2012) on Germany.

⁵ For example, Teresa Halik’s (2006) major ten-year study of Vietnamese migrants in Poland.

⁶ For exceptions, see Hardy (2002) and Schwenkel (2014), neither of whom is based in CEE.

⁷ As do Vietnamese transnational engagements with socialist Africa and Latin America (namely, Cuba).

⁸ Socialist mobilities were also multidirectional, especially in the postwar years as technical experts from ‘fraternal’ socialist countries travelled to Vietnam to assist with postwar reconstruction (Schwenkel 2013a).

⁹ I thank the reviewer for encouraging me to develop this point.

¹⁰ Research for this paper was conducted in Hanoi and Vinh City in 2006 and from 2010 to 2012.

¹¹ For example, China played an important role in training young Vietnamese architects in the 1950s and 1960s until tensions with the Soviet Union (resulting in the Sino-Soviet split) mounted.

¹² This section is based on interviews with Nguyễn Trục Luyện in Hanoi in July and December 2011.

¹³ Interview with Đặng Thái Hoàng, June 2010, Hanoi; also cited in Logan (2000: 193).

¹⁴ A pseudonym. This section is based on interviews with Mr Lãng in Vinh City in 2006, 2010 and 2011.

¹⁵ On the GDR as a ‘paradise’ for Vietnamese students and migrant labourers, see Schwenkel (2014: 248).

¹⁶ Interview with Mr Bình, July 2011, Vinh City.

¹⁷ As Beresford and Đặng (2000: 75) observed, *Thus the Vietnamese market before 1975 was characterised by circulation, on an extremely limited scale, of goods brought home from the socialist countries in the baggage of individuals.*

¹⁸ Interview with architect, June 2012, Hanoi.

¹⁹ Group leaders were responsible for a working unit of Vietnamese labourers in an East German enterprise or factory. They served as a mediator between workers and management to translate, explain and implement labour policy and disciplinary measures, as well as assisting workers in times of need (such as illness). Lãng’s work unit began with 25 workers and increased to 60, one-third of whom were women. On Vietnamese contract workers in the GDR and their return to Vietnam, see Schwenkel (2014).

²⁰ Though it actually means ‘Fijians,’ the term was used as a racist epithet for Asians in the GDR.

²¹ A pseudonym.

²² A pseudonym.

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From 'Jarmark Europa' to 'Commodity City.' New Marketplaces, Post-Socialist Migrations, and Cultural Diversity in Central and Eastern Europe

Gertrud Hüwelmeier*

This article explores global bazaars run by migrants in Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries. Socialist and post-socialist mobilities have made a fundamental contribution to the establishment of new trading centres since the collapse of communism. Marketplaces change over time and are shaped by migration regimes, neo-liberalism and increasing cultural diversity. In bazaars we can study how diversity and economy mutually impact each other. I argue that post-socialist migrations have contributed to cultural diversity, thereby promoting the creation of new marketplaces, while everyday encounters in these localities result in conflict and/or solidarity among various groups. These processes are embedded in state regulations and are affected by the spatiality of bazaars in CEE urban surroundings. I conclude by focusing on religious diversity in the CEE bazaars, as cross-border religious practices not only help migrants to cope with social and economic hardships but also generate global interconnectedness.

Keywords: post-socialist migrations; markets; diversity; religious practices; transnational Vietnamese

Introduction

New migration trends have arisen in Central and Eastern European regions since the beginning of the 1990s. In particular, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, thousands of former contract workers and students in Central and Eastern Europe, many of them from the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, did not return to their home countries but became successful entrepreneurs in the respective host societies. Local markets and global bazaars, increasingly composed of diverse peoples, engage in cross-border business and play key roles in post-socialist economic development, while transnationally linking a variety of geographical and socio-cultural spaces. In this article I focus on global bazaars to investigate fundamental issues about the relationship between migration, economy and society in CEE countries.

Marketplaces change over time and are shaped by migration regimes, neo-liberalism and increasing cultural diversity. Bazaars are perfect places to study how diversity and the economy mutually impact each other and where the economic and social ties of migrants from former socialist countries may be observed. I argue that socialist and post-socialist migrations have contributed to cultural diversity, which in turn has

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promoted the creation of new marketplaces, while everyday encounters in these localities result in conflict and/or solidarity among various groups. These processes are embedded in state regulations and are affected by the spatiality of bazaars in CEE urban surroundings. As religion plays a crucial role in dealing with social and economic hardship in the diaspora, I conclude by focusing on the performance of religious practices in CEE marketplaces.

This article, which is based on ethnographic fieldwork in February and March 2012 in a new global trading centre in Wólka Kosowska, Warsaw, addresses questions of socialist and post-socialist pathways of migration and the maintenance of transnational social, economic and religious ties after socialism. Fieldwork in 'Commodity City' included visits to the marketplace, informal interviews with locals, traders and clients, encounters with market management, a visit to the newly opened kindergarten within the market's grounds, an interview with the government's foreign affairs representative in Wólka Kosowska, meetings with religious experts in a nearby pagoda, and invitations to dinner in the homes of some of the traders. In addition, I visited other markets in Warsaw, including the site of the 'Jarmark Europa' bazaar, demolished in 2008, and the former stadium that was still under construction in preparation for the European soccer championship in summer 2012. I conducted fieldwork with the help of a Polish and a Vietnamese research assistant. Throughout this article, I also draw on some of my findings in multi-ethnic bazaars in the eastern part of Berlin and in Prague, where I also carried out fieldwork.¹ Like 'Commodity City,' these places are run by transnational Vietnamese and migrants from other countries and are thus nodes of encounter and intercultural relationships.

Markets and diversity

Marketplaces, and global trading centres and bazaars in particular, are sites of exchange in which the social, cultural, political and economic aspects of everyday life and the transnational ties of people impact on the encounters between various groups, such as migrants, locals, clients, traders and political authorities. There is a whole range of different markets across various countries, including night markets, street markets, periodic markets and global trading centres. The present article focuses on multi-ethnic bazaars in CEE countries, both because they spread after the collapse of communism and because they form a microcosm of a set of processes and practices that have not yet been sufficiently researched.

As many scholars have highlighted, markets already existed in the communist economy and thus were important places for the distribution of goods (Hann and Hann 1992 on border markets in Turkey; Sik, Wallace 1999; Nyiri 2007 on Chinese bazaars in Budapest; Marcińczak and van der Velde 2008 on bazaars in Poland). However, most of these were open-air markets (OAMs) where regulation was weak and where profit-making occurred through both legal and illegal activities, including pick-pocketing, speculation and the resale of stolen or smuggled goods. *As a consequence, OAMs in the communist economy were continually under the threat of police raids or – at best – tolerated as suspicious but irrelevant distortions of the production and distribution system* (Sik, Wallace 1999: 697). After the collapse of communism, some of these markets were transformed into more formal places, with territory that was bought by foreign investors. Generally a market's management is responsible for the private locality and local authorities attempt careful monitoring of the space (Hüwelmeier 2013b).

Markets are places of many kinds of interaction and intersection. They are not just the places where traders meet clients, but localities where many people with different interests and backgrounds come together. Drawing on recent conceptual debates surrounding markets and diversity (Hiebert, Rath, Vertovec 2014) I outline several characteristics of everyday life in global bazaars that deserve more detailed scrutiny. First, most entrepreneurs in the markets I studied did not have any formal training before they started their busi-

ness. Nearly all had come from different countries and a majority had migration experiences before they started engaging in trading. Second, very often, traders do not have full command of the local language and therefore hire local residents. Third, unlike in street markets, traders have to pay high rents to obtain a permit to sell goods in a particular place such as in a global trading centre or a wholesale market. The markets I studied in CEE countries, such as the *Dong Xuan* Centre in the eastern part of Berlin (Hüwelmeier 2013b) and the *Sapa* market in Prague (Hüwelmeier, in press) are, like ‘Commodity City’ in Warsaw and a migrant-run market in Bratislava (Hlinčíková, in this volume), the most diverse parts of the cities. At the same time, as people with various backgrounds may live different and separate everyday lives in their respective host cities, markets are localities where they come together, bargain, eat and drink. Markets are nodes of social and economic encounter, where locals and non-locals interact in various ways. Therefore, diversity is a matter of *configurations of co-present ethnicities, cultures, languages and religions* (Hiebert, Rath, Vertovec 2014: 3) and, in addition, includes other variables such as legal status, gender and class (Vertovec 2007) that cannot all be addressed in this contribution.

In the following, questions include the impact of diversity on the establishment and operation of post-socialist bazaars. In particular, I ask whether bazaars play a role in learning how to coexist across differences, how engagement in markets influences inter-group relationships in the long run, and whether markets contribute to changing cultural landscapes in urban and suburban spaces. As the establishment of the *Jarmark Europa* in Warsaw is a result of the collapse of communism and closely connected with the growing complexity of global migration, the following section draws on socialist pathways of migration with a focus on Vietnamese in Poland and other CEE countries. I continue by analysing the creation of transnational social and economic ties after the fall of communism by focusing on Vietnamese in CEE countries, their work lives in global bazaars and their encounters with other ethnic groups and locals. In the last section I point to Vietnamese’s transnational religious practices in Poland, as these are important for economic success and thus closely connected to bazaar life.

Socialist migrations and post-socialist mobilities – Vietnam’s many diasporas

Central Europe has a long tradition of migration, predominantly from East to West, starting from the mid-nineteenth century. After the Second World War more than 15 million people were displaced, among them 12 million ethnic Germans. Due to the Cold War separation, about 14 million people left for the West (Wallace, Stola 2001: 13–14). During the socialist period, international migration in CEE was tightly controlled, with exceptions for politically motivated emigration from Hungary, the former Czechoslovakia and Poland. Migrant workers generally came within the framework of the COMECON, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Okólski 1998). This economic organisation under the leadership of the Soviet Union included countries of the Eastern Bloc and a number of socialist states elsewhere. However, beginning in the 1980s, short-term commuting and suitcase trading was carried out by many people from various CEE countries working in Greece, for example, and included, among others, Romanians, Ukrainians and Moldavians travelling between Italy and their own country, Russians visiting the bazaar in Istanbul, Ukrainians and Byelorussians in Poland, and various groups of migrants working in the informal labour market (Sword 1999). Such movements *are historically rooted in patterns of mobility in the COMECON space even before 1989* (Morokvasic 2004: 10). These mobilities are also true for Vietnamese, many of whom came to Eastern European countries on student exchange programmes from the 1960s on and were part of what I have termed ‘socialist pathways of migration’ (Hüwelmeier 2011; in press).

As we have seen, a considerable number of Vietnamese migrated to socialist countries from the 1950s onwards as students, contract workers or experts providing expertise in such fields as science and industry,

as some did in Africa. They are therefore part of the global or ‘international socialist ecumene’ to be understood as imaginations of a *worldwide fraternal community forged by both states and individuals on the basis of enduring revolutionary solidarities and socialist ‘friendships’* (Bayly 2009: 126). At present an ‘enduring socialism,’ as West and Raman (2009) have called ongoing processes exists in a number of these countries due to former ties of ‘friendship’ among socialist states. To date, little is known about Vietnam’s many diasporas in CEE countries, the social, economic and religious ties of migrants and their ‘socialist pathways of migration’ (Hüwelmeier 2013b: 52). While tens of thousands of people from Vietnam arrived in the eastern part of Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia and other destinations such as Budapest and Moscow before 1990, students and contract workers alike, ethnographic studies about their everyday lives, migration experiences and transnational connections are still rare.

Therefore, in the following, I will briefly consider various groups of Vietnamese arriving in former socialist countries at different times. As much of the current discourse still refers to ‘the’ Vietnamese community in socialist countries, a term that assumes there is a single homogeneous group of Vietnamese with one distinctive culture, it is now time to refine the research lens to take into account the diverse groups of people from Vietnam who entered socialist countries at different times, with different objectives and in different places. Moreover, and this is important with regard to cultural diversity in the marketplaces that will be discussed below, Vietnamese from various regions in the country of origin, with different migration experiences, legal statuses and class background, meet other Vietnamese from different regions in Vietnam and migrants from various parts of the world. Hence, to begin with, it is important to look at the overall dispersion of Vietnamese worldwide in order to draw attention to Vietnam’s many diasporas.

During the second half of the 1990s an estimated 2.3 million Vietnamese were living outside their home country – around 1 million in the US, 300 000 in France, 200 000 in Australia, 150 000 in Canada and 115 000 in Germany, among others. There were different groups and different waves of Vietnamese refugees leaving Vietnam after the end of the war in 1975 (Baumann 2000: 38; Hüwelmeier 2008: 133; 2014; in press). At the end of the 1970s, the West German government (Federal Republic of Germany) declared its acceptance of a contingent of 10 000 refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. That same year, 1979, the contingent was increased to 20 000 and up to 1984 as many as 38 000 people from Indo-China had migrated to the Federal Republic of Germany, the majority of the refugees coming from South Vietnam.

Compared to the situation of the ‘boat people’ in the western part of Germany, the living and working conditions of the Vietnamese ‘contract workers’ in former East Germany were quite different. Starting in the 1950s, students from North Vietnam came to live in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the socialist ‘brotherland.’ Between 1966 and 1986, 13 000 Vietnamese students and experts were trained in the former GDR. From the 1980s on, on the basis of contracts between the socialist GDR and socialist Vietnam, tens of thousands of Vietnamese migrants, most of them from North Vietnam, came to live and work in East Germany. Many former Vietnamese who had studied in the GDR in the late 1960s and 1970s returned to East Germany to work as interpreters for the tens of thousands of contract workers from Vietnam. They stayed for four or five years and eventually went back to their home country. Incorporation into the host society was not expected. Thousands of Vietnamese who arrived in CEE countries, including the GDR, in the late 1980s as contract workers did not return to Vietnam, but stayed in the reunified Germany and many became successful entrepreneurs. Some of them established close business connections with wholesale centres in Poland and other parts of the post-socialist world, run by Vietnamese, Chinese and other migrants. And many heard about *Jarmark Europa* in the Warsaw stadium in the 1990s and early 2000s.

After 1989, new migration trends arose in CEE countries, and population movements, documented and undocumented, substantially increased. Many people arrived from as far afield as India, China and Vietnam due to growing economies. In addition to the diversification of migrant groups, there was also a diversifica-

tion of economic and political developments in various CEE countries. Migration scholars have drawn attention to the fact that until the beginning of the 1990s Poland did not accept foreign migrants (Okólski 2000). However, Poland became a country of transit migration and a whole range of 'illegal migration' strategies (Okólski 2000), in particular due to its location as an immediate neighbour of Germany, the most desired destination in Europe (Iglicka, Sword 1999; Okólski 2000: 60). Insofar as people from Vietnam were involved in trafficking migrants, there were indications of *semi-slave work at final destination to repay the 'debt'* (Okólski 2000: 62). With regard to Poland as ultimate destination, *migrants originate mostly from Vietnam (ibidem: 63)*. In addition to Vietnamese migrants coming directly from Vietnam to Poland, a number of Vietnamese citizens also entered Poland from Germany. These migrants had been contract workers in the now no longer existent GDR and were threatened with deportation to Vietnam. This group of Vietnamese from Germany was not legally allowed to enter Poland, nor were they legally allowed to work there (*ibidem: 64*).

Migration scholars largely accept that migrants tend to maintain a certain degree of attachment to their home countries. However, a number of studies still focus on issues such as integration or adaptation to the host country, in particular when it comes to the economic situation of Vietnamese people in CEE countries (Szymańska-Matusiewicz 2014). While the 'integration' and 'assimilation' debate is still very prominent in many policy-oriented studies, which often focus on one or several particular minority ethnic groups, there is a need to think beyond the ethnic lens (Glick Schiller, Caglar Guldbrandsen 2006) and to be aware of methodological nationalism (Wimmer 2009). This does not mean no longer studying single ethnic groups, but consciously taking into account the manifold relationships migrants create with their co-ethnics, with other migrants in and outside the host country, and with locals. Focusing on ethnic and cultural diversity and asking where and how people from various countries live and work together poses new challenges to anthropology and related disciplines. Taking a transnational perspective, exploring shifting boundaries and cross-border practices that are very much part of the everyday lives of migrants enriches our understanding of processes of migration. When the nation-state is no longer conceived of as the container model of society (although it will remain very powerful), research on migration will become more significant. By following the people, the goods, the ideas and the money across borders (Appadurai 1996) social scientists have been exploring the everyday lives of mobile people and their manifold transregional ties for about 20 years. As long ago as the early 1990s American scholars developed the idea of transmigrants, creating and maintaining *multiple relations – familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political that span borders. Transmigrants take action, make decisions, and feel concerns, and develop identities within social networks that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously* (Glick Schiller *et al.* 1992: 1–2). Taking into account theoretical approaches to transnationalism (Levitt, Glick Schiller 2004) and cosmopolitanism (Hannerz 1990), I have argued elsewhere for the concept of 'socialist cosmopolitanism' (Hüwelmeier 2011) in order to better understand the creation and maintenance of Vietnamese cross-border ties during the Cold War period. However, migration was not just unidirectional. For example, a group of East German architects became transmigrants as well, living in Vietnam for some years while constructing a socialist city after the American War in Vietnam (Schwenkel 2012). Thus, the analysis of cultural and political encounters in the Cold War period contributes to our understanding of 'socialist transnationalism.'

Although immigration to Poland, at least from the 1960s until the beginning of the 1990s, was statistically not significant (Iglicka 2000: 1243), government-sponsored programmes of 'socialist cooperation' with Vietnam generated a movement of students from that country with long-term consequences. The academic exchange programmes encouraged young Vietnamese to graduate in Poland and, like Vietnamese students who arrived in the GDR or in Czechoslovakia in the socialist period, many of them held important positions in their country of origin after their return. In Poland, 'the majority' of Vietnamese students (Iglicka 2000:

1245) went back to Vietnam. However, according to Ewa Nowicka (in this volume), some of them did not return to Vietnam, contrary to instructions from the communist authorities of their country. From the 1970s to the mid-1980s, about 200 students from Vietnam arrived in Poland every year, and, due to state policy, most of them returned to Vietnam after completing their degrees. In the 1990s, some of these Vietnamese returned to Poland, and from that time on, complex migration networks were established with subsequent migration from Vietnam (Halik 2000; 2001). There were no bilateral agreements about the sending of contract workers from Vietnam to Poland until the end of communism, but agreements were signed between the GDR and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (Hüwelmeier 2014), and between Czechoslovakia and Vietnam (Hlinčíková, in this volume; Hüwelmeier, in press). An estimated up to 35 000 Vietnamese are living in Poland and of these, according to the Office for Foreigners, 11 696 do have residence permits. Between 1994 and 2001, between 3 000 and 7 000 Vietnamese arrived in Poland every year (Szymańska-Matusiewicz 2014). However, due to ‘socialist internationalism,’ migration from Vietnam to Poland had started decades before (Szulecka 2012: 169) and probably some of the former students were among those who returned to Poland in the 1990s.

After 1989 an increasing number of Vietnamese citizens applied for work-permit visas, and therefore came legally to Poland (Iglicka 2000: 1248; Iglicka 2001a). By 1996 they were the second-largest group (after Ukrainians) by number of visas with work permit granted and since 1997 Vietnamese have been the largest. Those Vietnamese who came as non-documented migrants legalised their stay through marriage with a Polish citizen or applied for a permanent residence permit. At the end of 1995, according to sources from the Office for Repatriation and Foreigners in Poland, Vietnamese were the third-largest group of immigrants receiving residence permits, and from 1996 until mid-1999 they were the second-largest group (Iglicka 2000).

From *Jarmark Europa* to Commodity City²

Vietnamese represent the biggest immigrant group in Warsaw (Górny, Grabowska-Lusińska, Lesińska, Okólski 2010: 157) and have transformed *the urban space by rendering it conspicuously multicultural* (Piekut 2012: 209). One of the reasons why Vietnamese and other migrant groups became economically successful was the establishment of a huge market in Poland’s capital. The *Jarmark Europa* in the Warsaw stadium was one of the first huge markets created in an East European city after the fall of the Berlin Wall. It provided employment for more than 6 500 people, about 3 000 of them considered to be foreigners (Iglicka 2001b). Moreover, about 60 000 people found work linked to bazaar activities, such as in factories producing goods for trading (Okólski 1998: 16). Many of those who later became successful entrepreneurs had their first experiences of trading in this place (Sword 1999). Bazaars of this type exist in many CEE countries. In Warsaw, the *Jarmark Europa* near the city centre (called ‘stadium’ in the vernacular), Europe’s biggest bazaar, was the melting pot of the city: Vietnamese, Poles, Russians and others sold goods in this market after the breakdown of the socialist economy, yet Africans, Chinese, Indians and Central Asians were also among the traders. The place was built between 1953 and 1955; its name, 10th Anniversary Stadium, refers to the then ten years of the existence of the Republic of Poland. In the 1980s it lost its significance as a sports centre and after 1989, the government rented the stadium to a company which ran the *Jarmark Europa*, visited by 100 000 people every day (Sulima 2012: 241). This trading location has since been transferred to the suburbs, as the Stadium bazaar was demolished in 2008 to make way for a new stadium for the European soccer championship of 2012, hosted by Poland and the Ukraine. Some years before the demolition, Chinese, Vietnamese and Turkish investors purchased huge areas of land in a small village about 30 kilometres south of Warsaw, in Wólka Kosowska, literally ‘on the meadows,’ but with excellent access by road to other regions

and countries. The investors established new global trade centres, with about 2 000 stores (for a detailed description see Klorek and Szulecka 2013).

Whether the *Jarmark Europa* was originally established by members of the ‘Vietnamese intelligentsia,’ university graduates and doctoral students who had been living in Poland in the socialist period and who in the early 1990s saw an opportunity to make some easy money from street trading, is not yet clear. During my fieldwork in Wólka Kosowska, Vietnamese people told a somewhat different story. Some female Vietnamese traders in today’s huge bazaar in Wólka Kosowska claimed to be the first to have started *Jarmark Europa*. According to their narratives, a group of several hundred women arrived in Poland from Vietnam in the year 1989 to work in the garment industry in Łódź. Although there were no Vietnamese contract workers in Poland before 1989, as there were no contracts at state level, Mrs Ha, one of my informants in Wólka Kosowska, reported that about 300 Vietnamese came to Łódź shortly before the fall of the Berlin Wall under a private agreement between two companies in Poland and Vietnam. As these women had rapidly established production and trading networks in the textile industry, they quickly moved to Warsaw after the collapse of communism, appropriating public space in the former stadium, together with some successful Chinese traders.

Jarmark Europa soon became a multicultural site in the middle of the post-communist city of Warsaw, attracting thousands of vendors and customers as well as tourists, and becoming known as Europe’s largest open-air market. Thousands of traders sold pirated CDs, T-shirts, video tapes and even weapons. Minze Tummenscheit’s movie *Jarmark Europa*, first screened at the Berlin international film festival in 2004, illustrated some of the results of the eastward enlargement of the EU in 2004 from the perspective of those who remained outside. Many female traders also came from various parts of the former Soviet Union, travelling long distances as suitcase traders to transport their goods to Warsaw. Called *tschelnoki* in Russian, they embarked on a mobile existence between home town and bazaar; many were academics on low salaries who decided to become small-time traders, others were retired or unemployed. Some of the female traders travelled as far as 700 kilometres, for example from Penza, southeast of Moscow; or from Brest, the border city between Poland and Belarus. As these cases illustrate, gender issues are of great importance in researching processes of economic integration (Kindler, Szulecka 2013). Women who became traders in post-socialist bazaars (Hüwelmeier 2013a) created ‘transnational spaces of empowerment and agency’ (Morokvasic 2004: 19).

