

Thesis Title

‘Vietnamese Londoners: Transnational Identities Through Community Networks’

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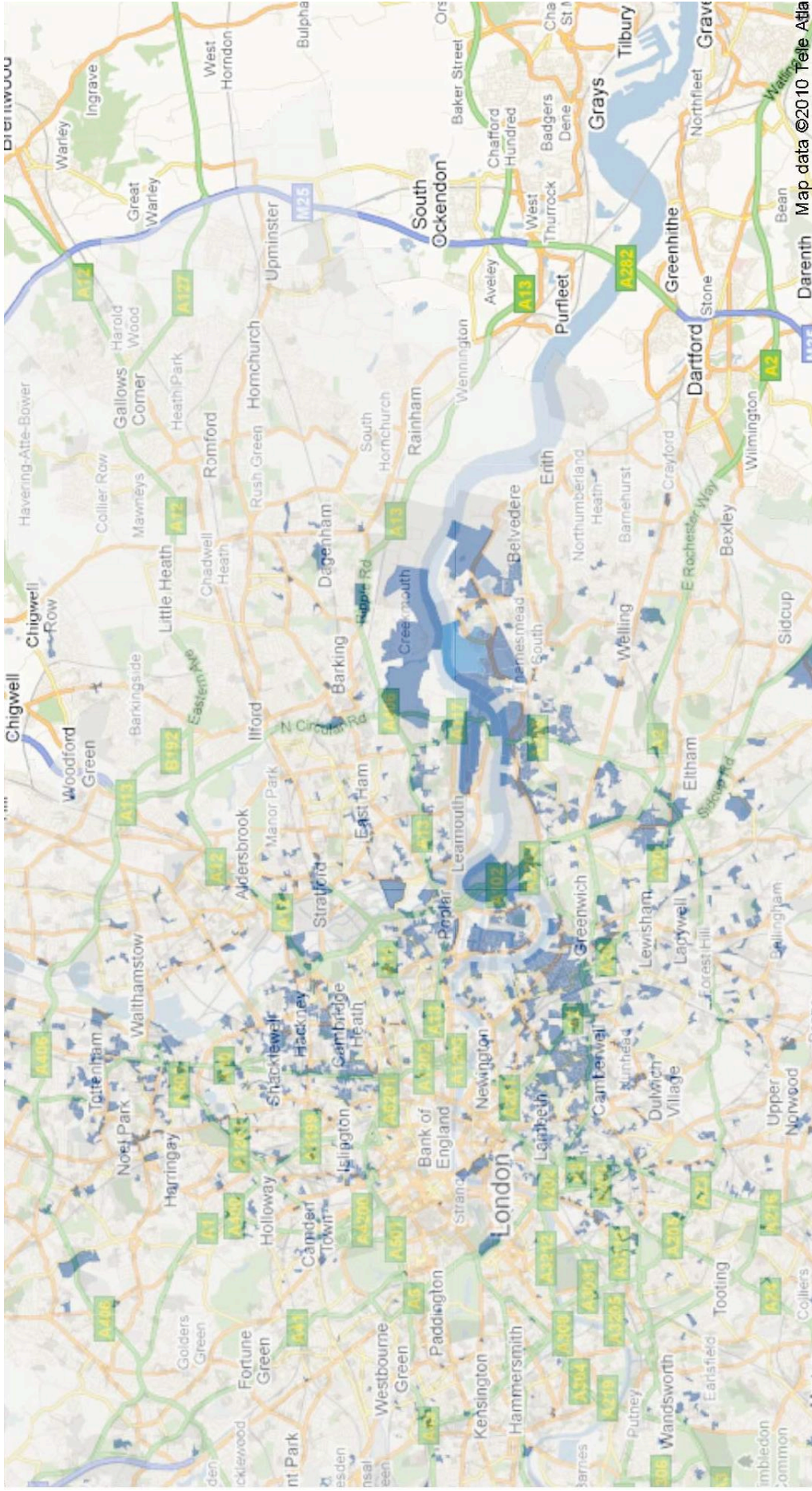
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Abstract

This research examines Vietnamese in London, focusing on identity formation and community networks through transnational activities. I argue that ‘the transnational’ is a ‘subset’ of migrant categories, and that Vietnamese transnational identities depend on the measurable activities in which they are involved. Important aspects of this research are:

First, the Vietnamese are one of the first major non-British Commonwealth peoples to migrate into the United Kingdom in the modern era. This has had implications related to settlement into British society, overcome by the subsequent shift from refugee status to transnational activity and identities, resulting in widespread Vietnamese transnational networks. Second, the Vietnamese represent one of the first ‘quota’ refugee populations granted entry into the UK. Refugees were accepted prior to entering Britain, and upon arrival, government and private support structures were provided. Also, Vietnamese refugees underwent mandatory dispersal across the UK, a detrimental situation prompting a subsequent intra-Britain migration to urban centres, particularly London. Third, Vietnamese communities in Britain have distinctive characteristics, making a study of identities and networks an interesting and useful one, particularly in light of developing research in transnational studies. These characteristics include the Vietnamese North-South cultural and linguistic ‘divide’, the presence of Vietnamese and Chinese-background Vietnamese, and differences in the timing and reasons for migration.

