

What is planned for the next year

- > Second observational survey of public spaces in 5 study sites and questionnaire survey (activity coordinated by NUCE);
- > Writing of academic publications (conference papers, journal articles by Canadian and Vietnamese researchers and students on the team);
- > Finalization of honours thesis on female youth street vendors (Celia Zuberec, McGill);
- > Theoretical/conceptual exploration of the concept/notion of urban public spaces in the Vietnamese context (literature-based);
- > Sharing seminar with Vietnamese team in Hanoi (Dec-January 2019);
- > Production of a documentary (activity coordinated by HealthBridge);
- > Development of content for exhibition to be held at Vietnamese Women Museum (Year 4 or 5).

Type of products envisaged in the coming year

- > Multimedia Coproduction;
- > Event;
- > Scientific Publication;
- > Presentation at a conference.



RELATIONSHIP OF RURAL YOUTH MIGRANTS TO URBAN AND VIRTUAL PUBLIC SPACES IN HANOI

and their everyday resistance tactics when labelled as transgressive by others

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Partners: Vietnamese Women Museum.

HOW DO YOUNG WORKING RURAL MIGRANTS RELATE TO, USE, AND PERCEIVE THEIR PLACE IN HANOI'S URBAN AND VIRTUAL PUBLIC SPACES? HOW DOES BEING LABELLED AS TRANSGRESSIVE BY OTHERS SHAPE THEIR RELATIONSHIPS TO THE CITY'S PUBLIC SPACES?

2019

Highlights

> About 100,000 internal migrants move to Hanoi every year. Over half of them move to the capital city in search of work (Coxhead et al 2015 and Hoang & McPeak 2010) and most go there to find work. This is a relatively young population, the majority of which being 15-25 years old. Some urban residents see the presence of these young rural migrants in the city as problematic. Critiques are numerous and relate to undesirable attributes or characteristics such as low socioeconomic status, rural accents and appearances, 'rural' or inappropriate manners, etc. In line with this, some view migrants as making the city dirty, polluted, noisy, disordered, overpopulated, congested, unsafe, etc. Although limited, studies suggest that rural migrants feel being looked down by urbanites and consider themselves 'outsiders' in the city. Social stigma, combined with institutional discrimination, is seen as causing social exclusion, a lack of a sense of belonging, and poor well-being and mental health. Against this backdrop, the aim of this project is: to investigate the relationships of rural youth migrants (16-29) to urban and virtual public spaces in Hanoi and to understand how perceptions of their 'place' in the city shapes their uses of the city's public spaces.

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What was done this year

- > Interview-based qualitative survey with 105 young rural labor migrants in Hanoi (August-December 2018). Coding of interview data;
- > Detailed observational survey covering all open public spaces in 5 wards of Hanoi where above interview survey was conducted;
- > Production of 3 literature reviews based on the two annotated bibliographies (English and Vietnamese language literature) on youth migrants in the East and Southeast Asian region covering English- and Vietnamese-language sources;
- > Publication of two research papers (*Journal Landscape and Planning* and *NUCE Journal of Science and Technology in Civil Engineering*);
- > Organisation of a public event on the question of DIY urbanism in Hanoi

Preliminary results

> Not a passive group (contrary to public/media view)

Most young labor migrants are not passive urban residents, regardless of how temporary their time in Hanoi might be. They come to Hanoi to partake in a range of opportunities the city provides, to «get» something from it. This «thing» is most often work experience or specific skills or competences migrants feel they need to advance a life project (often planned elsewhere than in Hanoi).

> A gendered experience

Young women are more regulated than men by family members living in Hanoi or back in their rural place of origin when they first arrive in the city. They more often report being told what to be aware of or to stay away from in the city. This then seems to play a role in the social network they develop in the city. For instance towards whom they turn to hang out, and by extension the public spaces they dis/use. However, some young women remark that being in Hanoi is an emancipatory experience (more freedom).

> Surprisingly limited feeling of discrimination

The young migrant we interviewed do not report strong experience of feeling of discrimination during their time in Hanoi. Yet, in an indirect way, many suggested at least a distance with the urban population. They rarely explained these socio-spatial preferences and behavioral changes after having moved to Hanoi in relation to feeling discriminated against. During the survey, we formulated six hypotheses to explain this surprising result: **i)** Contrary to what the literature says, there is actually very limited discrimination against youth migrants in Hanoi; **ii)** Young migrant workers have few and very shallow contacts with non-migrants in the city and this limits chances of discriminatory interactions; **iii)** migrants do have discriminatory experience where were too uncomfortable to share them with the interviewers; **iv)** given the lack of human right discourse in Vietnam, migrants don't have a sense that they are equal human beings worth being treated as urbanites; **v)** there are so many migrants now in Hanoi that the basis for discrimination has largely disappeared; **vi)** interviewee's reflexivity is limited and so is their capacity to put their experiences/feelings of discrimination in words.

> Perceived discrimination

Some interviewees nevertheless reported experience of discrimination and feeling of being stigmatized as migrants in the city. The 'migrant' dimension of their identity is only one reason explaining the perceived discrimination. Other dimension include type of job, specific province of origin, low socio-economic status, low level of education.

> Coping strategies reported include:

- Normalizing the situation; resignation; pushing the problem out of one's consciousness;
- Hanging out with other migrants (friends, relative) and only using public spaces with them;
- Going to public places used by lots of people from different walks of life/origins and where person in position of authority is tolerant to such difference;
- Self-regulating to hide rural origins and appear modest in terms of clothing, ways of speaking, of interacting with others;

- Avoiding some types of spaces altogether (ex: private sites of consumption such as malls)
- Avoid interacting with city space and population.

> Use and disuse of public spaces

Many noted that after working they are tired and don't want to go anywhere or do anything other than rest/sleep. Yet, very few never go to any type of public spaces. As mentioned above, youth migrants find certain public spaces appealing because they provide them with a sphere of anonymity in the city – a place where the dimension of their identity (type of job, rural origin, poorer) they don't want to be immediately visible to others is less so. These spaces share some common characteristics: they are free or have a very low access cost, they use the sidewalk or street (open air), they are intensely used or even crowded. There are however important gender differences.

> Portrait of public space in the 5 study sites (wards) (only some highlights)

- Half of all open public spaces in the study sites occupy sidewalk/walkway spaces. In comparison, formal spaces (parks, etc.) represent only 18%;
- Public spaces are used more intensively by all age groups during weekends, but most prominently by 16-29 y.o.;
- By far the most common activity in all spaces and irrespective of week day is to socialize/chat;
- The type of space supporting the greatest diversity of age groups and activities are those near ritual buildings, followed very closely by formal public spaces, and sidewalk spaces.

References cited

- > Coxhead, I., Nguyen Viet Cuong, Linh Hoang Vu (2015) Migration in Vietnam: New Evidence from Recent Surveys, Vietnam Development Economics Discussion Paper 2, Hanoi: World Bank – Vietnam Country Office.
- > Hoang, P., & McPeak, J. (2010). Leaving or staying: Inter-provincial migration in Vietnam. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 19(4), 473-500.



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