Transnational ties were maintained by a multitude of agents; the multi-ethnic dimension of global post-socialist bazaars is thus of special interest. ‘Commodity City,’ which replaced *Jarmark Europa*, hosts traders from various world regions and is run by Vietnamese, Chinese and Turks. Similarly, Prague’s *Sapa* market, run by Vietnamese, includes many wholesalers from various other countries (Hüwelmeier, in press). In Berlin, the *Dong Xuan* Centre, a global bazaar in the eastern part of the city, is run by Vietnamese and accommodates traders from India, Pakistan, China and many other countries (Hüwelmeier 2013b). These places are all characterised by ethnic and religious diversity, with occasional mutual animosities on the one hand, and solidarities on the other hand, according to the local, regional or global issues. Tensions and conflicts, even protests and strikes within marketplaces challenge the somewhat exotic image of these localities, and this is particularly true in regard to ‘ethnic’ conflicts.

In ‘Commodity City’ in Wólka Kosowska, friction between Chinese and Vietnamese flared when the Chinese management of one of the three huge bazaars in this locality raised the stall rents, leading to organised protests in 2009, 2010 and 2011 by market traders, and even a one-day strike. On that day, Polish, Turkish, Vietnamese and some Chinese traders blocked the main road to the wholesale area. Security guards financed by the Chinese management used batons and tear gas to break up the demonstration. The protest highlighted the fact that migrants from various backgrounds are willing to gather collectively in a host coun-

try to protest against unjust rent increases by the management. Issues such as power and class are also highlighted: different status groups such as the Chinese management on the one hand and a multi-ethnic group of traders on the other hand do not share the same interests. This is also true of new protests: in July 2012 a strike was organised by Vietnamese stall holders against the Vietnamese board of one of the bazaars in Wólka Kosowska, whose managers were planning not only to raise rents but also to demand a new deposit (Klorek, Szulecka 2013: 16).

Similarly to markets in Berlin and Prague, in Commodity City, the Vietnamese employ not only their co-ethnics, but also local people. For example, Vietnamese traders hire Polish shop assistants from the nearby villages. Relations between village people and foreigners seem to be quite relaxed, as I was told by some of the traders and by the local representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Wólka Kosowska, who reported that even marriages between villagers and Vietnamese had taken place. A number of Vietnamese families have settled in Wólka Kosowska or nearby villages, and their children attend the local kindergarten and school. However, according to a report on the 'migrant economic institution' in Wólka Kosowska, there are also negative voices from Poles regarding the presence of 'foreigners' (Klorek, Szulecka 2013: 26).

Recent transborder mobilities include not only new migrants, particularly from the centre of Vietnam to CEE countries, but also Vietnamese who had been living in the Czech Republic and then moved to Poland, as trading conditions had been poor in recent years. Due to intra-EU mobility, *in the year 2009, 69 out of 71 Vietnamese arriving to Poland from other EU countries were former residents of the Czech Republic* (Szymańska-Matusiewicz 2014: 5). This information accords with the experiences of some of the traders I met in the bazaar in 'Commodity City.' After business deteriorated at the Czech border – not least due to new border politics following the accession of the Czech Republic to the Schengen area in 2007 – a number of Czech Vietnamese decided to live in Poland and to work as shop assistants in the bazaars. As these cases illustrate, the nation-state remains important in the decision-making processes of migrants involved in trading (Iglicka 2008). To ward off bad luck and economic failure, many Vietnamese turn to religious practices to be blessed by the spirits.

A Ho Chi Minh shrine in the bazaar pagoda

Like many other migrants in the global world, Vietnamese transfer their religious practices across borders (Hüwelmeier, Krause 2010; Hüwelmeier 2015b). Temples and pagodas are established in post-socialist diasporas (Hüwelmeier 2013a), and small altars are erected in the traders' places of business to ask spirits and gods for protection. In some of the stores in Wólka Kosowska, as in Vietnamese shops in the *Dong Xuan* Centre in Berlin and in the *Sapa* market in Prague, the visitor will recognise small altars – normally placed near the till or the entrance – where the spirit of the place (*ong tho dia*) and the spirit of wealth (*ong than tai*) are venerated (Hüwelmeier 2008: 140). In addition to these popular religious practices, parts of the Vietnamese community in Warsaw established a Buddhist pagoda and a 'house of culture' near *Jarmark Europa* in the 1990s, in an area rented by a Vietnamese businessman very close to the river Vistula, where many of the retailers left their goods in small storerooms and containers. After the demolition of *Jarmark Europa*, the area was abandoned. In March 2012 I visited this desolate place near the newly built stadium. This urban space looked like a kind of ghost town, where the ruins of the pagoda and the 'house of culture' could still be seen, just two minutes' walk from the most famous new soccer stadium in the city of Warsaw.

After the demolition of the stadium, a Buddhist lay group started thinking about a new place for a pagoda. In 2012 they bought a plot of land, a meadow with a barn on it, close to the new Commodity City and therefore near the multi-ethnic market in Wólka Kosowska. The barn was transformed into a religious place and a group of elders, according to my interviewees, took care of the Buddhist statues which were transported

from the very first pagoda to the barn after the demolition of the stadium. When I visited the ‘barn pagoda’ in 2012, I talked to a monk from Vietnam and the chairman of the Buddhist Vietnamese community. The chairman told me that a new pagoda is planned for the meadow near the barn, but the congregation was still waiting for more donations and for permission from the authorities to construct the building. Plans of the new pagoda, designed by a Vietnamese architect, were prominently displayed, together with photos from the inauguration ceremony of the temporary barn pagoda. The monk from Vietnam was also travelling to other Vietnamese Buddhist pagodas in Eastern European countries, such as Berlin, Dresden and Prague. That way he was creating and maintaining transnational religious ties, connecting people and places (Hüwelmeier 2013a). During our encounter, which took place in the barn pagoda, a group of about 30 Vietnamese women, most of them traders from the Wólka Kosowska bazaar, were sitting on the floor, waiting for the monk to continue the religious ritual.

In March 2014, as part of the Global Vietnamese Diaspora pre-conference programme in Warsaw, I had the chance to revisit this place. A bus tour was organised by the conference planning group to places where Vietnamese were trading, among them Wólka Kosowska. We also visited two new places of worship near Commodity City. One was the newly established pagoda on the site of the barn pagoda that I had visited two years before. It had been renamed *Chua Nhan Hoa* and was at the bare brickwork stage, while the community was still waiting for more donations, as the chairman, whom I had also first met two years previously, told me. They had already spent 2 million US dollars on the purchase of the plot of land and the partial construction of a new two-storey building. A monk from Vietnam was still living in the barn and the religious ceremonies were being performed in the makeshift place. After having been invited for a cup of tea, fruit and cookies, and having taken photos from a shrine dedicated to recently deceased Vo Nguyen Giap (in October 2013), who was a General in the Vietnam People’s Army and a politician, the group left for the second pagoda.

Unlike the *Chua Nhan Hoa* barn pagoda, the second place, called *Chua Thien Phuc*, was already fully functioning as a ‘proper’ pagoda. In an ordinary family house at the margins of a village, some kilometres away from the first pagoda, about 20 members of the lay community received the group of scholars warmly. The owner of the place, absent during our visit, is a Vietnamese who had established the very first pagoda, *Chua Thien Viet*, and House of Culture near the Stadium bazaar in the 1990s. After the demolition of the stadium he became bankrupt and returned to Vietnam, according to rumours within the Vietnamese community. However, it seems that he had come back to Poland again. I was told that his daughter died recently and he donated this place in her memory and transformed it into the *Chua Thien Phuc* pagoda.

After lighting incense in front of the Buddha altar on the first floor, we were taken to the garden, where we gazed at the altar of the *hung kings* as well as the adjacent altar for Ho Chi Minh in one of the two garden houses. In Vietnam, the *hung kings* are celebrated as the religious and political leaders until 258 BC, ruling an area of what is now North Vietnam and part of southern China. Every year, high-ranking politicians visit the temples of the *hung kings*, about 80 kilometres from Hanoi, to pay their respects to the ancestors and founders of the Vietnamese nation (Lauser 2008: 148). As recently as 2007 the Vietnamese government announced a new public holiday to celebrate the *hung kings* and to express gratitude to the ancestors of the Vietnamese people. Seeing an altar dedicated to the *hung kings* in Poland came as something of a surprise for most members of the group, as the non-Polish scholars attending the conference had never seen such a shrine in the post-socialist world before. In the same garden house an altar is dedicated to ‘Uncle Ho,’ as Vietnam’s revolutionary leader Ho Chi Minh is called by many Vietnamese. Flowers had been laid on his altar, and incense burnt as our group arrived. Particularly impressive was a larger-than-life statue of the prime minister (1945–1955) and president (1945–1969) of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam) erected in the garden of the pagoda at the edge of a remote village about 20 kilometres from Poland’s capital. Ho Chi

Minh in fact visited Poland in 1957, but it has taken many decades for the spirit of Uncle Ho to truly arrive in this former ‘socialist brotherland.’

A highlight of our visit to the *Chua Thien Phuc* pagoda was the performance of a *len dong* spirit possession ritual, or to use the term currently preferred, a *hau dong* (Endres 2011: 13) ceremony in a second garden house, where a temple dedicated to the mother goddesses, was established. The religion of the mother goddesses, *Dao Mau*, and its accompanying spirit possession ritual *len dong* (mounting the medium) or *hau dong* (a medium’s service) was long considered superstition by the Vietnamese government. However, it is now tolerated in contemporary Vietnam and even performed in the US Vietnamese diaspora (Fjelstad 2010; Fjelstad, Thi Hien Nguyen 2011). During my fieldwork trips to Hanoi over the past few years, I have taken part in a number of *len dong* ceremonies, which sometimes last up to ten hours. These popular religious rituals involve groups of followers in public and private temples. Votive paper offerings, burnt for the spirits, food offerings and *chau van* musicians are an integral part of the performance in Hanoi (Hüwelmeier, in press). The majority of participants were women, most of them traders. Mrs Mai,³ who began her initiation as a medium in Vietnam, has lived in Poland for many years, and is both a trader and a medium in the Warsaw pagoda. Four assistants were helping her to dress up during the ritual, and the *chau van* music, a crucial element of trance singing and dancing which is performed by a group of musicians in Vietnam, was played on a cassette recorder in the garden pagoda in Wólka Kosowska. Similarly to the performances in Hanoi, the medium, the incarnation of the deity, distributed goods and money, throwing US dollars and Vietnamese dong to the visitors. Having received *loc* (blessed gifts) from the spirits and shared a meal with the group of followers, the conference participants left for Warsaw.

Conclusion

The Vietnamese have used ‘socialist pathways of migration,’ to forge and maintain social, economic and political ties with their home country and with people in many other places, both before and after the collapse of communism. Multi-ethnic bazaars in Berlin, Warsaw and Prague, created after the fall of the Berlin Wall, are transnationally connected by travelling Vietnamese businesspeople and market managers, and also through ‘cultural events’ such as beauty contests. Transregional ties are strengthened by personal contacts between traders in neighbouring countries, and finally, Buddhist monks from Vietnam create religious ties between Berlin, Prague, Warsaw and Hanoi, visiting each place to perform religious rituals in the bazaar pagodas (Hüwelmeier 2013a).

As this contribution has illustrated, there is no such thing as *the* Vietnamese diaspora. Rather, Vietnamese in all Eastern European countries are characterised by diversity at many levels (Vertovec 2007). They are internally divided by class, political activities, access to power, education, gender, family background, region of origin, and time of arrival. Vietnamese are not an isolated group to be studied without taking into account the manifold social relations with locals, as well as with Chinese, Africans, Pakistanis and Indians.

This ethnographic study has indicated that transnational social practices and globe-spanning political solidarities in the Cold War period and after the fall of the Berlin Wall were established long before new communication technologies, and the reduced costs of transportation intensified cross-border ties. According to ongoing debates on ‘methodological nationalism’ (Wimmer, Glick Schiller 2002), the study of social and historical processes cannot be contained within the borders of individual nation-states. Transborder activities between countries in the socialist bloc were already quite significant, but after 1989, traversing multiple cultural spaces became much more important in what are now called post-socialist societies. The thousands of Vietnamese from rural areas who arrive as new migrants in former socialist countries or as students in places such as London, Paris and New York, are contributing to an ever-widening diversification.

Notes

¹ This article is based on the research project *The Global Bazaar – Marketplaces as Localities of Social and Economic Inclusion*, funded by the German Research Foundation (HU 1019/3-1). I carried out multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork in marketplaces between 2011 and 2015 in Berlin, Warsaw, Prague and Hanoi.

² I noticed the term ‘Commodity City’ on a display board near the road in Wólka Kosowska.

³ This is a pseudonym.

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The Social Integration of Vietnamese Migrants in Bratislava: (In)Visible Actors in Their Local Community

Miroslava Hlinčíková*

The paper examines the integration of Vietnamese migrants through the particular experience of migrants from Vietnam living in Bratislava. From a theoretical perspective, the paper draws upon the research of social anthropologists Nina Glick Schiller and Ayşe Çağlar. From a research perspective, it is based on ethnographic interviews and participant observation in a particular neighbourhood in Bratislava where migrants from Vietnam are concentrated. I consider the social relations between migrants and non-migrants; children as cultural mediators; and how the public space of this multicultural neighbourhood is seen by different actors. The research data reveal that there are different forms of integration and a variety of social structures among migrants from Vietnam in Bratislava. Although the Vietnamese are widely accepted by other residents of Bratislava, their everyday interactions occur only within designated symbolic spaces – they are accepted if they are not too visible, speak Slovak and make no collective demands on the community.

Keywords: integration; Vietnamese; Bratislava; city; migration

Slovakia and migration – postsocialist ties

The countries of post-communist Central Europe are experiencing increasing cultural (and ethnic) diversity. Slovakia is a country with a significant share of indigenous minorities.¹ Following accession to the European Union in 2004 the situation changed and the numbers migrating for personal or economic reasons started to grow fast.² The total number of foreigners³ in Slovakia rose from 22 100 in 2004 to 76 000 by the end of 2014.⁴ However, foreigners continue to represent only a small share of Slovakia's total population, so the current share of migrants in local populations remains limited.

Slovakia's declared integration and migration policies focus on integration and administration at the local level.⁵ However, these have not, as yet, been translated into any concrete integration schemes, with individual local councils often failing to realise that the migrant population in their territory is on the increase. The growing number of migrants presents various challenges for their integration at local level. Legally, foreigners with a permanent right to stay are regarded as citizens in a given municipality,⁶ which entitles them to a range of services. Without a long-term integration strategy and specific mechanisms for integration, migrants can be increasingly disadvantaged over time. Either they become permanently excluded through segregation and marginalisation, or they are fully assimilated into the local culture.

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It is social integration that preserves space for diversity for both migrants and the majority society (which is also not homogeneous) (Rákoczyová, Pořízková 2009). The key argument in support of further increasing local powers is that, though migration and integration policies are defined at the national level, the integration process itself occurs locally (OECD 2006; Chert, McNeil 2012; Ramalingam 2013). The social integration of an individual thus occurs as part of daily life, in a specific place or neighbourhood. Thus not only is the social dimension of integration vital, but local conditions and institutions also prove decisive in shaping the integration process.

Social integration largely takes place at the micro level: it involves ties and relationships formed by people in their daily lives. The present study focuses on the local level of integration and the perception of solidarity among people in the Bratislava neighbourhood where the qualitative research was conducted. Dimitrovka is a post-industrial residential area within the city of Bratislava. It was originally built for workers employed in a chemical plant located there. A high proportion of the Vietnamese population live in the area, making it a symbolic centre for Vietnamese people living in Bratislava.

The study⁷ draws on the deconstructivist approach to analysis of national and ethnic groups, which looks at integration as a society-wide process. The qualitative research made use of in-depth ethnographic interviews and participant observation in the selected location, conducted in several stages between 2010 and 2013, mostly in the autumn of 2013. These methods contributed to understanding the respondents' way of life as they themselves saw it. The research sample consisted of twenty respondents: four representatives of the municipality (local authorities, primary schools, cultural institutions) and sixteen residents, eight of whom were of migrant background.⁸

Theoretical and methodological approach

Although the principal focus is the Vietnamese people in Bratislava, the research aimed to avoid using the ethnic group and ethnic community as the unit of analysis or the sole object of study. Social anthropologists Nina Glick Schiller and Ayşe Çağlar, arguing against viewing migrants through an ethnic lens, point out that this approach prioritises one form of identification and subjectivity as the basis for social interaction and the source of social capital over other forms (Glick Schiller, Çağlar 2007: 16–17). In other words, research on migration and the integration of migrants often emphasises their ethnic origin, while their other social identities remain in the background. *Ethnicity, race and nation are ways of perception, interpretation and representation of the social world. They are not real things in the world, but perspective of the world* (Brubaker 2004: 17). In pursuit of this argument, the present study assumes a critical attitude towards ethnic groups, and is not limited to exploring the Vietnamese ethnic group as a unit of analysis or a research object. It focuses on individuals – residents in one particular neighbourhood – their social ties, relations, social networks and the social fields formed by these networks. It explores various pathways of incorporation, rather than concentrating solely on ethnic pathways. The study focuses on processes and social relations, and its orientation *encourages the exploration of multilevel ties within and across the boundaries of nation-states and facilitates the discussion of simultaneity – incorporation both within a nation-state and transnationally* (Glick Schiller, Çağlar, Guldbrandsen 2006: 614).

Respondents are viewed as active agents whose behaviour, interpretations and constructions are structured and constrained (Brettel, Hollifield 2000: 4). The research presented here involved observation of how they take decisions and view their social ties. By their own definition, migrants represent neither a social group in the strict sense of the term, nor a subgroup. The Slovak migration expert Boris Divinský suggests that the division of migrants into groups depends on a number of different criteria, including their motives for mobility, legal status of their stay, type of residence permit, direction of their movement, length of stay,

and country of origin (Divinský, Bargerová 2008). These categories are inevitably imprecise, and the relevance of such definitional confusion is questionable. Social scientists tend to accept the concepts of group and locality as unproblematic and natural (Brubaker 2002), often going so far as to use the terminology and the implicit cultural presuppositions that form the basis of the policy of individual nation states, including immigration policy. Perhaps the general consensus is that 'a group' is a culturally constructed social representation, and it is important to distinguish between groups and categories, and how people and organisations do things with categories (Brubaker, 2004: 13). Even more importantly, migrants do not usually give themselves legal or political labels (Tužinská 2009). Nevertheless, these labels are widely used in texts on migration. Understandably, like anybody else, migrants perceive themselves primarily as members of their own social networks.

Migration from Vietnam

To provide a context for the situation of the Vietnamese in Slovakia I will briefly review Slovakia's history as a migration destination, and the history of Vietnamese migration to Slovakia. During the communist era labour migration in Slovakia (Czechoslovakia) was regulated by a network of intergovernmental agreements and business contracts. Vietnamese people began arriving in Czechoslovakia from the 1950s onwards on the basis of an agreement on mutual economic support and 'socialist cooperation' between Czechoslovakia and Vietnam (Williams, Baláž 2005). Under the agreement, Czechoslovakia trained Vietnamese students and workers in mechanical engineering and manufacturing industry. Immigration peaked in the 1980s when 30 000 Vietnamese workers were resident in the Czech Socialist Republic and 6 500 – in the Slovak Socialist Republic.⁹

The year 1989 marked a turning point in Vietnamese migration to Czechoslovakia, when the originally state-organised migration began to be replaced by spontaneous economic migration. Migration from Vietnam continued through relatively well-established social networks or 'migratory chains.' Once the Vietnamese moved to Slovakia, individuals usually preserved and maintained their transnational networks and links to Vietnam which played an important role in encouraging further migration based on the existing social networks.

At the beginning of the 1990s Czechoslovakia renounced the agreements with Vietnam. After the fall of the communist regime and the consequent de-industrialisation of Slovakia, the Vietnamese were among the first to lose their jobs in state-owned companies, and alternative employment possibilities were limited. At the same time it was very difficult to obtain work permits, so they were faced with attempts to repatriate them. Many left Slovakia either to move further west or to return to Vietnam.

The year 1989 saw the beginning of the restoration of a capitalist economy. In the 1990s a number of Vietnamese started to run retail businesses as it was one of the few ways they could remain legally in Slovakia. Trading licences enabled them to obtain temporary residence permits for the purpose of conducting business. They were also eager to grasp new opportunities to succeed in a new field of endeavour. After the fall of communism, there was a general lack of business experience and access to suppliers and wholesale networks among the population as a whole, yet migrants managed to respond to local opportunities, competing successfully with the native population. Both the majority population and the Vietnamese were subject to the same starting conditions, but knowledge, education and economic status differed between individuals. It is the first generation of migrants that tends to be especially strongly motivated to achieve economic success, which explains the higher share of entrepreneurs among them. The transnational networks of migrants still present in the country were helpful in the launch of businesses. The type of business that would prove successful was determined by the economic situation of the local population (Glick Schiller *et al.* 2006: 617).

The consumer behaviour of Slovak citizens was influenced by their limited access to goods (Lutherová 2013: 49–50).

The highest concentration of migrants in Slovakia can be found in Bratislava because the city offers the widest range of jobs. Although there are no exclusively ethnic districts in Bratislava, there are certain areas where the Vietnamese tend to settle. In 2013, there were 2 069 Vietnamese nationals in Slovakia whose status was ‘foreigner,’ either permanently or temporarily residents.¹⁰ Of these, 27 per cent (566) live in Bratislava, the majority of them (469) in the Third District (Nové Mesto, Rača, Vajnory).¹¹ Bratislava also boasts the biggest open-air market in the country, Miletička, and other smaller markets, such as Jedlíková, or bigger wholesale stores at Stará Vajnorská Street. Most of the active civic associations for Vietnamese people in Slovakia are headquartered in Bratislava, including the Vietnamese Community in Slovakia,¹² the Slovak–Vietnamese Chamber of Commerce¹³ and the Union of Vietnamese Women in Slovakia. Since July 2011, the Vietnamese Embassy has also been located in Bratislava.

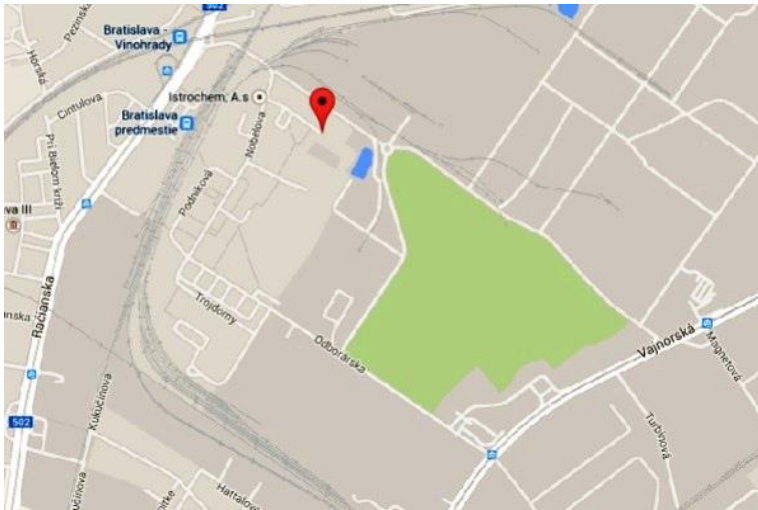
Dimitrovka – the chimney neighbourhood

The city part of Bratislava – Bratislava-Nové Mesto is among the most ethnically diverse areas in Slovakia. According to data supplied by the Border and Aliens Police, people from 96 different countries lived in the district in 2012. The total number of foreigners was 2 837 (469 of whom were Vietnamese), which is 7.73 per cent of the total population. The data do not include the naturalised migrant population, that is, individuals who have obtained citizenship. The lack of statistical data on (second-generation) naturalised migrants makes it difficult to estimate their proportion within the overall population both at local level and nationwide. However, it is likely that the migrant population in the Dimitrovka area is even higher.