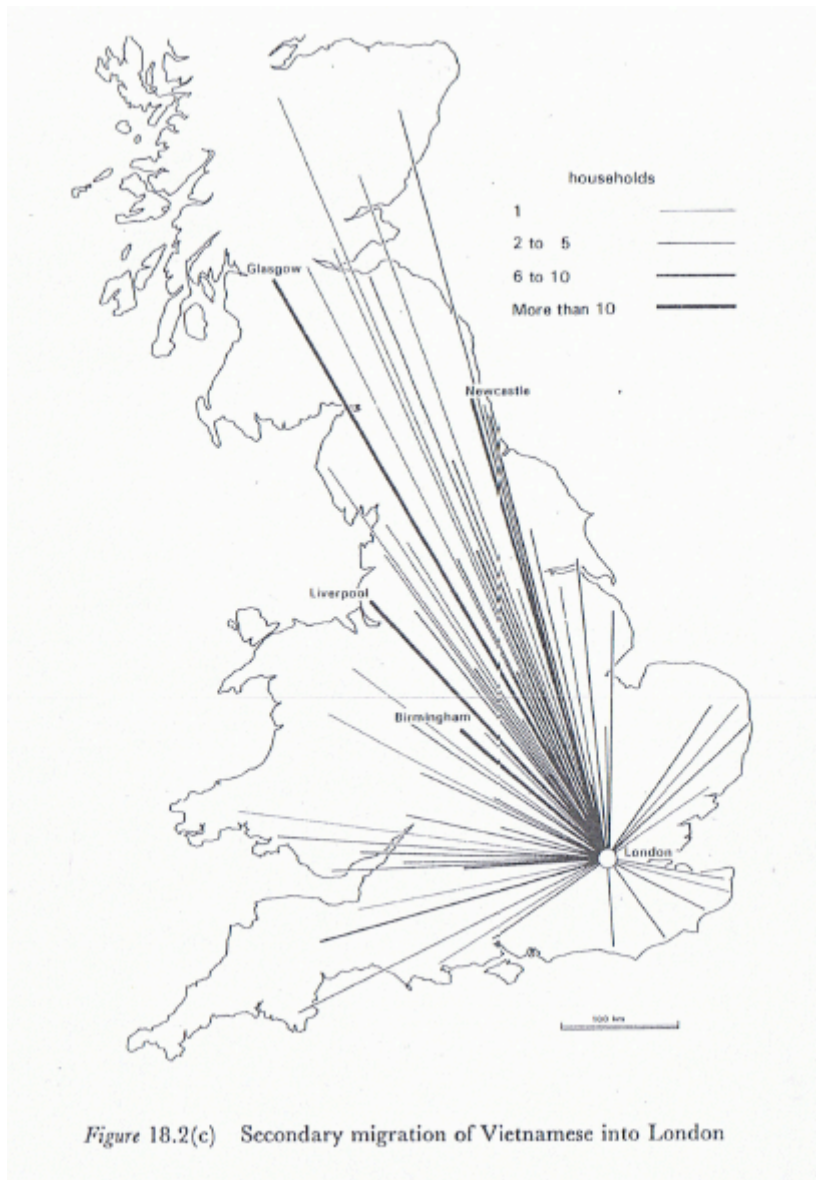
Key research questions relate to transnational activities, identities, and community networks played out in the role, reach and specific pathways of those activities across national borders. Key questions are: ‘What does it mean to be a transnationally active Vietnamese Londoner?’ and ‘How are Vietnamese Londoners engaged in community-based transnational networks?’ These questions are addressed using interviews, participant observation, participation in Vietnamese-related conferences, and in informal conversations on the street and in local Vietnamese shops. This research relates stories of contextualised transnational identities linking Vietnamese from London across the globe.



Map 1: Location of Vietnamese Communities in London, (Maptube.org, 2010).



Map 2: Vietnamese Transnational Networks from London



Map 3: Secondary Migration of Vietnamese Refugees into London (Robinson, 1993: 346)

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Notes on the Text

In this text, I have not used a Vietnamese font at the suggestion of Vietnamese interviewees. In future publications a Vietnamese font will be used throughout. Where Vietnamese terms are inserted in the text, the meaning is clear from the context.

I have chosen to limit the use of the term ‘diaspora’ as by definition, ‘diaspora’ refers to those Vietnamese who experienced a ‘forced migration’. This designation only includes a part of the Vietnamese population in London. While the term ‘diaspora’ appears at various points, I have chosen to use the Vietnamese term, ‘Viet Kieu’ or its English translation, ‘Overseas Vietnamese’.

The term ‘transnational’ is used throughout this text to describe identities and networks characterised by activities across national borders. In some cases, the term is used as an adjective, however, this does not in any way indicate a reification of the identity of transnationally active individual Vietnamese Londoners. In this study, an individual is ‘transnational’ by virtue of his or her cross-border activities, performed on a regular basis for carrying out a livelihood.

I have changed the names of some interviewees at their request. In the appendix, these names appear within quotation marks (‘’).

Introduction

Significant Vietnamese interaction in London's multi-ethnic and multi-cultural environment has been on-going for thirty-five years. After the 'Fall of Saigon' in 1975, and particularly during the aftermath of the Sino-Vietnamese (Chinese-Vietnamese) border conflicts of 1979 and 1980, significant numbers of Vietnamese began the arduous, and for many, dangerous migration out of Vietnam. For some, the impetus was freedom from Communism, for others economic opportunity, and for a large number, the added pressure of being of Chinese origin (even if many generations in the past) brought about a 'forced migration' experienced by many Vietnamese. Many of these refugees fled to Hong Kong, and a large number were eventually brought to Britain. Subsequently, Vietnamese have continued arrive in Britain under very different circumstances as students, work permit holders, tourists and also as non-legal immigrants. As a result, a number of Vietnamese communities have emerged across London (cf. Map 1). Communities and individuals can be identified by a number of factors including, relationship to the 'homeland' (as refugee or Vietnamese citizen), history of immigration, the particular reasons for migration, and geographical or urban backgrounds such as southern or northern Vietnamese, Hanoi, Haiphong or Ho Chi Minh City. Out of each community there are Vietnamese individuals who establish and maintain connections with Vietnamese communities around the globe. This thesis is about Vietnamese Londoners with particular reference to those Vietnamese who are based in London, and who have specific and transnationally active daily lives. The two questions that are key to this research are: 'What does it mean to be a transnationally active Vietnamese Londoner?' and 'How are Vietnamese Londoners engaged in community-based transnational networks?'

