

### **Modern Slavery and State Control of Mobility**

Keynote Lecture - Prof. Julia O'Connell-Davidson, Bristol University

Contemporary liberal states are eager to combat 'human trafficking', frequently described as the modern day equivalent of the transatlantic slave trade, and condemned as a gross violation of human rights. The same states are also depriving migrants of their freedom on an unprecedented scale through immigration detention, forcibly moving them across borders through deportation, and sustaining a flourishing industry in the prevention and control of human movement. This paper considers that paradox through the lens of transatlantic slavery.

### **Comments on the 'modern slavery' and human trafficking agendas in the United Kingdom and the way they involve people of Vietnamese origin**

Mike Dottridge

Consultant - Human rights and child rights, with a special focus on exploitation

The international community increased its attention on issues about human exploitation from the early 1990s onwards (principally UN organisations and Western countries), focusing initially on the commercial sexual exploitation of children in Southeast Asia and forced prostitution in Europe. From 2000 this attention was on what was called human trafficking, with the United States taking the lead in financing counter-trafficking initiatives. Since 2015 it has been rebranded in the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia as 'modern slavery'. Although relatively large numbers of Vietnamese were emigrating to earn a living even before 2000, the government of Vietnam was relatively slow to respond to the ways its emigrants were exploited, except in the case of girls and women who married abroad or who earned a living in sex work (sometimes forced prostitution) in Cambodia and China. In particular, the government's attempts to regulate the credit market were inadequate, so emigrants continue to pay extremely high interest on loans to finance emigration. The UK developed the 'modern slavery' agenda from 2011 onwards (leading to the appointment of an Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner in 2014 and the adoption of a Modern Slavery Act in 2015), coinciding with Andrew Forrest's interest in the topic and establishment of new anti-slavery and abolitionist organisations. Despite the lack of interest by the Vietnamese authorities, the UK authorities focused on Vietnamese children employed in the UK as cannabis gardeners, who were initially regarded as criminals (and prosecuted), until a Court of Appeal judgment in 2013 re-categorised them as victims of trafficking. However, this has encouraged the authorities in the UK to portray a wide range of informal sector employment of irregular migrants as 'modern slavery', notably nail bars and car washing facilities. Both European government officials and anti-trafficking/slavery NGOs based in Europe appear to have difficulties in analysing the informal economy in which irregular migrants are employed, or to know

how it is appropriate to respond, either in terms of preventing human trafficking or protecting children or adults who find themselves being forced to work in ways they did not chose.

### **Undocumented Vietnamese Migrants in the United Kingdom: The Experience of Alliance Anti-Traffic in Dealing with Returnees, Government Officials and Civil Society**

Georges Blanchard

Founder and director, Alliance Anti-Traffic Vietnam

Alliance Anti-Traffic, an international NGO based in Ho Chi Minh City, has extensive experience in addressing undocumented migration and human trafficking from Vietnam to Europe. This presentation will highlight the lessons drawn from a decade of implementing prevention, repatriation and reintegration programmes in collaboration with the British and Vietnamese governments. It will pay special attention to a large-scale repatriation exercise that was conducted at the request of the British government between 2012 and 2014. The goal of this operation was to repatriate 140 Vietnamese adult (and a few minor) men and women arrested in cannabis farms (but not exclusively) in the UK to Nghe An, Thanh Hoan and Quang Binh, three provinces in Central Vietnam from where most migrants depart to the UK. So far, this has been the first and only operation of that scale conducted between the two countries by an NGO under the auspices of the British government. The main findings of a survey conducted with the returnees on their socioeconomic backgrounds, their reasons for leaving, the challenges they faced during their journey across Europe and upon arrival in the UK, their lives as undocumented migrants and workers in the UK, their experience with the British criminal justice system, the impact vocational training had on their lives, microcredit and follow-up programmes that were provided to them in the UK and in Vietnam, and their views on the overall migration, repatriation and reintegration process and experience will be presented together with insights for future research and cooperation initiatives.

### **Undocumented Vietnamese Migrants in Paris: Some Preliminary Thoughts about the Temporalities of Debt-Financed Migration and Precarity**

Nicolas Lainez, PhD

Institut de recherche interdisciplinaire sur les enjeux sociaux (France)

This paper presents the foundations and preliminary findings of ongoing research examining the temporalities shaping unsanctioned debt-financed migration from Vietnam to France. The dominant trafficking and 'modern slavery' paradigm conceives of debt as a tool of control and exploitation wielded by "evil" human smugglers. However, this approach leads to a poor understanding of the inner workings of debt and its implications for migrants and their families and credit providers. This project seeks to overcome these limitations by illuminating the temporal dissonance between the strict repayment timeframes that govern the multiple loans that Vietnamese migrants take to finance their journey to/across Europe, and the uncertainty and precarity that permeate their everyday lives as undocumented migrants and workers. The dissonance stems from the fact that

debt requires the borrower to master time and foresee the future, whereas unsanctioned migration for labour purposes limits the ability of indebted migrants to do so. The study of this topic matters because the reimbursement of migration-related debts in such unfavourable conditions lasts for several months or even years, and is thus a constant and pressing concern for thousands of unsanctioned Vietnamese migrants who opt for such a risky form of mobility, and accessorially for their families who provide them with funds by borrowing from credit providers. Based on data provided by five undocumented Vietnamese migrants working in restaurants and construction sites in Paris, and one having worked in Moscow, this presentation will focus on theoretical, methodological and empirical challenges and insights.