This study focuses on Dimitrovka because of its ethnically diverse population. Dimitrovka is an area in Bratislava-Nové Mesto. Its inhabitants are referred to as *Novomešťania* (Newtowners) or *Dimitrovčania* (inhabitants of the Dimitrovka neighbourhood). It was originally built for workers in the Dynamit Nobel Chemical Plant, later renamed the Yuri Dimitrov Chemical Plant (and renamed Istrochem in 1991). During the communist era heavy industry was strongly supported and systematically buttressed by the state (Lutherová 2013: 9), and the construction of housing in Dimitrovka for workers and staff at the chemical plant is a result of this policy. Dimitrovka used to be on the edge of the city, though this is no longer the case due to urban expansion.

The residents of Dimitrovka used to refer to the neighbourhood as a ‘village’ or ‘community’ where everyone knew everyone else. Even today Dimitrovka is somewhat separated from the rest of the district, located between two major arterial roads leading to exit routes from the city. On one side a railway line divides it from the Vinohrady quarter and a street (Odborárska) and the former plant are boundaries on the other. It is the physical distances that make Dimitrovka appear to be a specific delineated area within Bratislava-Nové Mesto (see Illustration 1).

Illustration 1. Map of Dimitrovka



Source: Google Maps.

In the 1980s the Vietnamese started arriving in Dimitrovka as workers in the plant. The infrastructure built for the plant workers included a swimming pool, a park, shops, services and a school. Vietnamese people shared the neighbourhood with other workers housed in a dormitory near the plant. Dimitrovka can thus be termed a ‘working-class city district.’ After production ceased in the 1990s, most Vietnamese returned to their home country or migrated further west. Some decided to settle in Bratislava, and a number of them remained in the dormitory. Today about 150 people live here – new migrants and former factory employees. A few years ago the dormitory building was first rented and later purchased by a Vietnamese businessman (Gašparovská 2006: 15). It was refurbished as a residential and non-residential complex and now represents the centre of social and business life for the Vietnamese in Bratislava. A number of businessmen from Vietnam have their warehouses here. Some residents are employed elsewhere; others tend to be small traders who have their own retail businesses, such as small clothing shops, fruit and vegetable stores, nail studios and restaurants/bistros in Bratislava. This group were professionals or students in Slovakia before 1989, whose relatives joined them later through social networks. As a result, some multi-member families live in the former dormitory complex. Their reasons for staying there vary. A number of families and individuals prefer the idea of ‘shared’ housing to owning their own accommodation. Some individuals and later their families have been living here since their arrival in Slovakia ten or more years ago. One such resident is Kim: *We knew the Vietnamese live here; that it is the accommodation and the owner would give us good deal for the rent... We live here as tenants...*

The area surrounding the former dormitory contains a Vietnamese restaurant, grocery store, karaoke bar, hair salon, telephone booth, travel agency, storage depot, clothing shop and nail studio. The building’s owner also provides a satellite connection, giving access to a number of Vietnamese television channels.

Some of the Vietnamese families have bought or rented properties in the nearby block of flats. Some of the residents expressed their anxiety about the density of the Vietnamese community living in the neighbourhood. Ondrej, who has been living and working in Dimitrovka for five years, expressed his distrust in connection to the Vietnamese living in the area: *It seems that maybe in future – in ten or fifteen years – Dimitrovka will be Vietnamese neighbourhood.*

In the next section, therefore, I take a closer look at residents’ perception of the diversity in their locality.

The limits of integration

The social setting has a powerful effect on the ways in which an apparent minority and its individual members see themselves and identify with the country of settlement. In other words, there are no ethnic minorities without an ethnic majority (Fenton 2003: 165). The pattern of public and political discourse about ‘integration’ is based on the presumption that as long as migrants try hard enough, are kind and speak Slovak, do not draw attention to their problems, do not abuse the social security system and work hard, they deserve to be accepted in ‘our’ society. This neo-assimilationist discourse in Slovak (and/or European) society is based on a strong territorial and national identity that is in stark contrast with the fluid, pluralistic and transnational society of the twenty-first century (Roca iCapara 2011). Integration is the responsibility not just of migrants, but of society as a whole. The state and institutions in the country of settlement, as well as public attitudes towards migrants, play an important role. Previous research into attitudes to migration has offered a somewhat negative picture of Slovakia as a country of restrictive, non-inclusive policies, with a hostile and even xenophobic view of migrants, and a society too conservative and intolerant of otherness. A study entitled *Public Attitudes to Migrants and International Migration in SR* carried out in 2009 by the International Organisation for Migration suggests that a significant proportion of Slovakia’s population is not prepared to welcome foreigners and has a problem accepting otherness and perceiving diversity in Slovakia as a natural phenomenon (Vašečka 2009: 33). Attitudes to migrants and to diversity in general are influenced by public discourse, and by the contributions of individual groups to community life and their visibility in the public space. Despite the relatively high number of migrants in the neighbourhood, ethnic and linguistic diversity are not seen as something common or ‘normal.’ The population in the neighbourhood, though used to the greater number of Vietnamese people in Bratislava-Nové Mesto, maintains a largely cautious and reserved attitude towards them.

Even though the presence of national minorities makes Slovakia ethnically quite diverse, the population has not, as yet, had enough experience of cultural or ethnic diversity. Although the free movement of people outside the territory of Slovakia began after the political changes of 1989, it was not until Slovakia’s entry to the European Union in 2004 that it got underway in earnest. The ability to perceive other languages and people from other cultures as part of daily life is only now beginning to emerge in Slovakia. As my research shows, people accept foreign languages when it comes to making declarations, and yet within a specific context they consider them to be strange and outside the framework of public space.

The Vietnamese I interviewed often used the phrase ‘if we behave properly’ to illustrate the sometimes deliberate fulfilment of the majority society’s expectations and/or the type of conduct in public contexts that others expect and consider appropriate. Chung, the young Vietnamese woman explained to me:

Under normal circumstances, if I was home in Vietnam, I would allow myself to get upset, to say what I think, but I realise that they look at me with different eyes, so I try to control myself, simply to express myself neutrally. I thus got into a state that I no longer appear as a person, but people notice very much that I am a foreigner, that my features are Vietnamese, that – she is – the Vietnamese are like that.

Hanh has been living in Dimitrovka since 1990s. She described her feeling to Vietnam where she feels at home in a known environment: *if people treat us normally, politely. I miss home, Vietnam a lot, the friendly relations, the sense of belonging.* Ngon links home to language and tolerance, an understanding of everyday context and non-verbal communication:

When I am in Vietnam, I am in my home environment, I hear the sounds, I know what people say, and I understand a hundred percent... I thus feel more secure in that social context. Here in Slovakia I still feel a bit out of place, I cannot join the society fully... I sometimes feel like someone on the margins, by not hearing my mother tongue in the social context, on the street, I do not know who thinks what...

In this context the respondents referred to Vietnam as something familiar, known not only linguistically but also in terms of cultural and human context. Even though they consider Bratislava to be their second home, they reflect on their inferior position in a society that does not deem them equal citizens.

Diversified city

Integration is manifest in the nature, quality and quantity of social contacts with members of the majority society. These may vary from very close, informal and intimate relationships (strong ties) to formal and institutionalised ties (membership of voluntary groups, clubs, faith communities, etc.) (Rákoczyová, Pořízková 2009: 32).

The neighbourhood under study is highly diversified, not just in terms of ethnicity but also in age and social status. Both older settlers and new young families live there. It is the older population in particular who have appropriated the area and identify more closely with it. New arrivals come to live here because of the lower property prices and the quieter family-friendly environment. It is members of the older generation who describe the area through stories connected with the past and the times when the residential area was a busy workplace. They invoke a remembered affective geography which grounds strong and sometimes exclusionary forms of place-based belonging (Gidley 2013: 364). During one of the interviews Ondrej remembered how he settled in Dimitrovka and was recognised as a stranger in the area:

This, the street is actually a small village where everyone knows everyone, we all know each other. When I first came here, they looked at me wondering who I was, what I was. Over the years the relationship is the one when we know every dog and every cat here...

The Vietnamese in Bratislava represent a relatively coherent group with strongly bonded social capital that guarantees them support and assistance. Relationships with the majority population, and the consequent acquisition of bridging social capital, develop in quite an individual way. Again, it is the attitude both of the majority population and of society as a whole towards migrants that plays a decisive role here. If attitudes are negative over a long period of time, it may lead to migrants isolating themselves within ethnically defined social networks. The Vietnamese I spoke with had developed ties at different levels. Most relationships and communication had come about through their children: at the playground, at school, in interest groups or during cultural activities for children. Relations between Vietnamese and non-Vietnamese inhabitants of the neighbourhood lead to a distinction between 'us' and 'them.' One respondent's statement showed that the way people think about Vietnamese children is to contrast them to the 'white' children who are in the 'normal' category. The use of the term 'normal' demonstrates what the residents perceive as the norm (white children) and deviation from the norm (Vietnamese children). Such thinking also reflects that to some degree, acceptance or non-acceptance of the Vietnamese as 'normal' and 'ours,' as members of the wider group of residents in the neighbourhood, is being negotiated. Zuzana:

I like these kids, for instance. They're no... well, but there are no doubt some outcasts, but we have plenty of such white kids here in the living quarters, the normal ones, well, normal – white, who are worse than

the Vietnamese. The way they are make me prefer a Vietnamese, if I were to babysit a boy. I think they are polite, tidy, though there are no doubt exceptions among them as well – just like everywhere else.

The Vietnamese who live in this area generally show a preference for their close relatives and friends. Whilst at the public level we can observe and perceive the neighbourhood as multicultural, multiculturalism is commonly linked to private segregation. This, in turn, sustains the anonymity of lives behind the closed doors (Gidley 2013). Even though Vietnamese people have been resident in the neighbourhood for a number of years, the local population still does not consider them to be original settlers, to be ‘ours.’ Whilst the majority watch the Vietnamese from a distance, taking note of their activities (business or cultural) in the area, contact goes no further than this. Their coexistence can be characterised thus: ‘they know of each other, but do not know each other.’ Nevertheless, the migrants can also be seen to be maintaining a certain distance, particularly the Vietnamese who create quite a compact and cohesive community in the area. The residential block which is the centre of community life is surrounded by a fence. The fenced area contains a children’s playground and an outdoor seating area, creating something of a physical entry barrier for other residents.

Stronger ties between migrants and other residents are largely prevented by the enduring language barrier. The relationships between majority population and migrants are (at least among adults) thus kept within certain limits in the neighbourhood, with mutual tolerance, but an absence of closer ties. As Ngon illustrates on his experience: *When I wanted to express something, my lack of fluency in Slovak made the communication a problem.*

One specific type of relationship between the residents and the Vietnamese is looking after small children. Nannies known as ‘grannies’ or ‘aunties’ look after children up to the age of three who are too young for kindergarten. Sometimes nannies also take older children to school. The nannies are either Slovak women (particularly pensioners) or mothers on maternity leave. This enables others, largely Vietnamese women, to return to work very soon after childbirth, supplementing their maternity and child benefit income. Nannies usually obtain work by referral: one family recommends a nanny to another, or a nanny recommends an acquaintance or a friend.

The residents of Dimitrovka know each other by sight. These acquaintances sometimes develop into further contact and communication. Families living in adjacent flats, for example, may overcome the limitations of anonymity by improving their relationship. Ondrej differentiates between his neighbours and other Vietnamese residents:

For instance, there is a Vietnamese man who lives on our staircase. He gave me the keys of his flat for a month as he went to Vietnam with his wife and children... But the other Vietnamese... we just say hi to each other and leave it at that.

Another type of relationship between the Vietnamese and other residents is the provision of services. Residents and people who work in the area eat at a restaurant in the residential area or shop at the Asian grocery store (part of the restaurant) which offers mainly Vietnamese products. There is no sign outside the restaurant to identify it, so people have heard about it largely through their own social networks.

(In)visibility: city and migrants

The cultural diversity of Dimitrovka is not apparent to anyone passing through the area. The same applies to the presence of migrants in other aspects of the public space, for instance architecture or public symbols of religion, such as a Buddhist Temple.

Despite the relatively high number of migrant residents, the authorities – as represented by district councillors – do not reflect or respect the diversity of the local population, nor do they address local integration strategies. These elected representatives do not see the migrants as active agents; planning, whether symbolic, political, social or economic, does not take account of diversity. The Bratislava-Nové Mesto local council has announced plans to support different categories of residents through various events and activities, such as the construction of centres for the elderly, support for young families, rebuilding or refurbishing primary schools, kindergartens and children's playgrounds. At the same time it actively involves residents in the running of their city part through open discussion forums and voluntary activities. In this respect strong civic activism is the source of numerous initiatives addressed to the city council.

The identity of the Newtowners (*Novomešťania*) is also preserved through the local magazine *The New Town Voice. Residents' Magazine of the district of Bratislava-Nové Mesto* [*Hlas Nového Mesta. Časopis obyvateľov mestskej časti Bratislava-Nové Mesto*]. This provides information on local activities and representatives, and on the history of the district and cultural events. Its contribution to the discourse, however, addresses local migrants only marginally. The Vietnamese, quite a large group within the local area, are altogether unrepresented in this local periodical. There is thus no symbolic representation of diversity and migrants in the public space. Representation of Vietnamese people in local media (for instance in photographs of city life) would contribute to recognition of their presence and of themselves as members of the local community.

The policy and planning documents of the local authorities should define the inclusive nature of the city for all residents. A number of municipalities define migrants and minorities through their *otherness* and *differences*, instead of highlighting their basic needs and their status of belonging to the municipality as equal residents. In this way they exclude migrants from the jigsaw of 'common residents' (Ferenčuhová 2006: 150). Whatever applies at national level is reflected at local level. The cultivation of identity is also part of the institutional strategy of an integrated society, as it raises awareness among different groups that they belong to a given community, and also helps them identify emotionally with that community (Szaló 2003: 38).

In this respect the Vietnamese have not, as yet, attempted to participate in the administration of public affairs. Their civic groups (such as the Vietnamese Community of Slovakia and the Union of Vietnamese Women) organise festivals throughout the year in the local cultural centre (New Year, Children's Day, Women's Day, etc.). However, these events are not open to the general public, but only to the Vietnamese community. The city does not arrange any multicultural activities that would represent the local migrants. The few public events have included a performance by a Vietnamese puppet theatre in 2012 on Lake Kuchajda and sports activities, such as 'a football match against racism.'

Civil society is only just emerging in Slovakia. The post-1989 transformation and the subsequent social changes have affected people of all social levels to varying degrees, and everyone has had to adapt to new conditions. They have also affected Vietnamese migrants who arrived in Slovakia under communism and experienced the transition from a totalitarian regime to democracy. Activism and the desire to participate in the running of society are only just beginning to develop, as active, engaged citizens become aware of the need to get involved in civil society. The Vietnamese are no different in this respect. Most of those who live in Bratislava-Nové Mesto do not participate in public affairs and are not active at local level, although leaders of civic groups are involved in a limited range of activities. Not only do the Vietnamese not feel they belong among the local residents, but because they often do not know their rights and entitlements, they do not approach the local authority for help. The authorities thus gain the impression that the migrants do not need anything and so local policies do not need to be altered. The roots of the problem lie in the limited awareness and the lack of public information accessible to all local residents including migrants.

One of the few activities organised by the representatives of the Vietnamese community in Bratislava-Nové Mesto was a Vietnamese language course at the local primary school. It received broad media coverage and was presented by the media as an example of cooperation between the local council and the Vietnamese in Bratislava. In addition to its practical aspect, a course such as this offers important added value as a symbol of integration that recognises, supports and seeks to maintain equally valuable but different cultural identities. Yet in Slovakia the opposite tendency is more frequently observed: migrants are expected to give up most of their cultural distinctiveness and accept Slovak identity, much as though multiple identities were not allowed. For instance, when migrants dressed in Slovakian folk costumes sing Slovakian folk songs, they are very well received. This could also be seen as a manifestation of loyalty to the host country. The cultural identity of migrants, particularly that of the Vietnamese community, is essentially seen as inherently their own; they ought to subscribe to and present it. Yet not every migrant experiences cultural identity in this way, and they do not all wish to manifest it externally, outside their community. Local schools try to actively engage the Vietnamese community in cultural activities, but are often rebuffed:

I told them recently: I do more for you than you do yourselves. Why don't you want? Last year we celebrated the 120th anniversary of our school. I had to press them so much! So they did one number which entailed so much work for me to even bring them in (representative of the local council).

The school representatives negotiate about the fact of cultural diversity within the school life without any previous experience. They are not sure how to deal with such a diverse community and do not have any methodologies and guidelines developed for multicultural school environment.

Conclusion

The study presented here aimed to analyse the social integration of migrants in cities, particularly as regards the social and cultural diversity of a district in Bratislava. The Vietnamese people living there are relatively well received by the population at local level. Yet they only operate within a symbolic space that has been assigned to them for informal day-to-day interactions: they are accepted if they speak Slovak and make no collective demands. In telling the story of their lives on the estate, many residents show an understanding of place and invoke a remembered affective geography which grounds strong and sometimes exclusionary forms of place-based belonging.

I approached migrants as residents of the city and actors within and across space rather than as an aggregated Vietnamese 'community.' I focused on local-level dynamics and processes of belonging – the very local level is important for understanding questions of belonging and expressions of diversity.

The areas examined did not reveal links between residents and migrants, who tend to live separate lives next door to each other, even though they take notice of and respect each other up to a point. Yet neither crosses the notional limits. This is because migrants are not perceived as part of the wider local community; they are not deemed to be 'ours.' On the migrants' part, their non-acceptance is manifested, for instance, in their limited (and/or non-existent) civic and political participation. The research has shown that hitherto migrants have accepted this situation. Nevertheless, until they feel part of the wider political community, they cannot significantly contribute to its development (and not merely in economic terms). Despite their respect for the established 'rules,' migrants often develop a sense that the majority society does not accept them completely. Yet mutual acceptance by both parties is an important prerequisite for integration.

City-level policies do not yet include an inclusive city strategy, or policies seeking to better meet the needs of migrant residents and their engagement with wider society. The future image of the neighbourhood and the place of migrants within it will depend on the authorities' responses to the challenges of diversity.

Notes

¹ According to the National Census minorities such as Hungarians, Czechs, Roma and Ruthenians account for about 19.3 per cent of total population in Slovakia, e.g. (*Základné údaje zo Sčítania obyvateľov, domov a bytov 2011* (2012).

² For more on migration and integration in Slovakia after EU accession in 2004, see Bargerová Gallová Kriglerová, Gažovičová, Kadlečíková (2012); Gažovičová (2011); Divinský (2009).

³ 'Foreigners' is a legal term that includes immigrants with permanent, temporary or tolerated legal stay in the Slovak Republic. This number does not include migrants with Slovak citizenship.

⁴ In 2014, there were 76 715 foreigners with residence permits in Slovakia – of these 29 171 were from third countries and 47 544 were EU citizens. Source: *Statistical Overview of Legal and Irregular Migration in the Slovak Republic in 2014*. Police Corps Presidium, Bureau of Border and Aliens Police.

⁵ The main documentary sources on national migration (and integration) policy are: *Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic with a Perspective until 2020*, *Integration Policy of the Slovak Republic*, (prior to it *Concept of Foreigner Integration in the Slovak Republic*).

⁶ Foreigners with the status of permanent stay in the Slovak Republic have active and passive voting rights, but only in relation to the local municipalities and regional districts. According to the law foreigners in Slovakia cannot vote and cannot be elected to the national parliament.

⁷ The text is one of the outcomes of the research project *Family Histories. Intergenerational Transfer of Representation of Political and Social Changes*, Projekt VEGA 2/0086/14, Institute of Ethnology, Slovak Academy of Sciences. The research was also partly conducted with my colleagues Elena Gallová Kriglerová, Alena Chudžíková and Martina Sukulová as part of the research project *Migrants in Cities: Present and (In)Visible*, European Fund for Integration of Third Country Nationals, Institute for Public Affairs, CVEK, 2014. For more see the published book: Hlinčíková, Chudžíková, Kriglerová, Sekulová (2014).

⁸ All the names of informants mentioned in the text are fictitious – the real names of my informants are not used in the paper.

⁹ Online on: http://migraceonline.cz/e-knihovna/?x=2274071#_ftn1.

¹⁰ Source: *Statistical Overview of Legal and Irregular Migration in the Slovak Republic. 1st half of 2013*. Police Corps Presidium, Bureau of Border and Aliens Police.

¹¹ *Statistics of the Bureau of Border and Aliens Police*.

¹² <http://www.congdongvietnam.eu/index-sk.php?part=tinnhanh&article=90>.

¹³ <http://www.svcc.sk>.

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The Two *Tết* Festivals: Transnational Connections and Internal Diversity of the Vietnamese Community in Poland

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In the article, I present an analysis of two Tết (Lunar New Year) festivals organised by the Vietnamese living in Poland. The events, prepared by different organisations – a local branch of the Association of Vietnamese in Poland, an official organisation cooperating with the authorities of Socialist Republic of Vietnam, and pro-democratic activists – provide an insight into the community's internal diversity. The analysis indicates that the political involvement of the organising parties influences their choice of particular style of presentation, with a profound impact on the attractiveness of the festival for the two important segments of audience: the Vietnamese youth brought up in Poland and the Polish spectators. The paper is based on fieldwork research which the author has been conducting among the Vietnamese community in Poland for many years.

Keywords: Vietnamese diaspora; diaspora politics; ethnic festivals

Introduction

The Vietnamese in Poland are the biggest community originating from outside Europe, numbering around 25 000–30 000 people (Wysieńska 2012; Szymańska-Matusiewicz 2014). This group of foreigners is highly organised, as proved by the existence of numerous Vietnamese migrant organisations in Poland (Halik 2006; Wysieńska 2010). The community is internally diverse: various categories of migrants can be indicated according to particular factors, such as the length of their stay in Poland, occupation, or legal status.¹ In this paper, I would like to focus on the political divisions present inside the community. Differences in political views and involvement are among the most important issues discussed among the Vietnamese in Poland. I intend to show the complex character of political entanglements, discussing the case of the two *Tết* celebrations organised in 2014 by the Vietnamese community in Warsaw. The main problem discussed within the paper is the representation strategies chosen by the members of particular political circles during the organisation of the *Tết* festivals and their perception by two categories of audience: Vietnamese people residing in Poland and Poles participating in the events.

In my article, I would like to analyse the representation strategies adapted by the organisers of the two *Tết* festivals in two contexts. Firstly, I intend to describe them as an example of the discursive creation of ethnic identity, which is being built in a dialogue with the supposed perception of Vietnamese community by an

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important segment of the festival audience – the representatives of Polish society. Moreover, I will consider them as events designated to achieve some political goals – different with each celebration.

Multiple studies conducted in the areas of sociology, ethnography and social anthropology have concentrated on the role of festivals as means of creating and maintaining ethnic identity (e.g. Kasinitz, Freidenberg-Herbstein 1987; Bramadat 2001; Brettell, Reed-Danahay 2012; Moufakkir, Pernecky 2014). This way of thinking about ethnic celebrations results from adapting the constructivist view of ethnic identity, according to which identity is actively and discursively constructed during interactions with the ‘other’ (Brettell 2007; Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl, Liebhart 2008). In the context of ethnic minorities or migrant communities, the most important ‘other’ is commonly the majority society. However, the result of this dialogic process is inevitably impacted by the vision of a majority society, adapted by the representatives of the minorities. In my article, I will show that the organisers of the two festivals target different segments of Polish society, which is connected both with the differences in their political goals and the choice of different representation strategies.