In the years preceding the initial stages of this project, I was influenced by several events and interactions that indicated the existence of a somewhat negative perspective toward the Vietnamese population in London. This negativity on the part of some in the general population fuelled my curiosity about a people who, for the most part, seemed to have kept a low profile in the wider London milieu. The first event to draw my attention was an interview conducted with a British social worker who was active in Vietnamese neighbourhoods and homes; the second, was a series of conversations about Vietnamese in Britain held with people in London from a variety of ethnicities, backgrounds and industries; and the third was an article published in The Independent in 2000, which came to my attention two years after its publication. This series of interactions initiated, in 2003,

what became a formal study of the identities and related transnational activities of specific Vietnamese Londoners.

Perceptions of Vietnamese Londoners

During a conference focused on refugee issues, I met a British social worker employed by the council of a North London borough. I attended as a consultant, also working with initiatives amongst recent immigrants. When she discovered my affiliation with Vietnam as one who spent almost 14 years in the country, she began to voice her concerns about a number of clients who had immigrated to London over the past decade or so. ‘The Vietnamese are some of the poorest of my clients, even those who have been here for a long time’, she asserted (Informal Interview with a British Social Worker, 21 March 2002).

When asked about her reasons for making this statement, she listed a number of factors which, certainly from a Western cultural standpoint, could indicate poverty, but which, from a Vietnamese perspective, can simply be lifestyle choices. As we discussed various issues in the home, the focus of her observations settled on a lack of furniture, few ornaments decorating the walls, simple diet, which she described as ‘meagre’ as indicated by a sparsely appointed flat, refrigerator and pantry (Ibid.), and large numbers of people sharing rooms in small accommodation. As the conversation continued we discussed the fact that, while these factors could indeed indicate a serious problem, there could be another explanation. In my experience with Vietnamese refugees in the United Kingdom, Germany and the United States, it has been my observation that many Vietnamese immigrants choose to live very simply, refusing to invest in what some consider ‘luxuries’ such as furniture, vehicles, and household ornamentation in order to save resources for more important and lasting investments, particularly the purchase of housing and sending children to college or university. This interchange heightened my interest in Vietnamese Londoners and I initiated a journey, which was to culminate in this project.

Part of this journey involved conversations with other Londoners about the Vietnamese as well as on-line research. Many of those I approached in conversation about Vietnamese Londoners were surprised that there were significant numbers of Vietnamese in London. We discussed figures as reported in the first population reports I found on-line, initially in a

1997 report of those ethnic minority populations of over 10,000 residing in London¹ (Lewis, 1997: 2). One long-time Londoner expressed incredulity. ‘Vietnamese people in London? I’ve never heard that! [Foreigners], they’re coming from everywhere!’ (Informal Interview, 24 November 2002). This sense that London was serving as host to people from all over the world was quite common amongst many of those with whom I spoke. Some considered it a benefit and an addition to the richness of the city, while others were either ambivalent or concerned about the growing size, complexities and diversity of London’s population. Another Londoner, a second-generation migrant from Cyprus, was exasperated. ‘Vietnamese? We just keep taking people from everywhere! What’s the limit? People want to come because they’ve got such a good package here. The government needs to wake up! We can’t keep this up!’ (Informal Interview, 10 December 2002). Another informal interviewee had heard of Vietnamese in London, but expressed concern over their presence in the city, ‘I’ve heard that Vietnamese gangs run around parts of the city. They’re involved in crime and drugs, you know? But with all that, I still fancy Vietnamese [food] every now and again!’ (Informal Interview, 24 November 2002). I was pushed in my thinking by this discourse around the negativities associated with the presence of Vietnamese, but also by the wealth and richness of multi-ethnic London, with its growing range of cultural experiences, perspectives, food, literature and languages on offer.

Finally, I came across an on-line article and read the following: ‘Vietnamese boat people came to Britain for a new life. They found unemployment and despair’ (Burrell 2000). This news headline appeared in The Independent on 22 January 2000, and begged the question once again: Are Vietnamese Londoners still despairing and unemployed? Burrell describes, in the article cited above, a number of Vietnamese scenarios being acted out in the London scene, reflecting on visible difficulties of a disadvantaged Vietnamese community. He goes on to say, ‘two decades after the first refugees arrived at a reception centre at an RAF camp in Hampshire, the 27,000-strong Vietnamese community in Britain is in crisis’ (Ibid.). The major issues identified in the landmark article are individual and community problems centred on drug use and distribution, subsequent petty and organized crime, depression, mental illness and poor English language skills.

¹ Rob Lewis reports in his 1997 article titled, ‘The Demography and Geography of London’s Ethnic Minorities’, that at the time of the 1991 census, there were 11,848 Vietnamese residing in London who were born outside the country. These figures do not include second generation, London-born Vietnamese.

Burrell goes on to lay a large part of the blame at the feet of the British government, particularly the policy of ‘dispersal’ of refugees and asylum seekers, saying that the ‘problems now being experienced by the Vietnamese can be traced to the failings of the original ‘dispersal’ housing programme used by the Government to scatter the boat people across rural Britain... a policy still partially in effect today’ (Burrell 2000). Are lessons being learned from these past experiences? The previous year, Alice Bloch, wrote the following in the Forced Migration Review out of Oxford, ‘the Kosovo crisis has highlighted some of the problems with the new legislation, particularly in the area of support and dispersal’ (Bloch 1999). Given the more recent dispersals of Kosovar and Somali asylum seekers, the question remains open, and this point will be argued further in subsequent chapters. At this point it is important to note that the purpose of this research is to hear the voices of Vietnamese on issues surrounding identities and the global networks that rise out of the everyday activities of transnationals. In the meantime, the burning question remains: Is this negative perspective on Vietnamese living in the United Kingdom put forward by The Independent an accurate one?