## **THE MIGRATION FROM VIETNAM TO UK- BACKGROUND, REASONS AND TREND**

Associate Prof. Dr. Nguyen Van Phuc, Trung Vuong University, Vietnam

A high quantity of the human resource is considered as an advantage of Vietnam, a positive condition for the economical development of the country. However, lack of qualified, high skill labour force and surplus of low skill workers is a real barrier for the country's development. In order to overcome this problem, Vietnam launched a complex programme since 1980s, including a huge migration within the country, labour exchange with eastern European countries, strengthening the educational/ vocational systems and exploitation of underdeveloped regions. Later, the scope of internal migration was strongly reduced, but continuously remained. Eastern European countries did not received Vietnamese workers any more, but instead, other countries in Middle East, South Korea and newly, Japan. In addition, there is a migration to European countries, the US and Canada, legally and illegally. There is currently in Vietnam no complex, systematic study on the problem of migration from Vietnam to other countries, including to UK.

The migration to UK is not the biggest flow of the whole migration of Vietnamese people, but it seems to increase continuously in the last years. As in other countries, such as in the US, eastern European countries, South Korea and Japan, etc., Vietnamese migrants do either legal as well as illegal jobs, which may creates seriously different social and economical problems for receiving countries.

Theoretically, there are many direct and indirect reasons for the migration of Vietnamese into other countries, including the UK. However, in fact, in the last years, the most important and common reason is the economic one. Concretely, the common motivation for migration of Vietnamese into UK is to make money. Most Vietnamese immigrants and their family members thought that they could make money much more and easily in UK. Good examples for the thought are transferred under interested people widely, but not examples on the opposite direction.

In coming period, current influencing factors will play continuously the previous role. That is the reason for the assumption that the current trend of Vietnamese immigration will continue.

## **Vietnamese migration to East London: connecting home, work and urban mobility**

Annabelle Wilkins, University of Southampton

While there is a large and diverse body of work on labour migration and a growing area of research exploring how experiences of home are reconfigured through mobility, these literatures tend to focus either on work (including precarious migrant workers and 'highly-skilled' migrants) or on material and emotional aspects of home-making. My research aims to bring together and extend these broad areas, examining relationships between home and work among Vietnamese migrants in East London. This paper draws upon semi-structured interviews, ethnography and visual methods involving first generation migrants from Vietnam who live in East London, including individuals who arrived as refugees and people who migrated for work or education in recent years.

The paper examines the ways in which practices of work have changed in response to migration and the extent to which work might enable participants to feel a sense of home in the city. While the findings emphasize the diversity of migration trajectories from Vietnam, this paper also highlights how work places and networks form points of connection across different generations and migration journeys. Among some individuals, work is valued as an activity that forms a bridge between their former lives in Vietnam and their current environment, enabling a sense of identity that eases the transitional experience of migration. Others relate to work in a pragmatic sense, viewing it as necessary for survival or as part of a longer-term plan involving further study or secondary migration. The paper reveals how immigration policies, insecure work and housing influence participants' capacities to develop a sense of home or belonging in the city.

**'Beyond Victimhood'? Experiences of new Vietnamese migrants in the UK: modern slavery, trafficking and the cannabis trade'.**

Dr Tamsin Barber (Oxford Brookes University) & Hai Nguyen (Kings College London)

This paper will situate the position and treatment of Vietnamese illegal migrants in the UK within current debates around 'Modern Slavery' and 'trafficking'. Drawing upon existing academic literature and our own fieldwork on social media entries by Vietnamese migrants we challenge this framework and argue for the need to broaden dominant understandings and conceptions of Vietnamese migrants beyond those of 'passive victims' of trafficking or 'modern slaves' to include a wider range of experiences in which migrants display social agency. We will reflect upon the limitations of this framework for enabling a more accurate and fuller understanding of the situation by showing how the experiences of Vietnamese migrants challenges their categorisation as 'trafficked victims', and in most cases can be better understood as having undergone 'smuggling'. We will also argue that discussions of Vietnamese migrants need to better take in to account the

entire spectrum of migration experience and relations leading to migration: to include the situation of the sending communities in Vietnam, as well as their position within global-economic power structures that are responsible for producing vulnerable communities in Vietnam, shadow economy sectors (and unregulated labour markets) in the UK, while at the same time imposing strict immigration regimes in the UK (and Europe more broadly).