The political dimensions of the *Tết* Festival

In the literature dedicated to migrant communities, growing attention is drawn to the issue of their political engagement. The importance of the political impact of the activity of migrants is particularly visible in the studies of diaspora politics, in which the famous book by Scheffer (2003) played a very important role. Other authors, such as Ho (2011), refrain from usage of the term ‘diaspora,’ instead concentrating on the strategies of the sending state towards the emigrants. I will refer to both authors in order to explain the nature of the political activities of the Vietnamese community in Poland. Regarding the analysis of the political impact of cultural festivals, in the case of the Vietnamese diaspora, analysis of *Tết* festivals seem to be an obvious choice due to the importance of this holiday for Vietnamese residing both in the home country and in the diaspora. *Tết* – the Lunar New Year – is univocally perceived as the most important holiday in Vietnamese culture. According to a guide on the Lunar New Year published in Hanoi, *Tết is like a combination of Christmas, Western New Year's Day, Easter, American Thanksgiving, and everyone's birthday. It is a festival of communion, purity, renewal, and universal peace* (Huu, Borton 2005: 4). Among the Vietnamese, *Tết* is to a large extent celebrated as a family holiday, involving not only closest family members, but also living as well as dead members of the extended family. On this occasion, people often return to their home villages (*quê*), not only to visit their relatives, but also to pay tribute to their deceased ancestors, honored in lineage halls (*nhà thờ họ*). However, after migrating, the Vietnamese have no opportunity to practice this pattern. Instead of this, they often attend celebrations organised at the community level, by particular migrant organisations.

On the other hand, *Tết* can also be defined in terms of a festival. According to Stoeltje, a festival is *an ancient and resilient cultural form, which occurs at calendrically regulated intervals and [is] public in nature, participatory in ethos, complex in structure, and multiple in voice, scene and purpose* (Stoeltje 1992: 261). Festival celebrations customarily take place at the community level. The celebrations organised by the Vietnamese organisations in various countries where they migrate also follow this pattern. They are typically perceived as a means to strengthen bonds inside the community and to cultivate the ethnic identity.

It must also be taken into account that the *Tết* holiday in Vietnam has also been subjected to the policy of Communist Party, which since establishing its rule in Vietnam has undertaken various actions directed towards elimination of ‘bad’ traditions and superstitions, simultaneously praising and supporting the elements of tradition that were defined as ‘good’ and reinforcing patriotic feelings (Malarney 2002; Norton 2002). In the era of *post-đổi mới* reforms, many of the previously condemned religious and traditional traditions were

approved, or at least tolerated, by the state (Roszko 2010; McAllister 2013). In the past few years, the Vietnamese authorities have become more engaged in the *Tết* festival, organising large-scale celebrations which have involved a large amount of religious and spiritual symbolism.

Tết celebrations are also organised by the immigrant Vietnamese communities dispersed around the world. Vietnam is a country with a large population of immigrants – the overseas Vietnamese (*Việt Kiều*) number around 4 million people, with almost half of them (1.73 million) residing in the USA (Le 2014). As Brettell and Reed-Danahay (2012) note in their analysis of the *Tết* festival organised by the Vietnamese community in Texas, *Tết* celebrations should be perceived not as purely cultural events, expressing nostalgia for the homeland, but also as events of political importance. As a result of their historical background, representatives of the Vietnamese diaspora are diverse in their political views. The most important aspect of this division can be aptly described by the distinction of stateless and state-linked diasporas, introduced by Scheffer (2003). While the vast majority of the Vietnamese residing in the United States are people of refugee origin who express strongly anti-communist views (Brettell, Reed-Danahay 2012; Le 2011; Phan in this volume), and the French community is internally divided into two factions (Bousquet 1991), the communities in Eastern European countries are strongly influenced by the communist state (Bayly 2009; Hüwelmeier 2013; Szymańska-Matusiewicz 2014). The vast majority of the Vietnamese residing in Poland – with the exception of a few people granted refugee status – can therefore be perceived as members of the state-linked diaspora (Scheffer 2003). However, although multifold connections to the Vietnamese state are underlined by the majority of migrant organisations – as will be described in the following section – the representatives of pro-democratic activists actively oppose such connections, stressing the unity with the Vietnamese diaspora in the USA and Western Europe.²

Vietnamese migrant organisations in Poland and their political involvement

The majority of *Tết* festivals taking place in the diaspora are usually organised by immigrant institutions, such as official organisations, or unofficial social circles. In this section, I will present a general picture of the Vietnamese organisations in Poland. A basic overview of the Vietnamese institutions active in Poland, listing the main organisations, can be found in the works of Wysińska (2010) and Halik (2006). Observers may be surprised by the number of organisations, including both institutions of a general, unspecified profile (such as the Association of the Vietnamese in Poland – AVP) and specific organisations, such as the Association of Vietnamese Women and Association of Vietnamese Youth. However, this high number of organisations should not be perceived only as a result of grassroots pluralism, but as an outcome of the policy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, which influences the activity among the community residing in Poland through many channels, including the Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The abovementioned institutions can be described as ‘official’ organisations, cooperating with the Embassy, as well as with the authorities of the state of Vietnam. The activity of these institutions is in fact a manifestation of the Vietnamese state’s strategy towards its ‘external citizens’ – members of the migrant community. As Ho (2011) noticed, the sending states commonly adapt various strategies, enabling them to control and impact people who emigrated from the country in order to make use of their potential. The strategy of the Vietnamese state involves the existence of official associations of Vietnamese people residing in particular countries, which are formally connected to the political institutions of Vietnam. As an example, the Association of the Vietnamese in Poland has a local branch in Hanoi, which is responsible for organising events dedicated to *Việt Kiều* returning to the country, such as a summer camp for overseas Vietnamese children in Vietnam. It also cooperates with the Hanoi-based Vietnam–Poland Friendship Association (*Hội Hữu Nghị Việt Nam – Ba Lan*),

which is one of multiple official ‘friendship organisations’ operating inside the political system of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

The political involvement of particular organisations is an important issue, taking into account the fact that diaspora communities often play an important role as active agents, involved in – and influencing – the politics of migrants’ country of origin. While the Association of Vietnamese in Poland and other satellite organisations to a large extent act as a local branch of Vietnamese authorities, enacting the state politics among the diaspora members, in Poland organisations also exist that oppose the government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. They are not large in terms of numbers of supporters – the activists number no more than 10–20 people – and the events organised by them are attended mostly by Polish people, with a large representation of human rights activists and students. Due to the pro-democratic activists, the main reason behind the lack of support is the fear of the diaspora members – often intending to return to Vietnam in the future – connected with involvement in anti-government activity. However, during my fieldwork I could observe that many of the Vietnamese from Poland perceive the activity of anti-communist activists as not only anti-government, but also anti-Vietnamese and unpatriotic. Pro-democratic opposition is criticised by many Vietnamese people living in Poland for denial of official symbols of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, such as the flag, which for most of the Vietnamese community in Warsaw is a legitimate symbol of their country. However, the activists are often present in the Polish mainstream media, such as *Gazeta Wyborcza*. They vote for assurance of human rights in Vietnam and for the rights of irregular migrants in Poland. An important medium in which the activists express their ideas is the online newspaper *Đàn Chim Việt*.

In my article, I would like to discuss the political involvement of the Vietnamese diaspora in Poland, focusing on the case of the two *Tết* celebrations organised in 2014 by the representatives of various social circles: the Association of Vietnamese in Poland (the official organisation), and the social circle of pro-democratic activists. It is important to stress that the ethnic festivals organised by particular migrant groups should be perceived not only as an expression of symbolic ethnicity, but also as a part of diaspora politics. As Brettell and Reed-Danahay indicate, *Ethnic festivals are an ‘entrée into a community’s symbolic, social and political life, especially because they are organised and presented to members of the community by members of the community’* (Farber 1983, quoted by Brettell, Reed-Danahay 2012: 147). The description of both festivals, provided in the next section, aims to provide an insight into the political goals of both organisers. However, while discussing the case of the Vietnamese *Tết* festivals, it should also be taken into account that the celebrations organised by the Vietnamese were designed not only for intra-community communication, but also as an opportunity to present Vietnamese culture to the Polish majority society.

The Vietnamese are typically perceived as a hermetic community, maintaining little contact with the Polish majority society and difficult to reach during social research (Halik, Nowicka 2002; Wysieńska 2010; Wysieńska 2012). However, during my fieldwork conducted among the Vietnamese community in Poland I was able to notice that the Vietnamese undertake many activities aimed at promoting their culture outside the community. For example, both events described in the article – the celebration in Raszyn and the one in the Agora headquarters in Warsaw – were advertised in Polish, and Polish people were directly invited to participate. However, the outcome of the activity relies on the particular strategies which the Vietnamese adapt during the organisation of the event, which play a decisive role concerning the issue of whether the festival will be attractive for the Polish guests or not. Therefore, I would like to present the diverse styles of self-presentation of the Vietnamese culture by the migrants which could be observed during the events and are to a large extent connected with their political involvement.

The analysis of the two *Tết* festivals is based on fieldwork data. Until recently, for 10 years I was involved in various kinds of research concerning the Vietnamese community in Poland, as well as in fieldwork conducted in Vietnam. In 2014, I embarked upon a project sponsored by the National Centre for Science,

dedicated to the issue of transnational connections of the Vietnamese migrants from Poland. As part of this project, I participated in both the *Tết* festivals analysed in this article and performed a detailed observation including making field notes thereafter. In the case of both events I participated as a regular spectator, a person of Polish origin, but with some knowledge of the Vietnamese language (intermediate level). However, during both the *Wietnam – Ba Lan Tết* Festival and the *Gala Noworoczna* in Raszyn, my identity as a researcher was recognised by some of the organisers and participants, who knew me as a university-based researcher or as a person interested in the functioning of the Vietnamese community in Poland. In the article, I will also make use of my other research experiences, including participation in various cultural spectacles organised by the Vietnamese community, as well as from my fieldwork conducted in Hanoi, where I had the opportunity to attend events organised by former migrants who have been to Poland in the past. In order to grasp the point of view of some of the actors of the festivals, I will also analyse the article authored by Mạc Việt Hồng, a pro-democratic activist and author of *Đàn Chim Việt* who described three *Tết* celebrations taking place in Warsaw. The article was adapted to the analysis as a particularly interesting material, as it is the only text in which the two described festivals are directly compared to each other.

Local school celebration – *Gala Noworoczna* in Raszyn

In previous years, the *Tết* festivals organised by Vietnamese people from Poland were limited to the events organised by the Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and official organisations.³ However, in 2014, a significant diversity could be observed in the organisation of *Tết* celebrations. This was described by the journalist Mạc Việt Hồng with the term ‘pluralisation’ (*đa nguyên*).

On Saturday, 1 February, 2014, the New Year Festival (*Gala Noworoczna*) was organised in a public primary school in Raszyn, a small town on the suburbs of Warsaw. Raszyn is situated in the proximity of the Wolka Kosowska trade centres, where many of the Vietnamese from Poland work and live (Bieniecki, Cybulska, Roguska 2008; Klorek, Szulecka 2013; Piłat 2013). It was organised by the local authorities, such as the mayor of the Raszyn community), together with the official Vietnamese organisations from Poland – the local branch of the Association of the Vietnamese in Poland, the Association of Vietnamese Women and some others.

The event took place in the large gymnasium hall situated in the school. Around 500–600 people attended, mainly school children and their families. Vietnamese people formed the majority of the participants, but around 20–30 per cent of the public were Poles, mostly local residents. The event consisted of three parts: in the first one, the organisers and honorary guests (communal authorities, head of the school, leaders of the organisations and representatives of the Embassy of Socialist Republic of Vietnam) gave official speeches on the stage. During the main part of the celebration, the audience could enjoy multiple performances of Polish and Vietnamese children, such as singing, dancing (including Vietnamese traditional dances, such as the dance of the lion and dancing with the fans) and demonstration of martial arts. The last part of the festival included food, served for free – all participants could enjoy traditional Vietnamese *Tết* dishes, such as rice cakes *bánh chưng*, steamed pancakes *bánh cuốn* and some others.

In order to analyse the content of the festival, the notion of ‘strategic essentialism’ seems particularly suitable. This concept, originally created by Spivak (Darius, Jonsson 1993; Spivak, Landry, MacLean 1995) to describe the resistance strategy adapted by some minority groups in order to face the pressure imposed on them by the unifying global culture, is used to analyse the representation strategies of minority groups during such events as ethnic festivals. It can be described as deliberate self-identification with certain stereotypical characteristics, aimed at achieving some goals, such as unproblematic acceptance by the majority society

(see Bramadat 2001: 6). The nature of the goals adapted by the official organisations is an interesting issue, which I will try to answer in the conclusion of the article.

The *Gala Noworoczna*, organised in Raszyn for the second time, was welcomed with a relatively high level of interest and involvement of the public in the event – the stage performances of the children attracted and engaged many parents. It could also be observed that the event was performed in a specific performance style, characteristic of official events organised both in contemporary Vietnam and by the official Vietnamese organisations. Celebrations held by the Embassy and official associations are routinely organised in the style of a formal ‘academia,’ which for Poles who remember the communist era inevitably recalls the ‘academias’ organised in Poland prior to 1989 in schools or enterprises. During such events, the participants perform on the stage, which is always decorated with the name and the date of the event, commonly in traditional Vietnamese festival colours: red and gold. At the beginning of the event, the organisers and invited guests deliver formal speeches. The style is rather official, not leaving much space for improvisation. Stage performances, such as singing and dancing, require the participation of all actors involved in an event – for example, Polish guests invited to the celebrations of Women’s Day or Independence Day are expected to sing a song on stage.

This kind of performance style indicates the bond maintained by the official migrant organisations with the Vietnamese state. During my fieldwork in Vietnam, while I had the opportunity to attend to a few official ‘academias’ (among them those organised by the Hanoi branch of the Association of Vietnamese in Poland), I was stunned by the similarities between the performance style of the events organised by the AVP and the formal celebrations in Vietnam. However, it is also important to notice that this strategy of organising celebrations may lead to missing the important target at which they are directed – namely, representatives of the 1.5 and 2nd generation of immigrants, the young Vietnamese brought up in Poland. When I asked my informants during my 2013 research among the Vietnamese youth whether they attended the festivals organised by the embassy, most of them claimed that they avoided going there because the events are boring, dedicated mainly to older people.

However, observing the *Tết* festival in Raszyn, I noticed that this style of organising events is somehow compatible with the expectations of another target – some representatives of the Polish majority society. To a large extent, *Gala Noworoczna* resembled the style of Polish provincial festivals, organised by local authorities or organisations. Firstly, one can easily notice the division between ‘honorary guests’ and casual guests. During the *Tết* celebration in Raszyn, the honorary guests – the main *dramatis personae* – were the representatives of the local elite: the community mayor, the head of the municipal culture centre and the head of the primary school. They were seated in an honorary place together with the members of the elite of the minority community, such as the ambassador, the head of the Vietnamese Association in Poland and the representatives of Vietnamese Woman Union and other official associations. All the VIPs were seated together during the stage performance, and during the meal they occupied a common honorary table together.

Moreover, the event was organised in a school – a place where performances organised in the style of ‘formal academia’ are still quite common. Most of the Polish participants were the parents of the schoolchildren performing on stage. This kind of festival was somehow familiar to them, resembling various celebrations presented in Polish schools.

A fancy cultural project – *Tết* celebration at the headquarters of Agora

The next day, 2 February 2014 (Sunday), another *Tết* celebration took place in Warsaw. The *Wietnam – Ba Lan Tết* Festival was organised by the Freedom of Speech Society (*Stowarzyszenie Wolnego Słowa*), a Polish NGO advocating for human rights and democracy, and the Vietnamese pro-democratic activists. It was

symptomatic that the festival was held at the headquarters of one of the most important Polish publishers, Agora, which publishes the leading Polish daily newspaper, *Gazeta Wyborcza*. This paper has often presented the point of view of Vietnamese pro-democratic activists, and their leader Tôn Văn Anh is a frequent guest.⁴

The *Tết* celebration, similarly to *Gala Noworoczna* in Raszyn, was to a large extent directed towards children. The central part was the *Children of the Dragon* stage performance prepared by Vietnamese and Polish children, assisted by Polish cultural activists. The show was shown previously in the *Stara Prochownia* Theatre, on 21 December 2013. The premiere was very successful, attracting many Vietnamese as well as Polish spectators. During the *Wietnam – Ba Lan Tết* celebration, other attractions for children were provided, such as a playground and the supervision of a qualified children's caregiver/entertainer.

However, the schedule of the event also included some attractions for adult and teenage participants. Spectators could enjoy performances of young artists, originating mainly from the second generation of the Vietnamese population. Attractions included a concert by the alternative band Yoga Terror (two of the musicians were of Polish–Vietnamese origin), a performance by young Vietnamese beatbox artists, a pop singer and hip-hop dancers. Due to these factors, the event was described in Mạc Việt Hồng's article as a *Tết festival of the second generation*. We should note that all the elements of the programme referred to could also appear during the *Tết* celebrations organised by the official organisations – although the presentation style of *Children of the Dragon*, leaving much space for improvisation, might not match the formalised style of the official celebration very well.

However, in the event organised at Agora there were also some elements of the programme that would be unimaginable during the 'officially approved' *Tết* festival. These aspects included presentation of the amateur documentary film *The Vietnamese*, directed by the pro-democratic activist Tôn Văn Anh, and a campaign for collecting letters of support for the Vietnamese prisoner of conscience Do Thi Minh Hanh, organised in cooperation with Amnesty International. The presence of political aspects among the predominantly cultural event was summed up by Mạc Việt Hồng with the statement: 'Culture and a bit of politics.'

The public attending the *Tết* organised at Czerska street was also distinct from the participants of the Raszyn event. Firstly, it was noticeably less numerous – around 100–150 people took part in the event. Secondly, the Vietnamese formed a minority of the spectators – although their presence in the numbers of around 40–50 people was much more noticeable than during the majority of events organised in the past by pro-democracy activists. Polish attendees prevailed, and the presence of some other foreigners, of Ukrainian or African origin, could also be noticed.

In terms of performance style, a very important feature was the lack of division between the actors of the show and the spectators, as well as between the organisers and the public, which was very visible in the case of Raszyn event. Although the performers, such as the children involved in the show and young singers and dancers, performed on a stage, after the presentations they sat together with the public, sharing their impressions and opinions concerning the event. The organisers willingly chatted with all the guests and participants. The food provided for the participants was distributed throughout the event in buffet form. Both the organisers of the event and the spectators consumed traditional dishes, such as *nem* and *bánh cuốn*, while standing in the hallway of the Agora building and discussing various issues concerning the show. The egalitarian atmosphere was compatible with the age of the participants, of whom the majority were young people, and second- and 1.5-generation Vietnamese. The age profile of the participants was noticeably distinct from the case of the *Gala Noworoczna* event, where the main three groups of participants were schoolchildren, their parents and the authorities of the Raszyn community and official Vietnamese associations.

Cultural events and integration: various styles of promoting Vietnamese culture

The ethnic festivals organised by the migrant communities in cooperation with the institutions or organisations of the host country are commonly aimed at ‘promotion of ethnic culture’ and ‘integration of the migrant community’ (Brettell, Reed-Danahay 2012). In the case of the migrant community of the Vietnamese in Poland, the aim of ‘promoting the ethnic culture’ towards the majority society is currently of growing importance, since the Vietnamese are aware of the fact that they are commonly perceived as a closed and hermetic community, in both popular discourse and scientific literature (see the title of Halik and Nowicka’s book *Vietnamese in Poland: Integration or Isolation?*). During my fieldwork performed among the Vietnamese community in Poland, I heard declarations concerning the willingness of involving Polish people in communal celebrations. For example, when I appeared in the *Tết Trung Thu* (Mid-Autumn Festival, targeted at children) organised in *Chùa Thiên Phúc* pagoda in the proximity of Raszyn together with my family, we were very warmly welcomed. The organisers of the event repeatedly claimed that they are very willing to welcome Polish people during the Vietnamese celebrations because they want to ‘integrate’ and ‘promote their culture.’

Such statements are quite characteristic for the Vietnamese residing in the Lesznów and Raszyn communities, as their presence in this previously culturally homogenous environment is often perceived as a challenge (Piłat 2013). It can justifiably be assumed that the Vietnamese are aware of the tensions that may occur due to the growing presence of the culturally diverse groups in this area and fear the discrimination that they may expect from the local residents. In the past, when the Vietnamese community was concentrated mainly in Warsaw – a metropolis of over 1 million citizens, where the presence of a foreign, non-European community was much less noticeable – the celebrations and festivals organised by the official organisations seemed to be dedicated strictly to the Vietnamese community. The Polish participants present during such events as *Tết* celebrations included only selected guests, such as representatives of the Polish–Vietnamese Friendship Association or scholars investigating the Vietnamese community.

The pro-democratic activists, on the other hand, for many years directed their activity towards the Polish audience. Tôn Văn Anh was very active in Polish media, such as *Gazeta Wyborcza*. The topics presented by the pro-democratic activists covered primarily the issues connected with violation of human rights in Vietnam and problems of irregular migrants. Tôn Văn Anh, together with Robert Krzysztoń from the Freedom of Speech Society, for many years voted for different treatment of the migrants by the Polish authorities, as according to them they should be perceived not as economic migrants, but as refugees seeking asylum from the totalitarian regime. Therefore, the activity of pro-democracy Vietnamese has for a long time been associated strictly with political actions, and not with ‘promotion of Vietnamese culture.’

Significant change came with a project co-organised by the Freedom of Speech Society, which for many years has been cooperating with Vietnamese pro-democracy activists, and the Creative Studio Society (*Stowarzyszenie Pracownia Twórcza*), named the *Interdisciplinary artistic project Vietnam – Ba Lan (Vietnam–Poland)*. The project, lasting three months, was aimed at children. Vietnamese children living in Poland were given the opportunity to participate together with their Polish peers in a series of workshops, during which they learned about Vietnamese legends and traditional stories. The final aim of the workshop was preparation of the stage performance *Children of the Dragon*, during which the children occupied not only the role of the actors, but also creators. They themselves prepared the decorations and participated in the creation of the screenplay. The project, sponsored by the municipal authorities of Warsaw, was nominated for the ‘Best project of 2013’ prize in a city-run contest. The first final of the project was held at the *Stara Prochownia* Theatre on 21 December 2013. During the *Vietnam – Ba Lan Tết* event, the play was performed for the second time.

It should be noted that the project attracted significant attention from various social circles, including the parents and families of the Vietnamese child actors, second- and 1.5 generation Vietnamese brought up in Poland, but also Polish people interested in artistic activity aiming at multiculturalism. From the point of view of the Vietnamese pro-democracy activists it was particularly important that a noticeable amount of Vietnamese people participated in the events, among them some people well known and recognised in the community.

However, the project could not be perceived as an ‘apolitical’ enterprise. As Mạc Việt Hồng aptly noted in her article, its message could be described by the phrase ‘Văn hóa và một chút chính trị’ (‘Culture and a little bit of politics’). The official organisations and the embassy boycotted the event, as they have been doing for a long time with any events undertaken by Tôn Văn Anh and her social group. The *Wietnam – Ba Lan* project was not mentioned by any official media dedicated to the issues of the community. Moreover, in private conversations, some of the participants claimed to me that they were reprimanded by the representatives of the embassy and discouraged from participating in any further events organised by the pro-democratic activists. However, it could be noticed that the trendy cultural project – including the concert of an alternative music band and the presentation of breakdancing – attracted some categories of the Vietnamese audience that were not willing to participate in the official festivals, such as representatives of the 1.5 and 2nd generations – teenagers and young people.