In the discourse around ‘the health’ of the ‘Vietnamese community’ during the early years of migration into Britain, there seemed to be a tendency to downplay those Vietnamese Londoners who were active as productive members of society. The records highlight those who were struggling with the adjustment and with issues seemingly brought on through the exilic experience of breaking with all that was familiar, ‘risking all’ on the high seas, and surviving sometimes many years in the refugee camps of Hong Kong, Thailand, and other nations. Drugs, petty and organised crime, depression, mental illness; all have been the focus of discussions both in the media and amongst government policy-makers ever since Vietnamese began arriving in Britain. There are extremely important policy decisions being made related to these difficult and on-going realities within Vietnamese communities in London and other major Vietnamese population centres in the United Kingdom. However, the question remains: How did this negative perspective come to be wide-spread in the media and in the general population?

A Perspective on the Negative Discourse

As one who has been in relationship with Vietnamese both inside Vietnam (having grown up to age 14 in Ho Chi Minh City, formerly Saigon), and among the ‘forced-migration

“diaspora” in multiple nations, I found myself somewhat perplexed by what seemed to be a one-sided perspective. One of the motivating factors for embarking upon this project was to challenge these stereotypes of Vietnamese communities in London. One interviewee described the situation as ‘frustrating, because you feel like you can never change people’s attitudes no matter how good you are at what you do’ (Informal Interview, 20 January 2004). A Vietnamese community leader stated in a presentation that, ‘often when someone views the Vietnamese community in the UK, they seem to see the negative aspects of it, or at the most the business orientated community. There is a real lack of overall representation of Vietnamese in the UK in which the young Vietnamese professionals play a key role’ (Ton: 2006: 1). A further question must be asked: What are the identity and networking characteristics that can be found in those Vietnamese Londoners who are not struggling with the issues highlighted above, that is, those who have become identifiable by other Vietnamese as ‘successful’ and ‘productive’ members of the wider, globalised society? Huong, an interviewee from Hackney put it, ‘we are very practical. We are always thinking about how things should work out and what we’re going to do to make things happen’ (Huong Interview, 5 January 2010). Hai, another interviewee, stated, that ‘the Vietnamese people are very practical, always thinking about the future’ (Hai Interview, 28 March 2009). Another interviewee stated emphatically: ‘We Vietnamese always try to influence the world around us... we do everything we can to manipulate situations and people so that we don’t lose face or so that we get what we want or need’ (Informal Interview, Hackney 3 October 2007).

In light of these statements, I propose that the negative discourse at the root of Burrell’s article had to do with what he was hearing from Vietnamese embedded in communities, particularly those in leadership and management roles in local Vietnamese community centres. One of the positive aspects of the ‘quota system’, under which only a specific number of Vietnamese ‘boat people’ were accepted from Hong Kong into Britain, was a commitment on the part of the Thatcher government to provide support on a variety of levels to assist in the adjustment and integration process. As a young entrepreneur, Huong, asserted in an interview that the British government was ‘very helpful to our family in the early stages of life in Britain’ (Huong Interview, 5 January 2010). And, as Councillor Khanh Thanh Vu stated in an earlier interview, ‘in addition to providing housing and local assistance to families, the British government also funded local Vietnamese community centres’ as spaces of both access to the Vietnamese communities and spaces of assistance

(Vu Interview, 24 October 2007). However, the reality was that resources were dwindling as the government and other funding sources cut back, applying resources to newer immigrant groups, such as Kosovars, Somalis, etc.

This reality was addressed in 2004, when Vietnamese communities in the United Kingdom organised the Vietnamese National Conference with the theme, 'Youth and the Future of the Vietnamese Community'. Crucially, Ms. Claire Downie, Senior Policy Advisor on immigration at the Home Office at that time was invited to address the conference. One keynote speaker at the same conference, Quang Duc Nguyen, stated that 'there has been a decline of Vietnamese organisations, dramatically dropping since the mid 1990s largely due to the financial and resource constraints. It appears that the funding depends on the individual needs in order to be distributed' (Nguyen 2004: 5). It seems that in this context of diminishing funding that there arose the need to put forward in the strongest of terms the desperate needs of members of the Vietnamese community. By utilising the media, organising conferences and inviting various government and private sector officials, leaders in Vietnamese communities such as those quoted in Burrell's article, were able to keep the need for funding in the foreground.

Attending several of the workshops at the 2004 Vietnamese National Conference, I was given a clear picture of the major concerns of those present at the conference. One of the primary recommendations from the 'Community Organisations' workshop was 'strengthening the national conference to build up its profile as a lobby group to place pressure on the [British] government for Vietnamese community organisations' (Ho 2004: 9). The Vietnamese National Conference includes members from Vietnamese community organisations in both London and Manchester as well as past and current connections to similar organisations in Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Glasgow and Leeds. Two years later, Vietnamese community leaders addressed this issue in a conference celebrating 35 years of Vietnamese presence in the United Kingdom. Jenny Vuong, in a presentation to the gathering, stated that while there was a rise in the registration of businesses in London in the 'early 2000s', 'access to community support was declining because of a decline in funding' (Vuong 2006: 15). A solution was offered by Nguyen from the Southwark Vietnamese/Chinese Community, and included 'building a partnership between organisations in the same catchment area and creating a network between them so that those with corresponding aims join to form a force' (Nguyen 2004: 5). Gerd Baumann speaks to

this issue utilising the term ‘strategies’ to describe the process of community members seeking to influence political and social structures in their favour. Addressing the concerns of minority communities, Baumann states that, ‘a third option consists in a pragmatic strategy, and is the one that best avoids subjective alienation: it involves the creative forging of affinities and alliances across *community* boundaries’ (Baumann 1996: 134-5; emphasis in original). The Vietnamese have utilised this ‘strategy’ in quiet ways. There have been few marches, boycotts or open letters. In my observations of Vietnamese communities in London over almost seven years, it has become clear that mobilising community organisations and going through recognised channels is a hallmark of the Vietnamese’ strategy for gaining influence.

