

Project title: New Labour Migrations Between Vietnam and the UK: Motivations, Journeys and Reflections

Abstract:

In recent years there has been a noticeable increase in Vietnamese migration to the UK. Perceiving themselves as coming to seek a 'better life', this youthful group is largely depicted in the media as either trafficked through nail salons, cannabis factories or as unaccompanied 'child' migrants (Barber and Nguyen, 2015). This has raised concerns for authorities, especially specialist crime agencies, in both countries. These concerns relate to human smuggling, illegal drug trades and money laundering. Their associated social and economic consequences, such as burdens on the welfare and asylum systems in the UK, and family separation and poverty in Vietnam are also noted. This project seeks to understand why these migrants come to the UK. It explores their aspirations, expectations and experiences at different stages of migration. Identifying common perspectives of the migrants from both the home and host country this project aims to gain a deeper understanding of social agency and migratory strategies, to provide a fuller and more nuanced understanding of this migration.

Research Project:

Despite increasing interests in Vietnamese migration patterns to the UK among social research communities, there appears to remain a gap in the literature about migrants' perceptions and pathways. Existing evidence suggests human trafficking is the main means of migrants' arrival in the UK; and that as a result Vietnamese migrants are forced into bonded labour and slavery (SOCA 2013, CEOP 2009a and b). However, it is recognised that closer examination might reveal more complex routes and reasons for migration. By engaging in collaboration with scholars and practitioners both in Vietnam and the UK, this project seeks to develop a deeper understanding of why Vietnamese migrants wish to come to the UK, and what they hope to achieve through migration and their experiences once in the UK and/or on return to Vietnam. The project's objectives are:

1. To explore how societal perceptions of migration are formed in Vietnam and how these perception change during and after migration.
2. To identify the possible routes of passage for migrants (i.e. which countries do they pass through and which networks do they draw upon in this journey) and to draw up a map of migrant routes to show how much/how often they choose each route.
3. To understand their overall experiences of migrating to the UK and whether migration contributes to an improvement of their lives and the lives of their family on their return.

To achieve these objectives, a mixed method approach will be used. Firstly, a social survey designed to measure the extent and nature of Vietnamese migration to the UK: this will also serve the purpose of devising a map of migrant routes. Findings from this survey will aid the second phase of the project: in-depth interviews with Vietnamese migrants themselves. The interviews will be conducted with Vietnamese citizens at three different stages of the migration process: 1. Premigration, 2. Migration, 3. Post-migration and return. A second set of interviews will also be conducted with labour agencies and NGOs in Vietnam, as well as charities and NGOs working with Vietnamese migrants in the UK.

Planned research outputs:

1. The submission of a larger joint research grant application on the area of migration between Vietnam and the UK to the FCO UK Vietnam Fund (Bilateral Fund).
2. Two co-authored journal articles.
3. Baseline data on Vietnamese migration in the UK, which will serve later deeper

research on this topic.

4. New partnerships between UK and Vietnamese researchers

5. Clarification and setting first contacts with responsible government officials on the area of migration,

6. A project website hosting working papers, baseline data, blogs and other information about the research and the research partnership activities.

7. Shared teaching in Vietnam and the UK on the experiences and perils of migrating illegally.