Conclusion: tension between maintaining the bond with the homeland and attracting the young generation of Vietnamese

Both *Tết* festivals described in the article were important events for construction of the ethnic identity of the Vietnamese migrant group as well as bearing some political meaning. Concerning the issue of identity-building, both celebrations were aimed at integration of the Vietnamese community and maintaining the culture among the young generation. The second important dimension of the process of constructing identity was promotion of Vietnamese culture outside the community in order to facilitate the integration with the majority Polish society. Comparing the two *Tết* festival events, it can be noticed that in both cases this aim was fulfilled to some extent.

The common element in both enterprises was the orientation of the festivals towards children. The presence of children was a factor that encouraged participation and played an integrative function. At both the *Gala Noworoczna* Raszyn event and the *Wietnam – Ba Lan* festival organised at the headquarters of Agora, Vietnamese and Polish children performed together on stage and ran around together playing in the corridors. Another platform facilitating integration was the food. Ethnic food is a product often used during ethnic festivals as a convenient and attractive means of promoting culture and a marker of national identity (van Esterik 1982). The Vietnamese rice cake *bánh chưng*, served during the *Tết* holiday, has gained the label of ‘iconic festive dish’ (Avieli 2005). During both festivals, Polish people were deliberating curiously about Vietnamese dishes, which were prepared in the ‘authentic’ manner and therefore significantly different from the Asian cuisine served in popular bars, asking the Vietnamese participants about the correct way of eating particular dishes.

However, in some other aspects the festivals differed significantly, each of them reaching a different kind of public – on both the Vietnamese and the Polish sides. With the Raszyn event, the vast majority of the participants originated from the local community – the Vietnamese working in the trade centres in Wólka Kosowska and their Polish neighbours. To a large extent this reflected the characteristics of the Raszyn Vietnamese community, consisting of people of working age who arrived in Poland quite recently. In the festival organised at Agora, the Vietnamese participants were mainly young people, high-school or university stu-

dents, brought up in Poland. Most of them were more fluent in Polish than in Vietnamese. Discouraged by the formal, 'academia' style of the official Vietnamese events, they were more willing to participate in the trendy artistic project directed by the Vietnamese pro-democratic opposition.

Moving on to the issue of the political dimension of the two festivals, it must be remembered that for both sides – the AVP and the anti-communist activists – the *Tết* festivals were also something of a battlefield in two struggles – the 'struggle for the souls' of the Vietnamese community, and the 'struggle for the image' of the community shared by the public opinion in Poland. Until recently, the pro-democratic activists seemed to fail in the first battle, being unable to gain support in the Vietnamese community – but were quite successful in the second one, presenting in the Polish media the image of the Vietnamese as oppressed by the communist regime. In the AVP, in contrast, there was a relatively high degree of support from the community – counted in the number of participants during the events organised by the official organisations – and the issue of the image of the Vietnamese in public opinion was not of significant interest to them. However, the events organised during *Tết* in 2014 prove that the pro-democratic activists – cooperating with Polish artists and cultural activists – may have a better offer for an important segment of Vietnamese community in Poland – the representatives of the second and 1.5 generations.

The political goals standing behind this 'struggle for souls' are quite obvious in the case of the pro-democratic activists: they are trying to engage the audience – of Polish origin, but also (and probably more importantly) of Vietnamese origin – in the fight to introduce democracy and political pluralism in Vietnam. Such goals obviously stand in tension with the policy of official organisations. Although such events as *Gala Noworoczna* in Raszyn seem to have no connections with the issue of the political system of contemporary Vietnam, it should be remembered that the strategy of 'strategic essentialism' (Spivak *et al.* 1995) adopted by the AVP, based on presenting 'only the culture and no politics,' also contributes to creating a specific image of the Vietnamese. The activity of official organisations, who maintain strong ties with the home country, follows the line of the Vietnamese state policy, and is directed to making use of the economic benefits provided by the immigrants, such as remittances. Therefore, it is aimed at creating an image of an unproblematic and harmonious community, attached to 'traditional Vietnamese culture' and national values, but at the same time unthreatening to the Polish majority society. This image helps to fulfill the basic goal of the Vietnamese state: ensuring that the migrants are the source of economic benefits for the home country and at the same time pose no danger towards the political system of Vietnam.

What seems particularly important is the fact that the example of the two *Tết* festivals proves the relevance of the thesis concerning the importance of diaspora politics in the contemporary world (Scheffer 2003; Vertovec 2005). In the territory of the Republic of Poland, the official migrant organisations, transnationally bound with the state institutions of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, implementing the policy of the Vietnamese government towards the emigrants, play an important role in shaping the integration patterns of the Vietnamese. The activity of the AVP is contested by another transnationally connected actor: pro-democratic activists, who use the model of the American Vietnamese diaspora as a basic point of reference for the Vietnamese residing in Poland. The different nature of transnational connections results in the different performance strategies chosen in the case of the *Wietnam – Ba Lan Tết* Festival and the *Gala Noworoczna* in Raszyn, which influences the reception of both events among both Polish and Vietnamese people. The formal, official style, applied by the AVP due to its high commitment and direct involvement in cooperation with the Vietnamese authorities, may discourage many of the young audience – including the young generation of Vietnamese.

The tension between the demand to present an attractive message for the young audience brought up in Poland and the obligation to remain in the framework created by the formal, officially approved style of presentation was visible during another cultural event which I observed during my fieldwork – the *Lửa Viet*

festival. This celebration, organised for the second time in April 2014, was an event directed strictly towards the Vietnamese youth. However, due to the choice of performance strategies typical of formal events organised in Vietnam – a contest of knowledge, evaluated by a jury consisting of Vietnamese officials – the event mainly reached Vietnamese students who had recently arrived in Poland in order to study. The representatives of the 1.5 and second generations were involved to a small extent. The Vietnamese youth brought up in Poland commonly experience significant identity dilemmas, balancing between adapting the Polish or Vietnamese self-identification and value system (Grabowska 2005; Szymańska 2006; Szymańska-Matusiewicz 2007). When what the official Vietnamese organisations offer culturally proves inadequate for them, they may either completely lose interest in participating in ethnic shows or turn towards events organised by the pro-democratic activists. In that case, the choices taken by the Vietnamese youth – concerning the sphere of leisure and motivated by aesthetic factors – will also have a political meaning, proving the importance of ethnic festivals as an expression of diaspora politics.

Funding

The research was a part of the project entitled *Vietnamese from Poland – Transnational Migrant Community as a Bridge between Poland and Vietnam*, SONATA grant no. 2013/09/D/HS6/02675, sponsored by National Centre for Science, Poland (NCN).

Notes

¹ Concerning the issue of occupational diversity of the Vietnamese community, see the results of the Centre of Migration Research Survey: Górny, Grzymała-Kazłowska, Kępińska, Fihel, Piekut (2007), Kaczmarczyk, Okólski (eds) (2008).

² In the year 2008, pro-democratic activists organised a photography exhibition presenting the lives of Vietnamese people in Poland, entitled *Warsaw's Little Saigon*. The title of the exhibition refers to 'Little Saigons' – Vietnamese enclaves in American cities. Usage of the name of the former capital of Southern Vietnam may seem strange given the fact that most of the migrants living in Poland originate from Northern Vietnam and do not feel attached to the former Republic of Vietnam. Similarly, members of the pro-democratic opposition commonly use a yellow flag with three red stripes (the flag of former Southern Vietnam), i.e. in films directed by opposition members or during public exhibitions. For discussion concerning the symbolic meaning and political context of usage of the two Vietnamese flags, see Le (2012).

³ A few years ago (in 2009, 2010 and 2011), the Polish NGO 'Arteria' organised some celebrations connected with the *Tết* holiday. They were organised in the form of a club party or disco, aimed mainly at young people. The Vietnamese involved in organisation of the events were a few representatives of the 1.5 generation of migrants, and the vast majority of participants were Polish people. Due to the narrow target and weak participation of the Vietnamese community, I decided not to include these events in the category of 'ethnic festival.'

⁴ Analysis of the online archive of *Gazeta Wyborcza* indicates that Tôn Văn Anh was mentioned in over 40 articles published in the paper, dating from 2003 until 2014. See: <http://www.archiwum.wyborcza.pl/archiwum/tag/ton+van+anh?ktory=3&orderByDate=1>.

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Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Acculturation of Young Vietnamese Women in Poland

Ewa Nowicka*

The article focuses on the adaptation and acculturation of Vietnamese immigrants in the Polish society. Specifically, it concentrates on the situation of young Vietnamese women. It is based on analysis of 22 regular interviews and supplementary informal conversations with young Vietnamese immigrants in Warsaw conducted between 2007 and 2012. The author stresses the psychological problems and internal conflicts brought about by the process of adapting to Polish ways of living and thinking. The researched group was composed of 1.5 and second generation of Vietnamese who either were born in Poland, or grew up here from an early age. The situation of these young people, in particular of young women, grows on profound differences between expectations addressed to them in the Vietnamese society from which they come from, and the Polish culture in which they chose to or must live. Many Vietnamese norms are deeply inculcated and internalised – for instance those connected with having children, especially sons or those connected with the higher position of the older generation. At the same time, young Vietnamese immigrants find various Polish normative solutions much more attractive and favourable, for instance giving more freedom to girls by Polish parents, equal relations between men and women (especially between spouses and between parents and children).

Keywords: Vietnamese migrants; young women migrants; acculturation; cultural change

The Vietnamese in Poland

The Vietnamese community is the largest immigrant group in Poland among the diaspora coming from non-European countries. However, there are serious difficulties in determining the group's numbers: at present, estimates oscillate around 30 000, in comparison with estimations of 35 000 around a decade ago (Halik, Nowicka 2002; Halik 2006; Lesińska 2014). The problem is that there are no official statistics on the number of illegal immigrants entering Poland. Figures in the 2011 census speak of about 4 000 people declaring themselves to be of Vietnamese nationality, including 3 000 declaring only Vietnamese and 1 000 people who declared themselves to have both Vietnamese and Polish nationality, with Vietnamese as the first (no one declared Vietnamese as a second nationality). Neither the Ministry of the Interior nor Polish Vietnamese associations accept these results, and both are more than sceptical about the accuracy of these numbers. The problem comes from the fact that Vietnamese people avoid the census researchers and see them as representing the Polish authorities. Some do so because of their illegal status, and others because of their

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illegal activities (Iglicka, Gmaj 2010). It should be emphasised that Vietnamese migrants in Poland are not political refugees; their migration is voluntary and is based on the hope of increasing their social status through the emigration.

Two waves can be distinguished in the Vietnamese migration to Poland, which differ in many social aspects. The Vietnamese called the 'first wave' came to Poland from the early 1950s onwards (Halik, Kosowicz, Marek 2009) as students of an international exchange programme, a system of aid for poorer socialist countries. Some of them – against the will of the communist authorities of their country – decided not to return to Vietnam. In 1986, this group founded the Vietnamese Socio-Cultural Association in Poland and started the publication of the periodical called *Van Viet*. The Vietnamese from this first wave are now middle-aged or elderly people, sometimes married to Polish spouses, usually with their own adult children. All of them are well educated, with fluency in Polish language and an excellent grasp of Polish history, and are immersed in Polish social life.

The 'second wave' consists of those economic migrants who came to Poland after the 1990s and were mainly engaged in trade and small catering. Those of the second wave – economic migration – can be characterised by low levels of interest in the Polish culture and integration with Polish society, although they are very well adapted in a practical sense, acting smoothly in doing their businesses. Rarely are they able to speak Polish fluently, so their knowledge of Polish social life is rather limited (Halik, Nowicka 2002; Grabowska 2010; Piłat 2012). This second wave of Vietnamese immigrants largely used earlier networks of family relations with the first-wave Vietnamese, who already had a stable position in Polish society. It is important to note that legal status, not always regulated in the case of Vietnamese migrants, at first influences the economic and professional adaptation of immigrants of the second/economic wave (Grzymała-Kazłowska 2008; Wysińska 2012; Stefańska, Szulecka 2013).

In Poland, a country that 'sends' its citizens abroad rather than 'receiving' foreigners, the considerable immigrant group constituted by the Vietnamese has attracted the attention of scholars of various disciplines. There has been a recent interest in stereotypes of Vietnamese immigrants in Poland (Nowicka 2006), their ways of adaptation to the Polish social environment, and the diversity of identity strategies in different groups of the Vietnamese diaspora (Winiarska 2011; Szymańska 2006; Szymańska-Matusiewicz 2011, 2013), as well as the functioning of Polish–Vietnamese marriages (Halik 2004; Winiarska 2011). This article focuses on Vietnamese adaptation and acculturation in Polish society, concentrating on the situation of young Vietnamese women, their opinions on relations inside the family, between children and parents, between spouses, and generally between men and women. It is important to take into account traditional Vietnamese gender roles, intergenerational contract/relations, and the institution of the family, marriage or the notion of filial piety as contrasting in many respects to the Polish aspects of social life (Halik, Nowicka, Połec 2006). Family structure is treated by Vietnamese people living both in Vietnam and in Poland as a crucial, absolutely stable institution, not affected by foreign influences, and the 'core' social element in Vietnamese culture (Szymańska-Matusiewicz 2013; Grabowska 2005; Smolicz 1987). I focus on these particular aspects of differences between Vietnamese and Polish social life. Moreover, the research of Ewa Grabowska (2005) and Grażyna Szymańska-Matusiewicz (2013) indicates that Vietnamese immigrants in Poland as parents are more restrictive and more traditional than the same generation of parents living in Vietnam; this makes the situation of young Vietnamese women born or brought up in Polish reality especially difficult.

Vietnamese immigrants enter Polish society through the process of group adaptation, to a great extent closed in their own ethnic environment. Their social contacts with Poles are usually superficial, and cultural relations with Poland are usually limited. However, there are also some Vietnamese immigrants who have a very deep connection with the Polish culture and whose close contact extends to marrying Poles.

Internal division is also an *emic* category incumbent in Poland, as the first wave Vietnamese ‘ex-student’ group are also consciously distinct from the later wave (economic) – and they stress and affirm their specificity. They associate with similar migrants – their Vietnamese friends are mainly people who studied in Poland, and contacts with Vietnamese people who arrived later are seldom, and most often for economic reasons. We find this image in some interviewees’ declarations. They talk about economic migrants from Vietnam using the word ‘they’. As a 40-year-old man, twice married in Poland, belonging to the ‘first wave’ said, *They are a completely different line because they mainly come here to trade and set up restaurants, and I wanted to do something rather different, so we do not get along. Sometimes I buy something from them, sometimes I eat with them, and at the end there is no contact* (Winiarska 2011: 82). It is rare to hear about their dealings with the newcomers, exchange of services and mutual aid with them.

Some aspects of the differences between these two groups are demonstrated by the following statement from a young Vietnamese woman, the daughter of a ‘first-wave migrant’:

*In my generation all Vietnamese studied very hard and we are now studying abroad or at a very prestigious university, but now it's a new generation of students who are very mediocre. So a lot has changed, they don't study too much. Previously it was a generation whose parents came for colleges, for example, my dad. Then for me the emphasis was on the study, and as it is now, most Vietnamese people come simply from Vietnam just to earn money...*¹

Topic of the study and theoretical underpinning

The theoretical inspiration for this article comes from Malewska-Peyre’s observation analysing the process of changes in migrants’ values and behaviours affected by prolonged living in a foreign cultural environment (Boski, Jarymowicz, Malewska-Peyre 1992: 10). This article raises questions about the state of adaptation and acculturation in Polish society, as well as the type and model of identity and internal psychological conflicts among the young generation of Vietnamese female immigrants living in Warsaw and the city suburbs.

The concept of acculturation applied in this article is in accordance with the anthropological tradition (Redfield, Linton, Herskovits 1936; Spicer 1961) accepting the majority of contemporary psychological uses of the concept (Berry 2003, 2006). Acculturation is defined here not as every cultural and social change resulting from cultural contact, but only those changes that occur (1) during the life of an individual or a generation and (2) concerning crucial elements of the value system, affecting the rules and norms of interpersonal relations, which (3) may occur as the result of prolonged (not incidental) cultural contact. My concept of acculturation refers to both individual attitudes and values and to the changing social context (Fischer, Moradi 2001; Matsudaira 2006).

My theoretical inspiration is provided by studies which show how the age of entering into contact with a foreign culture, the possibility of secondary socialisation, and the intensity of contact are crucial factors of profound acculturation changes in an individual way of thinking and behaving (Matsudaira 2006). I am also applying a two-dimensional concept of cultural identity and competence of migrants (Sam 2000; Berry 2003; Phinney, Devich-Navarro 1997). The individual preferences, reflexivity and psychological functioning in both cultures are factors which I find very important in the process of adaptation and acculturation (Matsudaira 2006). Though in general terms I accept John Berry’s concept of acculturation, I do not agree with his theory, which neglects two different aspects, namely the conscious (reflective) and mechanical (not reflective) level of the process: ethnic identity on one hand, and cultural competence on the other, which do not need to agree in their tendency. A person may accept his/her Vietnamese ethnicity without any doubt but may reject particular elements of Vietnamese tradition. This is the case that I will elaborate in detail.

Methodology and the studied group

My research includes those young Vietnamese women who were either born in Poland or grew up here from an early age. It therefore excludes short-term migrants. The researched group consists of those young women who had the opportunity to participate in two different social orders: Vietnamese family and Polish schools. They have sometimes attended primary school, and sometimes high school and/or university.

The research method is purely qualitative, with 26 interviews collected between 2006 and 2012. The interviewees were Vietnamese women between 18 and 33 years of age, working or studying, four of them married (one to a Polish husband) and two with children. All interviews were conducted in Polish and all interviewees had a very good command of the Polish language. The young women interviewed talked voluntarily, so the interviews were long (between 45 and 90 minutes); all interviews were recorded and transcribed. The interviews were conducted sometimes at the home of the interviewee, and more often in a coffee shop, school building or the place the interviewee worked. Interviewers were either one of my students (Aleksandra Winiarska, Grażyna Szymańska, Anna Małachowska) or myself. The three young interviewers were generally of the same age as the interviewees, which favoured the informal character of the conversation. I was also a participant observer during various formal and informal contacts with Vietnamese migrants.

It should be noted that the young people researched here are in a particularly difficult situation, being under the psychological pressure of coming from both groups (the migratory one and the receiving society) and from both cultures – Vietnamese and Polish. The serious differences separating the two cultures make the situation even more complicated. The title of the article indicates the difficult psychological and identity crisis faced by this group.

The situation of these young people, in particular young women, develops into profound differences between the expectations addressed to them in Vietnamese society from which they come and from the Polish culture in which they chose to or must live. On the one hand, they find the strength of family roles, family ties and family expectations, communality, hierarchy and obligations. On the other, they feel a sense of inability to complete the ‘fusion’ in Polish society because of the obvious physical differences, perceived by Poles as well as by the Vietnamese people themselves as noticeable and substantial. I will attempt to show differences that can be observed in the process of adaptation and acculturation to Polish culture between (1) young people, which are the second generation – children of Vietnamese immigrants of the ‘first wave’ and those of the ‘second wave,’ and (2) young men and young women in both waves.

Previous anthropological studies (e.g. P. Radin, H. Spicer, R. Linton, N. Lourie) indicate that Native Americans exhibit gender differences in the forms and intensity of adaptation and acculturation to new Euro-American models of life. The process is much more difficult, including a higher proportion of pathological phenomena and dramatic psychological difficulties among males than females. Women ‘cope with’ acculturation to Euro-American patterns much more easily, partly because of the rise rather than the decrease in their status. This also preserves the possibility of the maintenance of their traditional roles as a concurrent technical facilitator in everyday life, as a result of the contact with a higher level of civilisation. Where a clash of civilisations takes place, men usually suffer more because of being cut off from the social gender roles that gave them the social status enabling them to demonstrate their manhood.

I am well aware of the limitations of vast comparisons, stemming from the diversity of cultural contact between Vietnamese migrants’ culture and the Polish culture described by anthropologists. I discuss the above-mentioned observations only as an inspiration to analyse the differences in response to contact with the European culture in young Vietnamese men and women. One such situation is marriage with Poles, which requires a change in the basic native principle values and behavioural patterns.

In this article, I focus on that particular category of young people who are born and raised in Poland. In general, they spent all their lives, or at least most of the period of early socialisation and schooling, in Poland. The children of the second wave usually spent their early childhood in Vietnam.

Poland and Vietnam: cultural differences

The cultural differences between Polish and Vietnamese society are perceived as significant by both sides. For some Vietnamese people, it seems impossible to overcome these differences. Poles do not like dealing with the Vietnamese lack of expressiveness, with no displays of affection, anger or hatred. These are unintelligible behaviours for Polish interlocutors. In business and, even more so, in close relations, the approach of not giving opinions is perceived as 'secrecy' and is perceived negatively. The Vietnamese, however, are surprised by Poles' concern for privacy, which from their point of view makes the country sad.

In Vietnamese tradition, the family, lineage, local community or ethnic group a person belongs to define the individual's identity. In the traditional family model, with its sources in Confucian philosophy, marriage was in fact a ritual way of paying tribute to ancestors, arranged for the family according to their wishes. Today it is said of this tradition that *[the] family was considered a superior value and its interests were considered as more important than those of the individual man and woman in marriage* (Halik 2004: 207).

The family in Vietnam is basically multigenerational, and the relationships between family members are based primarily on the patrilineal authority, i.e. the father being the head of the family and the oldest living man. Legally, the wife has a lower position than her husband or mother-in-law because of her age and/or her gender. Nowadays, this model is largely maintained in Vietnamese thinking, even among the emigrant population.

In Poland, the family has evolved towards a two-generation model, and one of partnership between the spouses, and to some extent, between parents and children. To be sure, these tendencies also influence Vietnamese immigrant families. In the Vietnamese family, from an early age, children are introduced to a hierarchical social system. They are taught to understand that social system is equal to generational hierarchy and not to human equality. Both were valid in the family and in the wider society. Young people are taught properly and rewarded for submissive behaviour to their parents and people of a perceived higher social status. They should not express their own opinion, nor show their assertiveness or independent thinking. From an early age, children are taught the appropriate Vietnamese etiquette, correct behaviour in relations with family members and submission to the hierarchical structure of family and society as a whole. This adherence to etiquette ensures the maintenance of the social, transcendent order and the harmony of the functioning community at all levels of society, including the family and gender relations. Traditionally in Vietnam, the multi-generational and extended family was part of the local community as an economic unit, i.e. working together for the entire community. However, this model changed, and was not accepted when the French colonial authorities introduced acceptance of immigration, which meant leaving one's family and one's home village and as a consequence leaving one's local community (Halik 2006: 17).

The traditional model of the Vietnamese family and community life assumed the subordination of women's fate exclusively to family goals (Ngo 2004). Despite the many changes in the value system of Vietnamese immigrants, this aspect of the female social role is reflected in various aspects of the thinking of today's immigrants. Young Vietnamese female immigrants are much less concerned with the question of national self-identity (and the way it is defined) than are young men. The reason is the specificity of the Vietnamese tradition, in which women, in particular young and unmarried ones, are much more attached to the 'space of family, home' (Ngo 2004), resulting in a reduction of their contacts with the external and non-household world (Szymańska 2006). It is also indicative that among the 15 cases of Polish–Vietnamese married couples

in Aleksandra Winiarska's study, only four are mixtures of Vietnamese women with Polish husbands, while 11 are Polish wives with Vietnamese husbands (Winiarska 2011). The asymmetry of the surveyed families results from the difficulty in finding a marriage in which a Vietnamese woman married a Polish man. I explain this by the Vietnamese tradition, according to which men can easily afford to go beyond the ethnic group in their life plans, while women are more likely to be kept in the vicinity of their own ethnic community. Girls are given a lot less freedom in their social life in Vietnamese families, especially over their choice of spouse. They are treated with a much greater degree of control in their daily lives, and this is more visible after emigration in Poland.