While the Vietnamese’ strategic use of conferences, lobbying and the media was an essential aspect of maintaining government and private sector support, one of the possible consequences of this pragmatic approach was that the successes of both individuals and Vietnamese communities in London had a tendency to slip into the background. There was an occasional article highlighting a successful Vietnamese individual, a surgeon for example (Hyams, 2006: 45), or an exhibit at the Hackney Museum focused on Councillor Khanh Thanh Vu, the first Vietnamese to be elected to the post of councillor in London. There was even a strong paragraph in Quang Duc Nguyen’s presentation at the Vietnamese National Conference in 2004, cited above, in which he states that ‘Vietnamese people are moving away from the welfare dependency and contributing to the local economy, venturing in businesses and self-employment such as restaurants, supermarkets, and nail shops’ (Nguyen 2004: 5).

However, the bulk of the Vietnamese population found themselves placed by many Londoners and many in the media into a collective identity characterised by crime, drugs, depression and isolation. Little was known about Vietnamese in London, and there were few public contact points through which mutual understanding could occur. These were some of the observations that drove me to carry out this project, which is to highlight specific individuals who are carrying out transnational activities through their far-reaching global networks. My desire was also to explore the ways that the activities of these individuals affect the wider society and the lives of other Vietnamese Londoners. Before addressing the many issues related to Vietnamese Londoners in general and those Vietnamese Londoners

who are involved in transnational activities in particular, it is helpful to examine the population dynamics with reference to the presence of Vietnamese in London.

Vietnamese Presence in London

For a brief introduction to Vietnamese presence in London with a particular emphasis on individual stories of migration see Appendix XI. With regard to the number of Vietnamese currently residing in London and the United Kingdom, accurate figures are problematic, given the fact that official census figures only include those Vietnamese born outside of the United Kingdom. Official figures simply do not count those born in Britain to Vietnamese parents over the past 30 years. Also misleading is the reality that up to the present, there is no census category specifically for ‘Vietnamese’. Southeast Asians have typically been a part of the ‘Chinese’ category on census forms.

In addition, since 2002, there has been a significant increase in non-legal immigration from Vietnam to the United Kingdom. Estimates currently stand at 10,000 non-legal immigrants living in London, according to several Vietnamese interviewees. Another source puts non-legal immigrants in England and Wales at 20,000 (Sims 2007: i). One Vietnamese community worker suggests that perhaps ‘as many as 2000 illegal immigrants enter the UK each year’ (Vu Interview, 21 November 2007). As another source stated, ‘the number of asylum claims in the UK represents only a fraction of the real number of Vietnamese nationals living illegally in the country. Most of them choose to hide away, making their living by working for Vietnamese businesses such as restaurants and shops’ (Pham, 2004). Also, community worker Peter Le states that ‘in my knowledge... now in London we have nearly 30,000 Vietnamese’ and ‘there are 3,400 overseas [university] students in London [from Vietnam]’ (Interview Peter Le 14 January 2008). Sims estimates that there are a total of 5000 Vietnamese students in England and Wales (Sims 2007: i). These estimates (including British-born Vietnamese, students and non-legal immigrants) are not included in the official figure of 30,000 Vietnamese in the United Kingdom out of 2.31 million Vietnamese living outside of the homeland of Vietnam. Official global Vietnamese statistics are listed below with a full account in Appendix 1².

² · 1.300.000 Vietnamese are now living in the United States; 250.000 in France; 300.000 in Russia and Eastern Europe; 120.000 in Canada; 100.000 in Germany, 30.000 in the United Kingdom; 110.000 in Australia; 100.000 in Thailand (Ryang 2001).

In 2005, five years after the publication of Burrell's article, a special report was published in the Guardian Newspaper's supplement, 'G2'. According to Leo Benedictus, 'clothing factories brought hundreds of Vietnamese refugees into Hackney in the early 1980s, but when their jobs went overseas in the mid-1990s (often, with bitter irony, to Vietnam) the textile workers had to find a new trade' (Benedictus 2005: 5). The government policy of dispersal scattered many Vietnamese refugees across the United Kingdom. The subsequent intra-Britain migration of Vietnamese not only built up supportive communities in London and other cities in the United Kingdom, but also resulted in the establishment of networks through which Vietnamese found employment (cf. Map 3). Benedictus went on to describe the entrepreneurial side of Vietnamese Londoners: 'In less than 10 years, having started with no training or experience, a few Vietnamese businessmen... expanded to the point where they now own more than 300 nail shops in London alone' (Ibid.). 'Nail shops' are a relatively new phenomenon in Britain, where manicures and pedicures have become an art form. An Internet search of current Vietnamese-owned businesses reveals that Vietnamese are thriving in multiple sectors with the nail and catering industries being the most common (cf. Table 1 in Appendix IV). The nail industry alone provides 'over fifty percent of Vietnamese employment in the capital' (Sims 2007: i).

Most striking to any observer of London's demographics is the plethora of Vietnamese shops and restaurants in several different London boroughs, both north and south of the Thames, 'in particular Hackney, Haringey, Southwark and Greenwich' (Baker and Eversely 2000: 58). The number and concentration of Vietnamese businesses that have been attracted to the London borough of Hackney is of particular importance for community identity and visibility. Along the Kingsland Road and Mare Street corridors one finds opportunities to shop for fresh Vietnamese food and dry goods in large and small supermarkets, Vietnamese music and film entertainment, books and magazines in the Vietnamese language, (some now published in London). There are also shops for clothing and even travel agencies. 'This is what a few boat people can do with 25 years and a lot of hard work' (Benedictus 2005: 5). The intervening 25 years were a time of consolidation for Vietnamese communities in London. They were also years of developing identities and networks in the everyday experiences of life in London. Some Vietnamese, however, through the strategic use of resources available to them, expanded their sphere of influence beyond London and developed identities characterised by transnational activities and networks. The purpose of

this research was to examine the circumstances around the development of these transnational identities and networks through the everyday activities that include the crossing of national borders in transnational ways. The focus was on ethnographic and multi-sited research with a reflexive and auto-ethnographic perspective. Formal and informal interviews provided the basis for gathering research in order to hear specific narratives and engage in a dialogic process about individual transnational experiences. Also key, was participant observation during cultural events, gatherings in homes and during community meetings, as well as informal gatherings of Vietnamese at local restaurants and community centres. In the following section, I outline the structure of the thesis.

The Thesis Outlined

In order to accomplish the aims set out by this project, this thesis is divided into six chapters. Following this introduction, the next two chapters focus on key debates and methodologies related to this research. Chapter one includes interaction with key themes in the literature as they relate to the debates and issues rising out of interviews with Vietnamese Londoners. The structure of the chapter includes discussions around identity, resources, migration, nationhood and citizenship, community and networks. In chapter two, I discuss methods used in the process of locating, engaging, and interviewing specific Vietnamese Londoners.

In the third chapter, I present a history of migration into Britain including the relationship between Britain and Vietnam. The Vietnamese immigration process is placed within the context of historical migratory patterns into Britain. The structure of the chapter revolves around both Vietnamese Londoners' views of the various stages of migration into London and also an identification of the various communities that have developed through the past thirty-five years of immigration, primarily through Hong Kong, during the Premiership of Margaret Thatcher. Chapter four addresses the concept of identity with a specific focus on complex roles lived out in multiple contexts across national boundaries. The chapter begins with a discussion of 'Vietnameseness' and then moves on to address the notion of identity as it is lived through 'everyday life'. A key aspect of this chapter is that through an examination of specific roles played by Vietnamese, identity is defined in its various contexts. The chapter concludes with an examination of the Vietnamese experience, navigating between identities associated with being a minority in a host culture on the one hand, and being a resourced, transnationally active networker in multiple Vietnamese

communities on the other. At issue is the fact that the lines of demarcation between communities are not clear-cut, but are fluid.

Chapters five and six focus on the interplay between Vietnamese communities and the transnational networks that link them. In chapter five, I examine the notion of community as it relates to Vietnamese transnational activities. I focus on multiple and complex Vietnamese communities as fertile ground for the development of transnational networks maintained across a wide variety of national borders. Discussions centre on the formation of Vietnamese communities in London, the concepts of resources, the roles and reach of transnationally active Vietnamese in maintaining relationships across communities, as well as the causal relationship between communities and the establishment and maintenance of transnational networks. Chapter six includes an examination of various networks that have been established by Vietnamese. Drawing on the experiences of Vietnamese who are involved in transnational networks, I show the far-flung nature of these networks. Also, utilising a framework involving the role, reach and pathways of transnational activity, I examine the specific ways that Vietnamese Londoners are involved in these networks.

The concluding chapter addresses the research questions originally stated in this thesis and presents conclusions resulting from this research. I include a review of the ways that Vietnamese Londoners participate in various Vietnamese communities through roles and activities that characterise transnationally active identities. I also look at transnational networks established and maintained by Vietnamese Londoners, each with a transnational agenda and transformative purpose. Finally, I present possibilities for future research related to Vietnamese and the transnational roles and networks that are currently rising out of the various Vietnamese communities in London.

Chapter 1. Key Concepts in the Development of Vietnamese Transnational Identities and Networks

1.1 Introduction

The interplay between active transnational identities, the communities in which they live, and the networks that they maintain are at the heart of this ethnographic study. Using the following research questions as a starting point, this chapter will include a discussion of relevant theoretical and conceptual frameworks, which will serve as a basis for the interpretation of the research. Key questions related to this research include: ‘What does it mean to be a transnationally active Vietnamese Londoner?’ and ‘How are Vietnamese Londoners engaged in community-based transnational networks?’ In reviewing literature relevant to these questions and the focus of my research, I address five themes that are of most benefit in discussions of the interactions associated with Vietnamese transnational identities and networks. These themes include migrant, national and transnational identities, the role of autobiography in the research process from a theoretical perspective, resource-based identities, and finally, identity, hybridity and values in everyday life.

1.2 Vietnamese Londoners: Still the ‘Other’, Still the ‘Stranger’?

As long as the Vietnamese who have made London their place of residence are perceived as the distant ‘Other’, they remain as ‘those boat people,’ a tag the Vietnamese are often given based on a tragic period in world history. The term ‘boat people’ has been defined as ‘illegal immigrants travelling by sea, especially those Vietnamese who left their country after the takeover of South Vietnam in 1975 by North Vietnam’ (Hutchinson On-Line Encyclopaedia, Tiscali.co.uk/reference, 2004). Perhaps in more up-to-date terms, ‘they run that exotic restaurant down in Peckham.’ Robin Cohen speaks to this issue in his discussions of ‘otherness’ and ‘difference’. He states that through the eyes of the dominant European ‘self’, the ‘Other’ has often been represented in negative terms to such an extent that the people are seen as ‘unamenable to reason, incapable of change, adaptation or assimilation’ (Cohen, 1994:197). This pejorative perspective locks into place a dominant ‘Eurocentric’ view (Said, 1993, 2000), which limits discourse to the perspective of the ‘observer (characteristically the European, the insider ‘the Self’), but denies coevalness to the observed (the outsider, the alien, ‘the Other’)’ (Cohen, 1994:197). This notion of the ‘denial of coevalness’ is an important one, and is defined by Fabian as ‘a persistent and systematic tendency to place the referent(s) of anthropology in a Time other than the present of the

producer of anthropological discourse' (Fabian, 1983: 31). My purpose, in this project, was to engage with Vietnamese Londoners in the present, in Fabian's 'intersubjective time' (Ibid: 81), in which interactions occur in the same space and time, while at the same time exploring what might 'open out' into the future as we 'encounter' one another on various levels (Ahmed, 2000: 145).