The meaning of life is different for women of both waves of Vietnamese immigration. Those coming from the first wave are more 'Polonised' and have fewer traditional pressures. They are the daughters of former students. The older and younger members of the first wave of Vietnamese immigrants have ambitions similar to young Polish women's ambitions. Young Vietnamese girls educated in Poland have different aspirations in life from the role of women in Vietnam. One of these girls says of the bad influence of traditional patterns for young ambitious Vietnamese women:

I also know a Vietnamese girl who graduated and also studied abroad and came back here to Poland and married. Her husband has a business here and she followed him in his business. It is a pity because her mother spent a lot of money on her education abroad and she is doing business. So it makes no sense at all. I know I would not want to do the same.

Some young women say openly: *Well, I rather recognise such a system, I was practically born in Poland, and so I definitely want to work and to be in a high professional position.* This woman remarks that her husband must accept her aspirations: *I do not want to be some kind of a stay-at-home housewife. At home, the division of work and responsibilities should be shared equally... I want to work in a bank, and not just be a stay-at-home. I don't want to be just a housewife.*

These sorts of declarations are present in interviews with the young generation coming from the 'first' wave as well as in interviews with the economic wave of Vietnamese immigration. However, young women belonging to the second wave of economic Vietnamese migration, employed in trade, are deeply rooted in traditional patterns of life.

From these interviews we can conclude that for young Vietnamese women from both waves of immigration, Polish reality concerning gender roles and internal family relations seems to be much more attractive than their native Vietnamese lifestyle. They frequently point to the positive aspects of the Polish tradition. At the same time, they also often openly criticise the Vietnamese approach to certain norms and rules deriving from the tradition derived largely from Confucianism and Buddhism.

The ideal young woman

It is worth mentioning that the young women researched were not explicitly evaluating the entire Polish culture and Vietnamese culture as a whole; they talked about both cultures selectively, focusing on the expectations of both cultural traditions addressed specifically to young women. They disagree with the belief about the roles of women, drawn from the tradition of Vietnam, and they also accept Polish demands in the area of the division of duties in family life. Knowing well the expectations of Vietnamese tradition directed to women (particularly to young women), they prefer to see their future lives in the categories and roles attributed to women by Poles. They stress the importance of personal development, life satisfaction and some shyly exhibited facets of hedonism. Although the young women interviewed stressed that remaining Vietnamese in

the young generation is important both for them and for their parents, they emphasised that observance of the Vietnamese tradition may coincide with their new aspirations. They feel they cannot properly face the expectations directed to them by their parents as young women. They demonstrate the feeling that their aspirations have changed since their migration in Poland compared to women who spent most of their lives in Vietnam.

This individualisation through the implementation of their own personal ambitions, passions, and purposes is contrary to the traditional Vietnamese perception of extended family, clan and lineage. These are the most important points of reference in the field of the traditional Vietnamese value system. This is expressed in young women's rebellion against the control of their family – and especially their parents – over their personal lives. The traditional ideal images of Vietnamese women are for them to be submissive, quiet, always smiling, not standing out, accommodating, passive, always agreeing with their husbands and ceasing to be attractive. Young Vietnamese women (the second generation of the second wave) pointed out various aspects of these attitude changes in the thinking of the younger generation of Vietnamese migrants: *Women are definitely more independent. Polish girls are certainly more independent. It may sound very negative, but the Vietnamese woman is seen more as the property of men.* She also indicates another difference between the Polish and Vietnamese way of life, important in her newly organised value system; this is the traditional ideal vision of a Vietnamese girl which is totally inadequate to the contemporary demands of modern civilisation: *In Poland, people are taught that everyone should be very, very self-confident, so women in Poland are more confident, they do what they want to do.*

During my visit to Vietnam 2010 I met women who studied very well, but in general they were not very confident. They were pretty, but were not taught to speak up, to express their views, to look someone directly in the eye. When they were looking for a job, they thought they would not get it. They had a very pessimistic opinion in every way. Although many of them were very smart, they were taught not to open their mouths to elderly people, etc. As a result of such belittling, it is always the woman who has to take care of the man, the man is always in first place, etc., and it is the man who selects his partner, whereas in Poland it is the opposite trend. Many women hit men. Another young woman says with irony:

A daughter should be lovely, sweet, nice (teasing), take care of everything... should know how to cook – it is very, very, very important, especially Vietnamese dishes. She takes care of her husband and the family. It's all just so the perfect housewife is the ideal type of girl. A guy... generally the ideal man should earn money and it's probably the only feature that a man must have, because the rest is just drink and play cards and they are rude.

This kind of criticism, attacking traditional gender roles, is common in the opinions expressed by my young Vietnamese interlocutors. The formerly obviously higher social position of men and lower position of woman is no longer accepted by all my interviewees. Some Vietnamese girls are beginning to behave in exactly the same way as young Polish women; this tendency is noticed and commented upon by Vietnamese female immigrants.

Return to Vietnam?

As a result of these changes, most young Vietnamese women raised in Poland cannot accept or even imagine returning to Vietnam for good: *My parents really, really want me to go back. And I rather do not fit entirely into the environment of Vietnam, to the culture there.* The interviewee assumes that the customs in Vietnam cannot possibly change: *Because for me, but after all, a woman there should be more the traditional woman, such as a housewife. And I will never get used to it [this kind of life]. Besides, I don't want to get used to it.*

Finally, the interviewed woman refers to the economic argument: *And still further wages in Vietnam are five times lower than in Poland. Though the standard of living there is also different. Above all, you pay less. However, there is the difference.* The interviewee has some future plans – Poland, however, is not the ultimate choice: *I would like to, in the future, live somewhere near Asia or Singapore or Australia to be able to visit my parents from time to time.* The attitude of young Vietnamese women living in Poland towards both Vietnam and Vietnamese tradition is complex. Whereas they criticise, reject and accept the traditional standards imposed on women and men, at the same time they express their devotion to family, even in relation to future plans for further migration. Another Vietnamese woman adopts a similar position: *Family is important – respect for the other person.* Immediately after these words, the interviewee speaks about totally different values:

Such a development is important – not to stay all the time in the same place and accept everything... to make progress, to get an education, to explore the world, to see how other people live, what they dream about, because this is very interesting. Also to help others as much as possible.

At the same time, she added some caution:

Of course we should do so not at the cost of losing ourselves, acting within reason. We should stay in one place like everybody, like other people, just listen to what goes around and not... You just have to be open and to be so active in life to have some contacts in this life.

A long-term migrant examines the situation of the Vietnamese in Poland, referring to her own experience:

The influences that you have from childhood are a very powerful factor, it is the subconscious that you can't manage to ignore, but I think it is worth doing it. Because people have such a possibility – they are not an animal that lives instinctively, only one is aware of it and should exercise one's choice to enjoy this life as much as possible, to get something from this life, because time goes by so fast. Already I have lived here for 20 years and I feel like it was yesterday. I regret what I haven't done, not what I have done.

A substantial compromise permeates the reflections of those who have lived in Poland as immigrants for many years. Their experience gives them a strong basis for estimating the particular choices immigrants have to face in their lives.

Family and having children as crucial value

Young Vietnamese people watch young Poles having fun and want to do the same. And yet they rule out returning – at some point in their lives – to Vietnam. At the same time, young Vietnamese women consistently accept the traditional value of the family – it is valid to increase the size of the family. Having children is undoubtedly important for the Vietnamese immigrants, and every woman chooses to give birth as soon as possible. All women emphasise that they want to have children, and among the interviewees, none of the young women had the slightest doubt about that:

Vietnamese girls want to have children, for them it is a kind of gift. Very few women of my age do not have children [in Vietnam]. They all wish to have two, three children. Some also decide too late on the second child and they have a problem, but they try it just because they earn money for it. If there are no

children, what is it all for, you know? You can travel, but these children are really a gift, I think too that if I had the right conditions I would want to have children. You pass your genes on, the children inherit, there is more fun, there is more fun in the family. If someone is older... is already in old age their grandchildren will come and they will give fun at home, if only for that reason.

Children are followers of the family, of the lineage, and they have the duty to take care of their aged parents. This is just the fulfilment of obligations, recorded in the Confucian tradition. The young immigrants say that the Vietnamese family tradition is particularly simply to have children, it is a kind of gift. This is a gift and we believe that if a young couple has a child it means that it is a gift from the heavens. When a woman cannot give birth, this means that something has happened, some sort of punishment to the couple. It is very desirable to have children. And there are few people who decide not to have children, who do not want to have them. In practice, however, the number of children (one or two) is adapted to the conditions of life in the diaspora. The value of having descendants remains important, despite the critical attitude towards many of the traditional values. The traditional gender hierarchy is preserved in many forms. It is taken for granted that it is good to have at least one son, who will continue the family tree. Therefore, the parents of two and three girls often seek to have more children: *I would like to have two or three. With the first child I would firmly and decisively want it to be a boy, then it's neutral.* When asked why, the interlocutor replies: *Because as I have been with the Vietnamese tradition then it should be a boy. And on the other hand, in my college group all the other students are boys, because I'm the only girl in the group so I could easily see that all the guys who have an older sister are less masculine. I noticed that the first boy is a nice case.* This request is repeated in interviews: *I'd love to have a boy, then a girl, because I always wanted to have a brother. I would love to have two children.*

Young Vietnamese girls pay attention to the man's preferences: *For a father, it is very important to have a son.* As the Vietnamese proverb says, *A daughter is worth less than two hens*, or *Ten daughters does not mean as much as one son* (Phuong, Mazingarbe 2003). Boys are considered as part of retirement benefits for old parents – a sort of social security for their old age. Traditionally, it is the responsibility of a boy to remain at home and take care of his parents. The daughter, on the contrary, leaves the parental home upon marriage. Although today daughters, like sons, in fact help their elderly parents, the patrilineal continuation goes through males. The position of the genders is not equal; it is the feeling of the unequal value of genders among the Vietnamese immigrants that is associated with the patriarchal, patrilineal, and patrilocal social structure. However, young Vietnamese women, when asked openly about their opinions on gender equality in the family living in Poland, do not take either side regarding the head of the family. Yet it is significant that in the answers of the young women it never occurred to them to say that the woman is the head of the family, although invariably my interviewees emphasised the egalitarian model of coexistence in married couples.

Immigrant living conditions are an absolutely conducive factor in the formation of a new pattern. Young female immigrants usually break the Vietnamese tradition and work during pregnancy until the end for purely economic reasons. They rarely give up their job after childbirth, and return to work as soon as possible. The baby is in the care either of grandparents, who are also in Poland, or of a hired babysitter. Parents sometimes arrive in Poland especially to take care of their grandchild. A young mother might even take her child to the work place. The interviewees pointed to the consequences of this situation: *Now, in this new generation, Vietnamese children are very, very spoiled. Because, in Poland, especially because parents work, at the market or wherever, they do not even have time to take care of them and usually give them a lot of money and buy what they want,* says a young woman from the second generation of the first wave of Vietnamese immigration, criticising customs among economic immigrants. It sometimes happens that Vietnamese par-

ents give their children for some time to Polish families in the village for child rearing. Only the wealthiest Vietnamese mothers employ a Polish (or, more rarely, Ukrainian) babysitter at home. The priority and main goal is to earn money in Poland. This situation creates extreme conditions for raising children, including infants, who are neglected and treated as an obstacle rather than a source of happiness. These are the observations of Polish and Ukrainian nannies hired by Vietnamese parents who talk with a frown.

Marriage and having children

Among the young Vietnamese women brought up in Poland, there are new ways of thinking about having children – this does not necessarily happen immediately after the wedding. Vietnamese girls want to give a better life to their future children and at the same time ensure that they have pleasure and fun in their youth. The first wave of Vietnamese immigrants kept the pattern of traditional family and tried to impose it upon their children. The situation is different among immigrants of the second wave. These women are much more engaged in their jobs, and cannot face all the demands of the traditional Vietnamese family model.

All parents, however, still claim a major share in the decisions of their children, not only daughters, to marry. Most often, young women are not able to ignore the will of their parents, but rebel against this internally:

I got married when I was 23 years old. My parents knew that I had been dating my current husband for some time, and put pressure on us that we should marry, that this was the time. It has already been adopted as the culture of Vietnam that a woman should be married to have children. My parents really wanted to have grandchildren.

In the past, matchmaking of young people was common in Vietnam. I have also encountered this phenomenon among the Vietnamese in Poland, although such arrangements are strongly camouflaged and hidden from the Polish, and even Vietnamese community.

The choice of the nationality of the boy who may be a proper candidate as husband is another question, often being a source of intergenerational conflict. We also meet with the conscious rejection of the opinion:

The Vietnamese always feel that if you are a Vietnamese girl then you need to marry a Vietnamese man and vice versa. Because they say that with cultural differences, such marriages are not successful, they may break up. My parents would always tell me to marry a Vietnamese man, not a Pole, but I don't think so.

It is symptomatic that in interviews with young women there are reluctant opinions towards marriage to Vietnamese men: *I'd rather like a Pole. Vietnamese men are rude. Only at first are they loving, and after marriage they betray, deceive and do nothing.* On the 'Miss Sajgon' blog one can read a Vietnamese girl saying that: *In paradise, your wife is Vietnamese. In hell, your husband is Vietnamese.*²

Family hierarchy

Hierarchy based on age and gender dominates the Vietnamese families still living in Poland. During my interviews, Vietnamese women analysed and talked about the phenomenon with emotion. Parent–child relationships are based on submission to older people, who should always be given respect and obedience, and these relations do not change with age. They persist between mother and daughter, grandmother and granddaughter, aunt and niece, etc., and even between older and younger siblings (Szymańska 2006). Even the language always reflects signs of hierarchy occurring in the behaviour:

In my opinion, in a typical Vietnamese family it is different from in a Polish family. For example, children have to listen, yes, to listen to their parents, and discussing with them is impossible, because they think that it is talking back, for example, in my case it is difficult to talk or discuss things with my parents. This is because they believe they are always right, because they have life experience. They believe that they and not their children can always be right. And sometimes the opposite is true.

Mothers usually only teach their daughters, give them tips, and rarely talk to them about their problems, and their relationship is rather formal. Young women talk about these relations from a comparative perspective, with the benefit of their observation in the Polish environment:

I recently had a conversation with my Polish friends and I found that in Poland people often talk, the mother often talks to her daughter about matters of the heart, general matters, etc. And in Vietnam there is such a hierarchy that generally parents speak only with children about school, etc., but never about feelings. It was very strange to my friends that my parents do not know about them or about the fact that I have a Polish boyfriend; I generally don't talk about such things. When I present him to them, it will be to tell them that he is probably my future husband.

The interviewee makes the following general remark: *In Asia, the intensity of interaction between the child and the parents is much lower than in Poland.* Sometimes, the parents have little contact with their children because of their hard work in the trade. The everyday living conditions result in the bad marks that children get in school. Children are involved in helping their parents, and school plays a secondary role that should be interpreted in terms of the immigration situation. Yet this development occurs only in the case of economic migration. In this way, the traditional normative order is destroyed by specific economic circumstances and not as the result of a real acculturation process. Despite this process, education remains highly valued:

From time to time my parents and we [children] watch TV together and that is all because I also have a lot of reading. During the school year, I often return home very late and there are days when we don't see each other, because I come back and they're already asleep. And usually we meet only to eat supper and perhaps watch TV.

Also, it is often difficult for children to adjust to total dependence on and control on the part of their parents while living in Poland and having contact with their schoolmates. Submissiveness is no longer so acceptable: *Since I came to Poland I can never agree with my parents so easily. Already eight years!* In Vietnamese families, children are strictly controlled, though boys are given much more freedom than girls. Vietnamese parents care about the reputation of their daughters. They cannot go out alone or with an unknown company, they need to tell their parents where, for how long, with whom they want to go out. A young Vietnamese girl

says with irony: *It would be best not to go out anywhere. I can go out sometimes but it is like that: 'OK, you may go', but it is said grudgingly.* None of my informants doubted the need to give reverence to parents, even though they expect more tolerance from them.

Conclusions

Young Vietnamese women living in Poland as immigrants who were here from their childhood face permanent pressure from two groups and the norms of two value systems: the Vietnamese one represented by the family (and particularly by parents) and the Polish one, represented by the Polish environment (school-mates, friends, teachers, anonymous people in the street and in various Polish institutions). They always have to decide, choose, and find a proper, or at least a less conflicting way of behaviour, all the time thinking about the demands of the mother, father, grandparents, aunts or even simply elder persons in Vietnamese immigrant groups. Many Vietnamese norms are deeply inculcated and internalised – for instance those connected with having children, especially sons, or those norms referring to the higher position of the older generation. At the same time, they find various Polish normative solutions much more attractive and favourable for them, for instance Polish parents giving more freedom to girls, equal relations between men and women, especially between spouses and between parents and children. Such a life leads to numerous dilemmas and psychological problems, together with permanent stress. It should be noted that every young Vietnamese long-distance migrant is conscious of the fact that every choice he/she makes is against somebody and against one's value system. His or her choice is between the devil and the deep blue sea.

Notes

¹ I use some extracts from interviews conducted in the course of my research seminar at the Institute of Sociology, University of Warsaw.

² <http://saigon.blox.pl/html> (accessed: 12 June 2013).

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The Disjunctive Politics of Vietnamese Immigrants in America from the Transnational Perspective

Hao Phan*

This paper examines the politics of Vietnamese immigrants in America from the transnational perspective. Vietnamese immigrants' politics are transnational due to two factors: their life experiences with the communists in Vietnam, and the current political situation in the home country. The impact these two factors have upon the politics of Vietnamese immigrants in America is complex. Although most Vietnamese living in America are anticommunist, they do not share the same level of hostility toward the government in Vietnam. This paper provides some insights into the complex politics of Vietnamese immigrants in America which are transnational and 'disjunctive.'

Keywords: Vietnamese Americans, Vietnamese immigrants, refugees, politics, transnationalism

Introduction

It is cold here, but not as cold as in the 'reeducation camps' in Vietnam, my life in America is still too good, said Mr Trung, a refugee from Vietnam, when I asked him whether the winter in Illinois was difficult for him. Ironically, for Mr Trung, life in tropical Vietnam after the war was indeed much harsher than winter in the American Midwest. As a lieutenant in the defeated South Vietnamese army, he was imprisoned in the so-called 're-education camps' for three years by the communists who took over the whole country in April 1975. In the brutal conditions of the camps, he performed forced labour, living in constant fear of punishment by the camp authorities or of death from starvation. After 21 years living under the communist regime, Mr Trung and his family came to America as refugees in 1996. They worked hard, stayed together and quickly settled down in the new country. Today Mr Trung's family owns a house, his children hold professional jobs, and he himself works in a college library. The stable economic status of the family has allowed Mr Trung to pursue his lifelong interest in Buddhism. He is now a monk at a Vietnamese Buddhist temple in Rockford, Illinois, the religious and cultural centre for the small Vietnamese community in the city. As a Buddhist monk, Mr Trung still pays close attention to politics in Vietnam and is highly critical of the Vietnamese government. Like most Vietnamese in America, his politics have been shaped in the crucible of his own experiences of war, imprisonment and immigration, and the current political situation in his home country.

Although the Vietnamese community in America is generally regarded as anti-communist, political diversity exists within it. While most Vietnamese Americans are strongly critical of the Vietnamese government,

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some are more tolerant. This paper seeks to show that behind these complex politics lie two transnational factors: the life experiences of the immigrants under the communist regime in Vietnam prior to their arrival in America; and the current political situation in their home country. The data used in the paper are drawn from ethnographic research in which I interviewed 22 Vietnamese living in northern Illinois.

The scope of the research

In this examination of Vietnamese American politics from the transnational perspective, I am focusing only on the experiences of Vietnamese who came to America after the Vietnam War ended in April 1975. My research does not include Vietnamese who came to America as students prior to 1975 or Vietnamese living elsewhere overseas. However, a brief description of these communities can form the basis for future research.

There were up to 15 000 Vietnamese students in America prior to 1975 whose lives were politically affected by the war in Vietnam. Many of them engaged in the anti-war movement, while others supported the government of South Vietnam in its fight against the communists. Vu Pham (2003: 146), in his article *Ante-dating and Anchoring Vietnamese America: Toward a Vietnamese American Historiography*, sees these Vietnamese students as transnational ‘agents of change’ who helped transform perceptions and increase awareness within the American public about Vietnam and the war. According to Pham (2003: 148, 149), many chose to stay in America to avoid the draft and the political instability in South Vietnam at the time, eventually becoming part of the Vietnamese American community. The political experiences of Vietnamese students who arrived in America before 1975 are nonetheless different from the experiences of those who came after 1975. For one thing, these students did not suffer the political retribution and economic hardship under the communist regime that were experienced by those coming to America after the war. The homeland that these students came from was also politically different from the homeland to which Vietnamese Americans of today are transnationally connected. For the former, it was a democratic South Vietnam that sent them to America to study, expecting them to return. For the latter, it was an authoritative state that forced its people into exile and today still views them as political adversaries. Such profound differences between these two groups, while interesting subjects for a comparative study, require research on a larger scale than that which I have conducted for this paper.

Apart from those in America, there are approximately one and a half million overseas Vietnamese living in Australia, Canada and Europe. Although sharing a common culture, each of these Vietnamese communities is politically distinctive in its own way. For example, unlike the Vietnamese community in America, which is formed almost exclusively by refugees from the South, the Vietnamese communities in Canada and Australia include a large proportion of immigrants from the North, who are politically more aligned with the Vietnamese government than those from the South.

The Vietnamese communities in Europe are even more complex, including refugees from the South living in Western Europe and Vietnamese from the North sent to Eastern Europe as contract workers by the Vietnamese government during the communist era. While the Vietnamese in Western Europe may be as critical of the Vietnamese government as those in America, the majority of the Vietnamese in Eastern Europe are politically supportive of the Vietnamese government. Szymańska-Matusiewicz (2014: 197), for example, in her study of the Vietnamese in Eastern Europe, observes that it is much easier for Vietnamese returning from Poland to run businesses in Vietnam, due to their political backgrounds, than for Vietnamese returning from America: *Unlike return Vietnamese migrants from the United States, East European Vietnamese do not have to cope with the issues of being on the ‘wrong side’ of the conflict during the Vietnam War; moreover, they can make use of their favourable connections with government officials.* Such interesting comparisons be-

tween the Vietnamese in America and the Vietnamese in Europe, again, require a more inclusive study that is beyond the scope of the present paper.

Literature review

Like Cuban Americans, Vietnamese in America are highly political refugees from a communist country. Yet few studies have been made of their politics, resulting in a lack of understanding of its complexity. The anti-communist politics of Vietnamese Americans, for instance, are often attributed to the refugees' bitter experience of Vietnamese communists, which is true, but offers a single level of explanation for a complex issue.