Ahmed looks at both the ethical and relational aspects of social interaction across boundaries, stating that 'to be responsible *for the other* is also, at the same time, to respond to the other, to speak to her, and to have an encounter in which something takes place' (Ahmed, 2000: 147 emphasis in original). The key terms Ahmed uses in her argument are descriptive of the process of this research. Being 'responsible for the other' is an impossibility in the research task. It is unbounded and 'infinite' (Ibid.). This responsibility can only become actualised (but not fully) on some level in the response of individuals to one another. It is through my 'encounters' with Vietnamese Londoners that I take some sense of responsibility for them in my response to their communication. Ahmed goes on to say that 'we need to recognise the infinite nature of responsibility, *but the finite and particular circumstances in which I am called on to respond to others* (Ahmed, 2000: 147, emphasis in original). This response is both in the 'present' and in future, both 'the *here-ness* of this encounter' as well as '*where it might yet be going*' (Ibid: 145). These are the issues faced in multiple encounters with Vietnamese Londoners. In each relationship, the encounters engaged in during the years of this research opened up the possibility of further interaction beyond the original encounter, taking us beyond the 'stranger' relationship. Each encounter also diminished the 'otherness' associated with Vietnamese identities through the give and take responses to one another. Vietnamese Londoners are not the immediately recognised 'other', 'outsider' and 'stranger', but are active members of London's communities. Ahmed concludes:

In my notion of ethical encounters, hearing does not take place in my ear, or in yours, but in between our mouths and our ears, in the very proximity and multiplicity of this encounter. What allows us to face each other... is also what allows us to move beyond the face, to hear and be touched by what one cannot grasp, as that which cannot be assimilated in a moment of recognition of either "the Other" or the stranger (Ahmed, 2000: 158).

According to Ahmed, getting beyond the identification of others as 'strangers' requires communication of a deeper kind than a simple glance or a momentary focus. The other must

be ‘encountered’ in various ways and over time through sight, sound and touch such that I and the ‘other’ exchange something intangible but very real, that is relationship. One way to facilitate the movement away from an uninformed and immediate ‘recognition’ and designation of ‘otherness’ or ‘strangeness’, is through the use of stories including biography as suggested by David Morley in Ferguson and Golding (1997: 126). To bring biography into the historical picture is to weave the two together into a multi-textured tapestry of biography in history. This tapestry of ‘experience’ will not, in Joan Scott's words, simply be the ‘reproduction and transmission of knowledge’ (Scott, 1992: 37), but will need to be analysed and interpreted, through relationships, from a variety of ‘perspectives’ (Bourdieu, 1999), including those of the Vietnamese themselves. It is through their eyes in addition to others that this history, which is a complex, political one, should be interpreted. This research, in many ways, is historical in nature as I explore the various pathways by which Vietnamese have come to London, but it also includes ‘present tense’ encounters and perspectives from the point of view and experience of the Vietnamese as mentioned above. It also includes the perspectives of those living in England at the time, and my own biography, including my experience as a transnationally active individual and member of multiple communities as I respond and relate to Vietnamese migrants in London.

1.3 Perspective: Active Identities Rather Than Historical Assumptions

The emphasis on perspective is rooted in what Pierre Bourdieu calls ‘perspectivism’ (Bourdieu, 1999: 3). Bourdieu, writing out of his research amongst multi-ethnic, urban populations in France reacts to the observable fact that life in a multicultural world is messy. In this light he states first:

That simplistic and one-sided images... must be replaced by a complex and multi-layered representation capable of articulating the same realities but in terms that are different and, sometimes, irreconcilable. Secondly, ...we must relinquish that single, central, dominant, in a word, quasi-divine, point of view that is all too easily adopted by observers – and readers too, at least to the extent they do not feel personally involved. We must work instead with the multiple perspectives that correspond to the multiplicity of coexisting, and sometimes directly competing, points of view (Ibid.)

It is through intentionally laying aside this ‘quasi-divine’ point of view that we are able to interact with the multiplicity of perspectives surrounding us in the multi-ethnic world of London. As members of London’s multi-ethnic communities, the Vietnamese are indeed caught up in ‘coexisting’ and, at times ‘competing’ points of view. Bourdieu further defines

his concept saying that ‘this perspectivism has nothing to do with a subjectivist relativism which might lead to cynicism or nihilism. It is instead based in the very reality of the social world, and it helps explain a good deal of what happens in society today, in particular, much of the distress caused by clashing interests, orientations, and lifestyles’ (Bourdieu 1999: 3-4). This ‘reality-based’ understanding of the cultural discord that can occur when peoples of various ethnicities come together, sharing the same spaces, is descriptive of the situation encountered by Vietnamese in London. In the context of suffering, Bourdieu addresses the complexities of life, particularly in a multicultural world. He has constructed a paradigm, which takes into account the widely varied reasons and agendas for the behaviour of people separated by culture, class, gender, education and a host of other factors. Bourdieu is helpful in that he, in a way, gives an explanation as to why things are not always tidy in society. His ‘perspective’ allows for the ‘messiness’ of life. He speaks against the arrogant sense of separation so often experienced by those who simply watch or are being watched. He asserts that getting involved opens up a life-on-life exchange that goes beyond the shallows of politeness or ignorance and out into the deeper waters of shared experience between the ‘Other’ and ‘others’, ‘migrant’ and ‘national’. I now turn to the experience of migration.

1.4 Migration Experiences

In order to introduce discussions of Vietnamese transnational identities, I must first define the notion of migration, and then place the concept and realities of the nation and transnationalism within the Vietnamese context. Faist defines migration as a ‘permanent or semi-permanent change of residence, usually across some type of administrative boundary... [the] ‘term refers to a person who moves from one *country* to another with the intention of taking up residence there for a relevant period of time’ (Faist 2000: 18, emphasis mine). Within this broad, nationally-based definition, I present here, a series of three descriptions of migration experiences; economic migrants, hyphenated British migrants, and forced migrants. According to John Eade in Gupta and Omoniyi (2007) there are at least two identifiable types of migrants. The first involves economic migrants, which ‘suggests that people are arriving primarily to make as much money as possible before returning’ (Eade 2007: 27; also Nonini and Ong, 1997). The second migrant designation involves “hyphenated British” which indicates a movement from outsider to insider, from temporary resident to permanent settler and from a predominantly homogeneous to an increasingly heterogeneous society’ (Ibid.) These two definitions indicate a marked difference in the purposes of migration, and they include a large percentage of migrants with

the exception of a third category, that of the ‘forced migrant’ (Mason 2006; Betts 2009; Van Hear, 1998).