According to the ethnic studies scholar Yen Le Espiritu (2006) at University of California, San Diego, there were two major models in the field of Vietnamese American studies up to the late 1980s. The first model, which Espiritu refers to as the 'crisis model,' repeatedly portrays Vietnamese refugees as *abject figures who suffer not only the trauma of forced departure but also the boredom, uncertainty, despair, and helplessness induced by camp life*; and the 'assimilation model,' which focuses on Vietnamese refugees' assimilation to American life and views *assimilation as the solution to the refugee resettlement crisis* (Espiritu 2006: 441). While the first model represents the Vietnamese as 'passive recipients' of America's generosity rather than as active agents in the refugee situation, the second model *impose[s] a generalized narrative of immigration on Vietnamese refugees, thereby reducing the specificities of their flight to a conventional story of ethnic assimilation* (Espiritu 2006: 441). Since the 1990s, Vietnamese American studies has developed into a more complex field, with studies that have moved *beyond demographic and needs assessment* to look into the cultural aspects of Vietnamese Americans, *addressing the gender, sexual, class, political, religious, cultural, and generational diversity of the population and articulating the localistic, familial, national, and transnational linkages of Vietnamese lives* (Espiritu 2006: 441). Two examples of research on politics utilising these new approaches are the works of Thuy Vo Dang (2005) and Caroline Kieu-Linh Valverde (2012).

Dang, a scholar of ethnic studies at University of California, San Diego, suggests that for Vietnamese Americans, anti-communism conveys cultural purposes. It is a way to preserve the story of South Vietnam, the home country that is now lost to the communists. It also serves as a pedagogical tool to educate young Vietnamese about the history and culture of South Vietnam. Viewing anti-communism from the cultural perspective, Dang explains some of the controversial politics in the community, such as why Vietnamese Americans acknowledge only the yellow flag of South Vietnam but not the official flag of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, or why they commemorate the Fall of Saigon every year during what is known as 'Black April.' Community ceremonies in which the yellow flag is displayed and the anthem of South Vietnam is sung, as observed by Dang (2005: 77), create a *cultural space* for Vietnamese Americans to *express their exilic longing for South Vietnam*, to define their identity as war refugees, and to bear *witness to a history that cannot be erased by mainstream America*. Anti-communism for Vietnamese Americans is therefore not only a way of rejecting the communist regime currently ruling their homeland but also of maintaining their cultural heritage as people from a democratic state.

The emergence of transnationalism in Vietnamese American studies, as mentioned by Espiritu (2006) above, is particularly important, because it enables scholars to study immigrant life as a fluctuating mode of being that continues to flow back and forth between the home country and the host country, as opposed to the one-way assimilation of moving from being foreign to Americanised. In other words, it places immigrants in a dynamic global context rather than within the conventional borders of the host country.

Valverde, a scholar of Asian American studies at University of California, Davis, conducted a study on the transnational flow of Vietnamese music between Vietnam and America, through which Vietnamese

American politics was also examined. For example, as part of the transnational music flow, many overseas Vietnamese singers have returned to Vietnam to perform, while singers from Vietnam have come to America to participate in the diaspora music industry. Singers from each of these groups, however, face harsh criticism from the Vietnamese American community. In the eyes of the anti-communist Vietnamese Americans, overseas singers returning to Vietnam are betraying the community that has nurtured them, while singers coming from Vietnam are cultural agents of the communist regime. Music shows featuring singers from Vietnam often meet strong protests from people in the community. On occasions, audiences have had to be escorted by the police for their own safety. Thus, as Valverde (2012: 52) states, *limits on free expression take place in segments of the Vietnamese American community that are critical of Vietnam's communist government.*

By incorporating culture and transnationalism into their work, Dang (2005) and Valverde (2012) provide meaningful insights into the complexity of Vietnamese Americans' anti-communism. Like Dang and Valverde, I approach the subject of Vietnamese American politics from the transnational perspective of an ethnographic study. Yet, unlike these two scholars, I also attempt to explain these anti-communist politics through two channels: by learning about Vietnamese Americans' life experiences under the communist regime prior to their migration to America; and by linking their anti-communist politics to the current political situation in Vietnam. As for the theoretical framework of the paper, I will utilise the global concepts suggested by the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (2008) in his well-known book, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*.

Appadurai (2008: 32, 33) argues that the new global cultural economy has reached a point where it can no longer be understood in terms of the existing centre-periphery models. Instead, this complex world must be viewed with *certain fundamental 'disjunctures' between economy, culture, and politics*. Appadurai identifies five dimensions of global flows in the world today as ethnoscaples, mediascaples, technoscaples, financescaples, and ideoscaples.

Ethnoscaples describe 'the shifting world' within which people – including tourists, immigrants, guest workers and other moving groups – constantly move from one place to another. Technoscaples refer to the fact that technology, 'both mechanical and informational,' moves at high speeds across various kinds of previously impervious boundaries. Financescaples concern the disposition of global capital at high speeds. Mediascaples indicate the global mobility of electronic goods and information, and the images of the world created by the media. Ideoscaples are also image-centred, but more directly political, and are associated with *the ideologies of states and the counter ideologies of movements explicitly oriented to capturing state power*. Contemporary ideoscaples still contain ideas of the Enlightenment worldview – freedom, welfare, rights, sovereignty, democracy – but their meaning *requires careful translation from context to context in their global movements*, depending on different political actors and their audiences (Appadurai 2008: 37).

The interesting component in Appadurai's terms is the suffix 'scapes.' According to the author, it indicates the 'fluid, irregular' and subjective nature of the global flows, which are constructed and affected by various historical, linguistic and political factors. These global flows are also interconnected to one another in 'deeply disjunctive' relationships, for each of them *is subject to its own constraints and incentives*, and at the same time, *each acts as a constraint and a parameter for movements in the others* (Appadurai 2008: 33, 35).

Appadurai's concept of ideoscaples helps explain why Vietnamese American politics are mainly shaped by transnational factors taking place in Vietnam rather than by mainstream American politics. The idea that 'disjunctures' exist within each of the global flows is useful in explaining the political diversity among Vietnamese Americans despite the fact that the whole community is anti-communist. I will employ Appadurai's concept of ideoscaples to illustrate that Vietnamese immigrants' politics are transnational and at the same

time disjunctive. In this sense, I also place my study within the transnational context, moving away from the familiar approach of immigrant studies that focus merely on assimilation.

Methodology

Data used in this paper were gathered from ethnographic research on Vietnamese immigrants residing in the northern part of the state of Illinois, America. Between November 2009 and January 2010, I interviewed 22 people living in the cities of DeKalb, Sycamore, Rochelle, Rockford, and Chicago. Each interview took an average of about three hours and was followed up by email or telephone calls. Over the course of the three-month research period, I also attended many community events and conversed with other Vietnamese, who although not formally interviewed, helped me better understand the community.

I carefully selected the interviewees to represent the diversity of the Vietnamese diaspora, who also, as suggested by Michael Angrosino (2007: 38), appeared to have valuable information to share and were able to *convey that information in a reasonable manner*. The 22 participants in the research sample came from the following 4 sources: 1. people whom I met at the Buddhist temple in the city of Rockford: 11 participants; 2. Vietnamese American students at Northern Illinois University: 3 participants; 3. staff of the Vietnamese Association of Illinois in Chicago: 3 participants; and 4. people whom I personally know: 5 participants.

The gender balance in the studied group corresponds with the gender balance in the Vietnamese American population (US Census Department 2010). As it regards the age structure, the sample includes a relatively big group of older people (13) – between 45 and 74 years old – when compared to the Vietnamese American population (US Census Department 2010). This stems from the fact that most of the people eligible for my study, who had experienced life in Vietnam are now at rather advanced ages since the last major wave of Vietnamese immigrants to America ended about 20 years ago. The large proportion of older individuals in my sample also indicates that for the most part this is a study focusing on first-generation Vietnamese immigrants. Out of the 22 participants, nonetheless, 4 people can be considered second-generation Vietnamese Americans, who were either born in America or migrated to the country as young children. With the exception of one person born in America and one born in Canada, the research participants were born in Vietnam and came to America by one of the four following modes of immigration:

1. as part of the 1975 evacuation at the end of the Vietnam War: 3/20;
2. as ‘boat people’ escaping from Vietnam by boat from the mid-1970s to the late 1980s: 6/20;
3. as part of the two humanitarian programmes between 1989 and 1994. The Humanitarian Operation (HO) brought former military officers of South Vietnam, who were detained in ‘re-education camps’ by the Vietnamese communists for at least three years, to America. The Amerasian Homecoming Act allowed Vietnamese children born to American fathers to come to America with their families: 8/20;
4. through family sponsorships: 3/20.

Mode of immigration is important in understanding Vietnamese Americans’ transnational politics, because their life experiences under the communist regime in Vietnam depended on how and when they migrated to America. People leaving Vietnam during the Fall of Saigon in 1975, for instance, have no experience of life under communism regime and in general are less hostile towards the Vietnamese government than those who left the country later. People who have left Vietnam for America under the family sponsorship system more recently are also less political than the ‘boat people’ who embarked upon extremely difficult escapes during the 1980s. For this reason, it is important to know the historical context of each of these immigration modes illuminating why and how Vietnamese immigrants have left their homeland for America since 1975.

The history of Vietnamese migration to America

According to the US Census Department (2010), there are 1 737 433 Vietnamese in America, forming the fourth largest Asian group in the country, following the Chinese, Asian Indians and the Filipinos. Many Vietnamese came to America as refugees for political reasons. For the purposes of this paper, nonetheless, the more general term ‘immigrants’ is used when referring to Vietnamese Americans, because my study also includes people migrating to America for non-political reasons.

The first immigration wave

Although there were Vietnamese in America before 1975, their number was small and consisted mostly of college students. Vietnamese started to migrate to America in large numbers in April 1975, at the end of the Vietnam War. By December 1975, a total of 129 792 Vietnamese had resettled across the 50 states of America (Do 1999: 39). This is by far the largest number of Vietnamese refugees to have arrived in the United States in a single year. Many refugees from this first group were high-ranking government officials and military leaders in South Vietnam; others had worked closely with Americans in Vietnam as secretaries, interpreters, intelligence experts, and propagandists (Kelly 1977: 2). They were rather atypical in many ways compared to the general population in Vietnam at the time. According to a report by the Interagency Task Force for Indochina Refugees (1975: 13), among the heads of household in this group, 47.8 per cent had some secondary education, 22.9 per cent had some college education, 7.2 per cent were medical professionals and 24 per cent held professional, technical, and managerial jobs, while only 4.9 per cent were farmers or fishermen. Given that more than 60 per cent of the population in Vietnam are peasants, these numbers indicate the highly urban and ‘modern’ characteristics of the first group of Vietnamese immigrants to America.

The second immigration wave

The second wave of Vietnamese immigrants began in 1978, when hundreds of thousands of people escaped from Vietnam by boat, creating the so-called ‘Vietnamese boat people’ phenomenon. On capturing the entire country in 1975, the communist regime had begun a policy of retaliation against those serving in the government and the military of South Vietnam. These people were sent to ‘re-education camps’ located in remote areas where they endured harsh conditions for years. Meanwhile, in the cities, their families faced many forms of discrimination from the local authorities. The new government also relocated 700 000 urban people to New Economic Zones (NEZs) where living conditions were so horrific that eventually over 400 000 of them returned to the cities, despite knowing that their houses had been confiscated by the local authorities (Tran 2007: 47). Although it was designed as an economic programme, in practice the NEZs policy was used politically to ‘purify’ the urban population, since most of the people forced into the NEZs were family members of those affiliated to the military and government of South Vietnam. The planned economy run by the government made life extremely difficult for the whole population, due to severe shortages of food and basic commodities. In addition to economic mismanagement, in 1979 the Vietnamese government engaged in a war with the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, drafting many young people into the military to fight on foreign soil. Faced with political oppression and the possibility of starvation, hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese fled the country by boat or by walking across Cambodia into Thailand. Living in various refugee camps located in Malaysia, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Thailand and the Philippines for anything from a few months to a few years, the majority of these ‘boat people’ were eventually accepted into America while the rest were relocated to Canada, Australia and Western European countries.

It should be noted that many of the 'boat people' were of Chinese ethnicity. In 1979, at the height of its conflict with China, the Vietnamese government tried to eliminate the ethnic Chinese living in Vietnam first by harassing them, then by encouraging them to leave the country through organised trips if they paid a fee. This programme, often called 'semi-official departure,' lasted several years and sent tens of thousands of Chinese Vietnamese to the open sea to face the same risks that the illegal 'boat people' had encountered during their own escapes. It is estimated that approximately 10 to 15 per cent of all the 'boat people' perished at sea and one-third of all 'boat people' were victims of robbery, rape and murder (Le 2007: 51). Altogether, the 'boat people' wave brought over half a million people from Vietnam to America between 1976 and 1988 (Le 2007: 36).

The second wave of Vietnamese immigrants was more ethnically diverse than the first, relatively less educated, and less proficient in English (Caplan, Whitmore, Choy 1992: 27). However, as I have learned through interviewing the 'boat people,' this group consists not only of fishermen but also of many urbanites. Since the value of boats was so high at the time, fishermen often did not just flee the country with their own families but secretly sold the boat to an organiser, who then sold the trip to many 'passengers' from the cities. Together, they managed to escape after bribing the local police patrolling the coastal section where the boat would depart at night. An escaping boat in fact could include more urban people than fishermen. Education levels of the 'boat people' are thus relatively diverse. Many 'boat people' were psychologically traumatised by their horrific experiences at sea, such as being robbed and raped, in many cases repeatedly, by Thai pirates. They then had to endure a dreadful life in refugee camps that lasted anywhere from a few months to a few years before coming to America.

The third immigration wave

In addition to those leaving Vietnam in April 1975 and those escaping from the country by boat in the 1980s, many Vietnamese came to America in the 1990s through two official refugee programmes: the Humanitarian Operation and the American Homecoming Act. The first programme, often referred to by Vietnamese as the HO programme, allowed former military officers of the South who had been detained in 're-education camps' for at least three years to come to the United States. The HO programme started in 1989 and by 1998 it had brought 123 728 former military officers and their families to America (Tran 2007: 55). The second programme, the American Homecoming Act, passed by Congress in 1988 and implemented in 1989, focused on bringing Amerasians, children born of American fathers during the war, and their families, to America. Between 1989 and 2000, a total of about half a million Vietnamese migrated to the United States (Le 2007: 36).

Refugees from the third wave were diverse in terms of educational background, occupational skills and proficiency in English. In general, the education levels of former military officers were relatively high because they had to complete at least high school to become officers. Despite the hardships of life under the communist regime after 1975, over a long period of time, many children of these former military officers managed to receive a college education in Vietnam. Moreover, while waiting for the immigration papers to be processed, which could take up to several years, the HO programme applicants often tried to acquire some English and occupational skills that they anticipated would be useful in America. The majority of Amerasians, however, were illiterate. Due to poverty and racial discrimination, it was extremely difficult for these Amerasians to attend school in Vietnam.

The third-wave refugees left Vietnam for America by plane and did not suffer the terrible experiences at sea that the 'boat people' had endured. However, they had suffered years of difficult living in Vietnam facing political hostility and racial discrimination under the communist regime.

Through family sponsorship

In addition to the three waves of immigration described above, many Vietnamese came to America through family sponsorship. This mode of immigration includes wives of overseas Vietnamese men returning to the home country to get married. Today, marriage sponsorship is the principal mode of immigration for Vietnamese, mostly women, for three reasons. First, the normalisation of relations between America and Vietnam in 1995 made travel back to Vietnam easier for overseas Vietnamese. Second, new communication technologies, especially the availability of internet dating sites, email and cheap international phone cards, greatly expanded the platform for transnational marriage. Third, due to the mostly dangerous circumstances under which Vietnamese left their country, there are more men than women in the diaspora community.

Furthermore, according to the sociologist Hung Cam Thai (2008), transnational marriages between overseas Vietnamese men and women in Vietnam are also generated by the 'Vietnamese double gender movement.' The phenomenon can be summed up as follows: many women in Vietnam do not want to marry men in Vietnam who, they think, are still held back by outdated gender traditions, while Vietnamese men in America do not want to marry Vietnamese American women who, they think, no longer possess the traditional values needed for a successful marriage (Thai 2008: 29). Transnational marriages thus reflect the respective 'gender ideologies' that Vietnamese hope to fulfill at the global level.

Transnational politics shaped by life experiences in Vietnam

Although in general Vietnamese immigrants to America are anti-communist, the degree of their resentment toward the Vietnamese government depends on the level of suffering they experienced in Vietnam after 1975. While some strongly oppose the communist regime, others seem less critical of the system. I have chosen to describe the politics of four of the interviewees to demonstrate this point.

A young singer and the wife of a military officer stationed in a Central Vietnam province, Mrs Tho's life was happy and relatively comfortable before 1975. Her world was turned upside down after April 1975 when her husband was sent to remote 're-education camps' in the North. As a singer Mrs Tho herself had to attend a brief 're-education' course to learn about the new 'revolutionary culture.' The new regime, however, soon realised that it could use Mrs Tho's talents to 'serve the people.' Mrs Tho was allowed to perform in a state traditional theatre where she could sing one or two contemporary songs for the opening of each night. The job was financially and mentally stressful, as she recalled in the interview:

Every time I wanted to sing a new song, I had to perform it over and over in front of a committee until it was approved. They told me not only what songs to sing but also how to perform them, even how to walk on the stage, how to move my hands, what to wear. All the songs praise the new regime and Uncle Ho anyway. The most difficult part for me was the tiny salary, which was not enough even to feed myself, let alone to feed my two kids. Once I was sick with stones in my bladder but did not have money for medicine. I went home and my aunt could only find me some herbals. But it cured, you know. I did not return to the theatre after that but decided to become a smuggler to earn a living.

The smuggling Mrs Tho mentioned was only for the basic goods that in a free market should not have been considered illegal, such as fish, rice, coffee, sugar and cigarettes. Most of the smugglers at the time eventually ended up having their goods confiscated by the government customs department. This also happened to Mrs Tho. The only option open to her was to leave Vietnam. In 1980, she left for Hong Kong with a friend, travelling in a wooden fishing boat carrying 23 people. She left her two young children behind with her

mother because the trip was so hazardous. The boat was so tiny that *sitting on it one could reach into the sea water*. It took a month to reach Hong Kong and the travellers endured many ordeals at sea. After the engine stopped working, the boat drifted for several days until it met a foreign fishing boat, whose crew agreed to tow the disabled boat to Macau in exchange for all the money and valuables that the Vietnamese had on board. When night fell, however, the foreign vessel abandoned the Vietnamese boat in the middle of the ocean. After another week of drifting at sea without much food and water, Mrs Tho's boat reached a Chinese island, where they were helped with food and engine repair to continue their journey. Out in the open sea once more, they faced several heavy storms before arriving in Hong Kong.

Thirty years on, the memory of the trip is still painful for Mrs Tho. It took her almost an hour to tell me about the trip, with many horrific details. Throughout the conversation, she sounded distressed and her eyes were full of tears.

The most difficult part of life in America for Mrs Tho was the separation from her children. Since there was no direct communication between America and Vietnam in the 1980s, every month she had to travel to Canada for a pre-arranged phone call to her children in Vietnam. After 11 years of painful separation, Mrs Tho was finally able to sponsor her two children to America in 1991.

For Mrs Tho, the ordeals that she and her family went through and the pain they suffered were obviously caused by the communists. Although bitterness toward the communist regime is typical of the 'boat people' I interviewed, I also interviewed another 'boat person' who appeared much less critical of the Vietnamese government.

Born into a small business family in a coastal town located about 250 km from Saigon, Mr Song continued to enjoy a relatively comfortable life in Vietnam after April 1975. Owing to the small scale of their business, Mr Song's family members were not considered 'capitalists' by the new regime and were therefore allowed to keep their property intact. In 1979, when relations between China and Vietnam began to sour, the Vietnamese government encouraged ethnic Chinese people to leave the country on boat trips organised by the government. Although not an ethnic Chinese, Mr Song managed to take the trip after his family paid 10 bars of gold to the authorities, an enormous sum of money at the time. Unlike Mrs Tho's difficult trip, it took only a few days of smooth sailing for Mr Song's boat to meet a foreign ship that took him to a refugee camp in Malaysia. After a year in the refugee camp, Mr Song came to America through the sponsorship of a church in Seattle, and later moved to Chicago to attend college, obtaining a degree in computer science in 1984, followed by a master's in mathematics in 1986. Now living in the affluent town of Naperville, Illinois, Mr Song runs a website featuring news and entertainment information from Vietnam, earning income from the advertisements on the website in addition to working as a computer programmer. The website's server is in America, and the content is collected from various online sources by a small complement of staff in Vietnam. The business in Vietnam, however, is not registered with the Vietnamese government. *The authorities will make a fuss about it if I register the website, just because they want to be bribed*, Mr Song explained. The underground nature of the operation, he admitted, prevents his business from growing in Vietnam. Yet, it is a limitation that Mr Song is prepared to accept. Mr Song told me that although he felt sorry about the political and social problems in Vietnam today, as a businessman he did not want to engage in politics. *Politics are bad for business*, he said. Indeed, for his website, Mr Song is careful to select only content that appears non-political to both the Vietnamese government and the Vietnamese diaspora.

Mr Song's politics seem to consist of two layers: deep down he dislikes the communist government but to outside appearances he has reached a pragmatic compromise with it. Compared to Mrs Tho's, Mr Song's life in Vietnam after 1975 was neither dramatically different nor too difficult; his escape from Vietnam as a 'boat person' was relatively easy. These factors could explain why he is less anti-communist than Mrs Tho, who suffered a great deal at the hands of the communists.

My proposition that life experiences in Vietnam define the politics of Vietnamese immigrants in America appeared to be borne out throughout my interviews. Even among former military officers from the South, the group supposedly most antagonistic toward the Vietnamese communists, political attitudes toward the Vietnamese government also varied, depending on how difficult their lives in Vietnam had been after 1975. Mr Trung, the monk depicted at the beginning of this paper, for example, typifies the anti-communist politics of former military officers. However, in my interviews, I encountered one former military officer who was almost sympathetic to the communist regime. I describe his case here to show the ‘disjunctures’ around politics in this community.

Mr Dan, who like Mr Trung was an officer in the Air Force, was sent to ‘re-education camps’ for nine years. He was fortunate enough to earn a good living when he returned home in 1984. Trained as a pilot in America before 1975, Mr Dan possessed good English skills and managed to become a popular English teacher in Saigon in the late 1980s. His students even included children of high-ranking officials of the communist government. *There was a huge demand for English teachers at the time because many people were about to go to America on various departure programmes and the country was also beginning to open up to foreign investors*, Mr Dan explained, *and a person like me who had previously studied in America was considered highly valuable, not only because I could teach students to speak English like Americans, but also because I could tell them about life in America*. The teaching job made Mr Dan’s life so comfortable that at first he did not want to go to the United States through the HO programme for which he was eligible. In 1992, however, he decided to emigrate, realising that in the long term America would be a better place for his family.

It seems that because his experiences in Vietnam after 1975 were not as horrific as Mr Trung’s, Mr Dan has a more positive view of the Vietnamese government. Mr Dan told me he believed the political situation in Vietnam would improve when the current aging communist leaders were replaced by a younger generation. Mr Dan’s politics are not typical of former military officers of the South, most of whom strongly reject the idea that the communist regime is capable of evolving into a more democratic system. When asked how he felt about his nine years in the ‘re-education camps,’ Mr Dan expressed an interesting point of view:

During the war, I flew, I fought, but I also enjoyed a great city life, unlike other soldiers who had to fight in the jungle. In the end we were defeated, so we should have accepted the game. The ‘re-education camps’ were part of that game. Now everything to me is just in the past, and I am the type of person who always looks forward to the future.

Although life experiences in Vietnam under the communist regime significantly affect the politics of Vietnamese people in America, they are not the sole defining factor. Apart from maintaining *a memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland*, as pointed out by Clifford Geertz (1973: 304), diasporic subjects are also defined by their *continuing relationship with the homeland*. In this context, the politics of immigrants are shaped not only by memory and life experiences in the past, but also by present linkages to their homeland. For the Vietnamese immigrants, such linkages are particularly strong due to the challenging political situation in their home country, one of the few communist states left in the world. In the next section, I examine how Vietnamese immigrants’ politics are defined by the current politics in Vietnam.

Transnational politics shaped by the current political situation in Vietnam

Throughout my research, I found that the two current political issues in Vietnam to which Vietnamese immigrants pay close attention are human rights and national sovereignty. The 2010 report by Human Rights Watch (2010) summarises the human rights situation of Vietnam in 2009 as follows:

Vietnam intensified its suppression of dissent in 2009 in an effort to bolster the authority of the Communist Party. Authorities arrested dozens of peaceful democracy advocates, independent religious activists, human rights defenders, and online critics, using vaguely-worded national security laws such as spreading 'anti-government propaganda' or 'abusing democratic freedoms.' The courts convicted at least 20 political or religious prisoners in 2009, including five people sentenced in October whom the previous month the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention had determined to be arbitrarily detained. People imprisoned in Vietnam for the exercise of fundamental rights number more than 400.

The government tightened its controls on internet use, blogging and independent research, and banned dissemination and publication of content critical of the government. Religious freedom continued to deteriorate, with the government targeting religious leaders and their followers who advocated for civil rights, religious freedom and equitable resolution of land disputes.

An example of the government's 'suppression of dissent' was the high-profile trial in January 2010 that sentenced 4 democracy activists to between 5 and 16 years in prison for what were called *activities aimed at overthrowing the people's administration*. The convicted activists include 4 well-educated and successful citizens: Le Cong Dinh, a prominent lawyer educated in America on a Fulbright scholarship who had represented many leading multinational firms in Vietnam; Nguyen Tien Trung, a software engineer educated in France; Tran Huynh Duy Thuc and Le Thang Long, two entrepreneurs who founded an information technology company involved in launching Vietnam's stock market. As reported by Pham (2010) on the BBC, although Dinh and the other defendants insisted they just wanted to improve the political system in Vietnam to fight against corruption, they were accused of working with 'reactionary forces overseas' to overthrow the government. Their trial caused concern to governments in the West, including the United States, and was quickly condemned around the world as a mockery of international legal standards. Kenneth Fairfax, the US Consul General in Ho Chi Minh City, called for the dissidents' release while British Foreign Office Minister Ivan Lewis stated that *nobody should [have been] imprisoned for peacefully expressing their opinions* (Pham 2010). The fact that the government punished the activists for their connections with 'reactionary forces overseas' showed how deeply troubled the communist regime was by the transnational political linkages between democracy advocates inside the country and those in the Vietnamese diaspora. In fact, the most serious evidence used to charge Le Cong Dinh was his trip to Thailand to attend a three-day training course on non-violent political changes, sponsored by the overseas Vietnamese political party Viet Tan (Vietnam Reform Party) (Mydans 2010). Other evidence against Le Cong Dinh included a file found on his computer of the book *From Dictatorship to Democracy* by Gene Sharp, translated into Vietnamese by Viet Tan. The prosecutions of the other three activists were also based on 'evidence' of their communications with overseas political organisations. The case demonstrates how ideoscapes, the concept of democracy in this case, flow both ways between diaspora communities and their home countries, as illustrated by Appadurai (2008: 37): *The fluidity of ideoscapes is complicated in particular by the growing diaspora (both voluntary and involuntary) of intellectuals who continuously inject new meaning-stream into the discourse of democracy in different parts of the world*. Apart from crushing democracy activities, the Vietnamese government is also

suppressing the recent rise of anti-Chinese nationalism in Vietnam, a political strategy strongly condemned by most Vietnamese in America.

A traditional enemy of Vietnam for over two thousand years, China has always appeared highly suspicious in the eyes of the Vietnamese, and recently tension has increased due to territorial disputes between the two countries. The disputes centre around the Spratly Islands and the Paracel Islands, two small chains of islets believed to have large oil and gas deposits located in an area of military and strategic importance in the South China Sea. China seized the Paracel Islands in 1974 from South Vietnam and occupied part of the Spratly Islands after fighting a brief naval battle with communist Vietnam in 1988. Since 2007 China has increased its military presence in the waters around the islands and has started to harass Vietnamese fishermen working near the disputed islands. In many cases the Vietnamese fishermen have been beaten and held to ransom (Pham 2009). Ironically, instead of protesting to the Chinese government over these incidents, the Vietnamese government has attempted to suppress its own citizens' criticisms of China (Zeller 2007). In December 2007, when China ratified a plan to create a symbolic administrative region called Sasha that included the Paracel Islands and Spratly Islands, several hundred young Vietnamese organised two public demonstrations in front of the Chinese embassy in Hanoi and the Chinese consulate general in Ho Chi Minh City. It was the first time that political street protests had taken place in the history of communist Vietnam. The protests were quickly suppressed by the police, however, with many demonstrators arrested or intimidated (Zeller 2007). As reported in an article by Crispin (2009) in *Asia Times*, there are different theories that explain why the Vietnamese government aggressively defended China instead of its own national territory. According to its author, one theory states that given the current economic downturn, Vietnam is relying on China for a secret financial bailout. Another theory suggests that the repression of anti-China sentiment reflects the *internal politicking between broadly divided conservative and liberal factions* within the Vietnamese Communist Party (Crispin 2009).

The Vietnamese immigrants whom I interviewed had their own interpretation of this political situation in Vietnam. In their opinion, the Vietnamese government is suppressing nationalism in Vietnam for two reasons: first, it cannot afford to upset China, its only remaining communist ally in the world today; second, and more importantly, it is afraid that nationalist protests might turn into a democracy movement that overthrows the ruling regime. In any case, for Vietnamese Americans, the rise of anti-Chinese nationalism in Vietnam provides justification for their anti-communist politics. Anti-communist politics thus is not only to denounce the authoritative regime in Vietnam but also to protect the homeland from China's territorial violations.

Mr Trung, the former military officer who is now a Buddhist monk, for example, stated that he was critical of the Vietnamese communists not only because they had treated him badly in the past, but mainly because nowadays the communists were dangerously compromising the country in China's favour. When I asked him whether it would be appropriate for a Buddhist monk to be political, Mr Trung responded: *A monk can only be a monk when there is a country for him to practise his religion. The communists are selling out Vietnam to China, so even as a monk I must condemn them.*

Although homeland politics are an important contributory factor to the anti-communist position of many Vietnamese immigrants, it may have little impact on the politics of young Vietnamese Americans. Young Vietnamese Americans do not have much life experience under the communist regime and appear to be more interested in mainstream American politics than in Vietnamese politics, as illustrated by the case of Dinh, one of my interviewees.

A graduate student of literature, Dinh came to America with his 'boat people' parents when he was only one year old. Growing up in America, Dinh was told by his parents about their harsh lives in Vietnam after 1975 and their difficult journey to America. Despite conceptualising Vietnam as an undemocratic country, Dinh is uncomfortable with the anti-communist politics of the Vietnamese diaspora. He stated:

I hold a skeptical disposition about the Vietnamese government because of my parents' experiences, but also skeptical about the Vietnamese American politics, which are conservative and reinforcing the idea of the model minority. I've learned to avoid talking about politics with my parents because of their skepticism about the American left. I listen to them, but don't have much to offer to the conversation.

It is obvious that Dinh used the familiar left–right spectrum of American politics as a measure of the politics of Vietnamese immigrants, rather than viewing them from the transnational viewpoint of a Vietnamese immigrant strongly connected to his homeland.

Homeland politics might also be perceived differently by recent Vietnamese immigrants: although they lived in Vietnam under communism for a longer time, they did not suffer as much as those who left Vietnam before the 1990s. These people tend to express a rather positive view of the Vietnamese government and, moreover, feel discontented with the anti-communist politics of the Vietnamese in America. The case of Mr Lam illustrates this point.

Mr Lam, a 32-year-old nail technician living in the city of Aurora with his wife and a young child, came to America less than two years ago. His family was sponsored to America by his brother in a process that took more than ten years to complete. Growing up in Vietnam in the 1990s when the communist regime was experimenting with economic reforms that significantly improved the living standards of many, Mr Lam did not suffer from economic hardship as the early immigrants had. Mr Lam told me that although there were social and political issues in Vietnam, overall he thought the country was doing well. Instead of criticising the Vietnamese government, Mr Lam expressed his unease about those Vietnamese in America whom he considered politically extreme. In his opinion, the fight against the Vietnamese government was a waste of time; he simply wanted to concentrate on earning a good living. Although he had only been in America for two years, Mr Lam had already gone back to Vietnam for a visit, and really enjoyed the trip. Although he is not anti-communist like other Vietnamese immigrants, interestingly, it seems his political position has also been shaped by his life experiences with the communist regime in Vietnam. In his case, it just happened that the experiences are relatively positive.

The cases of Dinh and Mr Lam reveal the 'disjunctures' within the political sphere of Vietnamese Americans with regard to homeland politics. While human rights and nationalism in Vietnam have fuelled the anti-communist politics of many Vietnamese Americans, they still appear distant to some others. Again, for the most part, this depends on the individuals' life experiences under the communist regime in Vietnam prior to their coming to America. People who have suffered at the hands of the communists in the past pay more attention to the current homeland politics than those who did not suffer. Thus, the two transnational factors shaping the politics of Vietnamese Americans – life experiences under the communist regime and current homeland politics – are interrelated. They are the two main causes of Vietnamese Americans' anti-communist politics, a politics that itself is disjunctive.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have shown that Vietnamese American anti-communist politics are the result of two transnational factors: life experiences in Vietnam and current homeland politics. The loss of South Vietnam to the communist North at the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 brought dramatic changes, most of which were devastating, to the lives of millions of people in South Vietnam. The end of the war also heralded the start of mass migration from Vietnam to America. By showing how people suffered at the hands of the communists in Vietnam, I have sought to explain why Vietnamese Americans are anti-communist. For these people, anti-communism is not a theoretical matter but the direct result of painful life experiences. I have described

Vietnamese Americans' life experiences along the trajectory of their migration history to America, which can be divided into three waves. I have presented cases representing each of these refugee waves to show the variety of politics among Vietnamese Americans regarding the communist regime in Vietnam.

Life experience with the communists, however, is only one of the two factors shaping Vietnamese Americans' politics. Another important factor is their linkages to homeland politics. Two homeland political issues are of great concern to many Vietnamese Americans today: human rights and anti-Chinese nationalism. For some Vietnamese Americans, however, homeland politics appear rather distant. These political discrepancies are again determined mainly by the individual's life experience, or the lack of it, under the communist regime in Vietnam.

The Vietnamese community in the United States is a direct product of the Vietnam War, a war that ended 40 years ago but has left behind a very complex legacy for all the parties involved, including the Vietnamese now living in America.

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— BOOK REVIEWS —

Ulrike Ziemer, Sean P. Roberts (2013). *East European Diasporas, Migration and Cosmopolitanism*. London. New York: Routledge, 160 pp.

The title of this co-edited collection neatly captures its conceptual framework: in referring to the widely addressed triangle of migration, cosmopolitanism and diaspora, it links diaspora explicitly to the space of Eastern Europe.

Writing in March 2015, post-*Charlie Hebdo*, and with thoughts of Paris as well as Copenhagen as metropolitan urban places where Jews are once again the victims of racist hate crime in Europe, it seems any naïve claim of a specific European capacity for cosmopolitanism has lost its currency. Coming shortly after the death of Ulrich Beck in January 2015, Ziemer and Roberts' co-edited book is almost a tribute to Beck's work: are we in fact up to the challenge of what global and local cosmopolitanisation mean to our societies? Beck was one of the more prominent advocates and protégées of academic and public debate over contemporary European cosmopolitanism. So, why do cosmopolitan value orientations, such as the notion of vernacular cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitan practices, matter to diasporic groups, to migration and – with respect to the focus of the book – the less acknowledged pathways of diasporic migrants coming from Eastern Europe? To begin with, as Ziemer and Roberts detail in their introduction, cosmopolitanism in the post-socialist context is of interest as this area, both ideologically and geographically, is often sidelined in current discourses on cosmopolitanism. As they argue (2013: 7):

By considering the socialist past in an analysis of the post-socialist present, we can better highlight the tensions and ambiguity that influence people's present experiences. Therefore, the concept of cosmopolitanism may have its limitations

when it comes to researching and understanding minority groups in post-socialist countries. Yet, this does not mean that cosmopolitanism has to be abandoned completely. Instead, in such cases cosmopolitanism can highlight the different ways in which groups of people form their diverse sense(s) of belonging by a selective and diversified engagement with the socialist past.

The editors, hint at the proximity between ideas of cosmopolitanism and internationalism (*ibidem*); Sanders' contribution on Kazakhstan looks more explicitly at the cultural legacy of a state-led USSR-Russian *kosmopolitizism* (see for further details, Humphrey 2004).

The eight chapters of the collection are organised in four topical sections. Sections II, *Former Yugoslavia*, and III, *In and beyond Germany*, interestingly, tackle national state contexts, whereas the other two are devoted to *Fostering cosmopolitanism* (I) and *Ethical challenges in research on migration* (IV). In this respect the range of contributions and post-territorial angles reflect the diasporic East–West migratory location of the different authors.¹ Below I discuss some of the arguments to be found in the co-edited collection, highlighting some particularly interesting approaches.

With one exception, all the chapters engage with the *contemporary* migration and cultural mobility of diasporic communities. The chapter by Lettevall, however, is different: Lettevall looks back at the historical Nansen passport, named after the ambitious Norwegian Fridtjof Nansen (1861–1930), himself a cosmopolitan character. Nansen became associated with the League of Nations and activities during the interwar period, championing a passport / legal document for refugees. Lettevall argues that this passport could be regarded as an early example of moral-political cosmopolitanism in practice, pre-dating the later post-1949 Human rights agenda. As

a legal document, the Nansen passport was issued by nation states, (*50 nations states joint this effort in 1929*, Lettevall 2013) and allowed a certain amount of movement by stateless refugees in and across territory. It also gave them access to work though they were excluded *de jure* from national citizenship. It is also worth mentioning that, in terms of methodology, Lettevall's chapter is highly informative as she argues for a historical-reflective use of the concept of cosmopolitanism, for example, going back to Gadamer's term *Wirkungsgeschichte*.

Praszalowicz's insightful chapter, *Migration memoirs and narratives of Polish migrants in Berlin*, is perhaps most interesting to readers of the *Central and Eastern European Migration Review*. It first compares the memories and written accounts of a female and a male migrant from Poland to Germany, and second, contrasts these older narratives with narratives of recent Polish migrants, post-2004 EU accession. In the latter case, the importance of the locality is crucial, creating a more trans-local and cosmopolitan rather than a bi-national notion of belonging. As Praszalowicz concludes: *Displaying cosmopolitanism attitudes openly alongside living out Polishness has become part of everyday life. Today, Polish migrants are able to embody several identities. They can identify as Jews from Poland or Silesian/ Jewish. Their narratives cease to be Polish-centred; instead 'new' Polish migrants occasionally draw on cosmopolitanism as an identity source, which denotes a stance toward diversity that enables them to construct belonging in terms of ethnicity, as well as multicultural location* (2013: 103, 104). It follows that the cluster of homogeneous national identities (such as either being Polish or Jewish or German) consists of multi-layered fragments, aspects of identity that have been forced into a single dominant label as a result of a nationalising ideology.

A link to this problematic dimension of transnationalism and ethnicity is provided by Ragazzi's chapter, which stands in contrast to the overall tone of the collection. Unlike most of the authors, who broadly welcome cosmopolitanism, Ragazzi convincingly interrogates cosmopolitanism as a mean-

ingful concept in the context of state politics, migration, ethno-diaspora and transnationalism. He suggests 'post-territorial citizenship' as an analytical framework for the transnational ethnification purpose of Croatian citizenship; he characterises this as a 'transnationalisation of state practices' (2013: 61). All in all, Ragazzi is more critical of the optimistic reading of cosmopolitanism, while arguing more specifically that post-Yugoslav Croatia managed to construct allegiances and national citizenship beyond the classic idea of a nationalised territorial container. It is this chapter that particularly captured my interest, as it is the best illustration of the logic of spatial transformation and the reconfiguration of any political 'imagined community' in a globalising world.

In contrast, other chapters struggle to make the argument for cosmopolitan openness. Darieva describes the 'diasporic cosmopolitanism' of transnational second and third Armenian-American generation that can be detected in social and ecological activities carried out in their Armenian homeland. Radeljić's chapter explains how the European Community's response to representatives of Slovenian and Croatian diasporic communities in 1991/1992 could be called cosmopolitan. However, we have to bear in mind that this is the period when ethnic war was taking place in Yugoslavia; and for that reason trying to fit this kind of European 'diplomacy' under the umbrella of 'cosmopolitanism' seems inappropriate to me. It is here where we also could have a deeper conversation to what degree the whole concept of cosmopolitanism post-2011, in light of the dynamics of recent populism and the rise of violent fundamentalist extremism, needs to be reconsidered.

As with many co-edited collections, individual readers may find one or two chapters of particular interest, depending on their research interests; rarely do collections speak across the range of disciplines. Nevertheless, the editors have, in my view, successfully presented findings specific to the Eastern European diaspora. Certainly, Sanders' conclusion that *an old Soviet and a new Kazakhstan version of cosmopolitanism essentially operate to providing mo-*

ments of sociability (2013: 89) illustrates the extent to which we need to deepen our understanding of the emergence and merger of different historical and situated traditions as well as experiences of cosmopolitanism, particularly post-1989 and post-2011.

Notes

All but one of the authors are based at Western universities; the cultural roots of the two- or three-way diasporic communities considered range across Armenia, Russia, Romania, Kazakhstan, Croatia and Poland.

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Christof Roos (2013). *The EU and Immigration Policies. Cracks in the Walls of Fortress Europe?* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 245.

This book describes the legislative background of European integration since the 1970s, with particular attention paid to the first decade of the twenty-first century. The reader will learn about the process of European integration and its milestones. The content also concerns some important issues related to the future of the European Union's migration policy. Professor Roos describes selected specific areas of integration in the subsequent sections, outlining the history of the process and a response to emerging challenges in a globalised world. The book consists of nine chapters, appendices, and an extensive bibliography. The detailed analysis of the legislative process is also enriched by data obtained during 19 in-depth interviews, conducted with EU officials, analysts and advisors. Although the conclusions from these discussions presented in the book are rather laconic, they pro-

vide the reader with a glimpse 'behind the scenes' of the processes of the development of European law that are discussed. In the first four chapters, the author presents the historical background of the process of European integration, the various regulations and the stakeholders involved in these processes – from their preferences to framing policies. In the next chapters, the process of the development of the five EU directives on the entry and residence of different categories of migrants is presented and discussed. This includes the areas of family reunification, long-term residency, migration of students and researchers, and labour migration. The chapters on the directives of family and student migration contain some interesting information about the various factors affecting the evolution of legislation in this area, as well as the impact of these types of migration policy of the European Union. As the author points out, *The Commission found this situation to be unsatisfactory, leaving too much discretion to member states in deciding on a person's family life, which is considered to be a major factor in people's well being and successful integration into the country of immigration* (p. 89). Roos evokes this complex process, and the results of the invitation of guestworkers, their mass influx, settlement and family reunification, as a final stage. Analysing the uncoordinated steps taken by particular European countries to try to solve this problem, he goes on to identify a further dilemma: *full equal treatment could lead to welfare shopping, people moving around the EU in search of the best conditions* (p. 116). The author also discusses extensively the controversy surrounding the arrangements for family reunification in the area of the EU. Another interesting point is the discussion on the regulation of migration of students and researchers. In this case, their integration into the local labour markets, as recognised by the following brief statement: *international student mobility has been increasingly perceived by OECD states as not only culturally beneficial but also economically useful* (p. 131). However, the discussion is not limited to the calculation of the economic calculus arguments seeking a simple answer to the question of long-term bene-

fits and costs. The author tries to get to the specifics of the problem of modern mobility within the EU and to comment on the further consequences of this phenomenon. The last chapter summarises the book, with the author reflecting how the European policy can affect a sensitive area of immigration and how these regulations could contribute to building a common European background of agreement among the member states of the European Union. It should be noted that the book shows in detail not only the data for the next steps in the formation of European law, but also an in-depth analysis of the literature, including EU directives and regulations. However, at this point, this analysis would be even more interesting if a more profound insight was given into literature from any of the new EU countries. The book is, undoubtedly, an important source of data for academics of various fields investigating the legal aspects of the European integration, and tracking processes of formation and modification of the EU law.

As the book starts with a title question – is there a crack in the walls of Fortress Europe? – the classic book *Fortress America. Gated Communities in the United States* (Blakely, Snyder 1997) might come to mind. According to its authors, the transition in social life is a result of the ghettoisation of American suburbs in accordance with one of the three dominant motivations behind the development of gated communities: the search for prestige, security, or a particular lifestyle. With the construction of walls, fences, cameras and guards, it is possible to maintain a common lifestyle reserved for residents. The price for living in such a community is isolation from the external, real world. Isolation covers not only the place of residence, but also place of work, leisure activities or even places to spend one's holidays, in all-inclusive resorts. The development of these forms of residence has been observed not only in the United States, but also in other parts of the world. In trying to answer the title question, one may ask whether Europe is, at least for outsiders, such a prosperous and safe place, offering its residents a standard already available in the rapidly enlarging cities in developing countries. Is there

a real world behind the walls of Fortress Europe? The content of this book explores the answers to these questions. Europe, with its level of economic development and quality of life of residents, constantly attracts the attention of immigrants from poorer areas, not put off even by information about obstacles.

The author investigates not only a large number of conflicting interests, but also the chaos and abrasion of the competing national votes. Moreover, it appears that further regulations do not contribute to sorting out the chaos. Especially the 2004 enlargement of the European Community to the countries from Central and Eastern Europe significantly changed the scale and direction of current population flows within Europe. As many authors have noted, the walls are now formed not only around 'fortress Europe' now, but also within its borders, thus bringing more challenges for social cohesion, integration and daily lives of Europeans. The author limits his analysis to the area of Europe, only in a few cases addressing the specificity of European migration in relation to a broader, global context. Readers with a sociological background may also be a little disappointed with the limited reference to any reactions of public opinion to the analysed topics. The author does not provide any information about the reasons for anti-immigrant attitudes in European countries, treating them more as a result of the actions of politicians and political parties, and does not perceive such attitudes as a social response to the impact of migration observed in the immediate vicinity. One may also ask whether the book helps us to understand the specificity of European migration – the causes and effects, including long-term ones. It seems that the author leaves the reader with many open-ended questions.

Undoubtedly, this book should figure in the collections of people interested in contemporary social life, and experts on the subject, for whom it may serve as a source of information about the recent history of Europe. Let's hope that future editions will be complemented with descriptions of transformations of Fortress Europe in 2010 and subsequent years, while also contributing to the

understanding of the phenomenon of present-day migrations and processes of integration. The term 'mobility' – widely used in the book – seems to be the keyword to understanding the changing nature of contemporary migration and its impact on the transformation taking place on our continent. Meanwhile, the term 'Harbour Europe' (p. 142) is an alternative to the 'fortress' mentioned in the title, although the effects of migratory flows described in the book do not facilitate selection of the optimal strategy on the axis between the restrictive immigration policies and former limitations of migration.

Christof Roos treats migration as an opportunity rather than a threat to Europe – both for the economy and society – concluding: *Apparently, EU policies are a mirror image of national preferences, which show that member states and the EU have abandoned their zero immigration approach. In fact, these EU immigration policies more and more define the cracks in the walls of Fortress Europe* (p. 198). It is to be hoped that the future results will be optimistic.

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