Forced migration involves refugees who, ‘owing to a well-founded fear of political persecution, leave their country of origin’ (Betts, 2009: 5). There are many factors that motivate people to become refugees. Joly clearly and succinctly outlines some of the issues associated with the driving forces behind the realities of the refugee experience when she asserts:

What is important is not only the conflict within which the populations are caught up and which leads them to become refugees but also their own consciousness of the pressure brought upon them through these conflicts and how this leads or compels them to consider flight as an option. Naturally, to become an option, the concrete feasibility of flight must also exist. The main debate here revolves round the voluntary or involuntary nature of the flight in parallel with... the discussion on ‘political’ versus ‘economic’ factors causing flight (Joly 1996: 143).

Important in Joly’s statement is the need to bring life into the often sterile discussions of refugee numbers, policies and political debates. Refugees often become political ‘hot potatoes’ shifted from one border-space to another in a seemingly endless game of ‘Who wants them?’ To personalize the discourse and to bring the issues into a right relationship with the humanity about which they swirl is to tell stories. It is to base the arguments ‘in the very reality of the social world’ as Bourdieu put it (Bourdieu 1999: 4).

As the designation ‘refugee’, or ‘forced migrant’ is applicable to the earliest Vietnamese migrants into the UK, it is important to define the term as well as to set it into the ‘reality of the social world’ (Ibid.) of the Vietnamese experience early in this project. According to the 1951 UN Convention ‘Relating to the Status of Refugees’, a refugee is ‘a person who, owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his [sic] nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself [sic] of the protection of that country’ (Martin, Martin and Weil, 2006: 59). Refugees are often held in a state of temporariness both by host governments waiting for opportunities to repatriate them, but also by the refugees themselves as they often long for the right moment to return. The earliest Vietnamese migrants into the UK came from this temporary status, many having spent years in the ‘second’ country of Hong Kong as will be discussed in a following

chapter. The state of temporariness also applies to the perspectives of the refugees themselves as one Vietnamese said, 'my loneliness will not go away until I put my feet back on my country's soil' (Informal Interview 8 November 2005). He has already lived in Britain for 35 years and still hopes for the day when a change in the Communist regime will allow him to return.

Forced migrants often have every intention of returning as soon as the source of the upheaval dissipates, although many shift to other types of migrant identities over time and never return permanently for a variety of reasons. Martin states that, 'large scale return movements to countries where personal security is at risk, that are devoid of economic opportunities, and where commitments to peace are fragile, pose more problems than they solve' (Martin, Martin and Weil, 2006: 68). For the first twenty years, Vietnamese refugees in Britain remained in a refugee state of mind. As one interviewee described his perspective: 'We were all waiting, but not really believing that anything would change for a long time. But then, President Clinton... I think it was 1995... put out his hand to the Vietnamese, and then Vietnam began to open. Now I can go back and visit my relatives' (Informal Interview, 5 November 2005). With the normalisation of relations, the establishment of embassies 'opened' a path for travel that included some refugees returning, but very few on a permanent basis due to the economic situation in Vietnam. 'There is no way I could make a living if I had gone back at that time' (Informal Interview 5 November 2005) stated another interviewee when describing the new openness to return on the part of the Vietnamese government. However, according to many Vietnamese in London, the situation actually began to change after 1986, through a Vietnamese government policy of openness and rebuilding or 'Doi Moi'. At the present time, there is a wide cooperation such that travel is commonplace.

1.5 'Trans-National-ism' and the Necessity of the Nation

Descriptions of 'trans-national-ism' must, etymologically and practically include a discussion of the concept of the 'nation'. Mishra states that, 'the transnational moment ...presupposes the existence of a nation connected to an actual or imagined political territory ...and is made up of those aspects that *violate* the circumscribed structures, politics and ideologies of nation-states' (Mishra, 2006: 132, emphasis mine). According to some researchers the nation is 'deterritorialising' and 'elongating' (Basch, et al, 1997) or 'eroding' (Appadurai, 1995). However, balancing much of the 'post-national' discourse, there are

good reasons for considering the nation as continuing as a viable entity. Smith presents a compelling argument based on the policies of national governments and their dependence on remittances (monetary transfers from migrants back to family and others in the homeland), the rise of restrictive immigration laws and the strict policing of borders of some nation-states, and finally the rise of nationalism, all indicate that the nation continues to exercise power and control even if in the face of the forces of globalisation (Smith, 2001: 172-3).

According to Mishra and in accordance with this research, the 'nation' is not passing away, it is being challenged and stretched beyond its traditional borders. It is obvious from the literature and through observation that the role and status of the 'nation' is indeed changing. Many individuals and communities see themselves as 'subjects' of the nation-state, but also as 'users' of the nation-state in the sense that the nation provides resources useful and necessary to transnational activity. This phenomenon results in an intricate pattern of intersections between immigrant and so-called 'national', 'stranger' and 'native'. Ahmed points out that 'the distinction between native and stranger within a nation is not simply enforced at the border: rather, that distinction determines different ways in which subjects inhabit – which involves both dwelling and movement – the space of the nation' (Ahmed, 2000: 101). This emphasis on settlement in the national space (national spaces – plural) as well as movement to and from, (but also through and across) that same space is crucial for an understanding of the Vietnamese experience in London.

This back and forth motion includes a 'settling into' the nation, the United Kingdom, as well as the establishment of significant interactions with either Vietnam as a homeland, or with other 'nations' in which the wider Vietnamese global population, the Viet Kieu or Overseas Vietnamese, have settled. Ong, referring to overseas Chinese sums up this point stating that: 'In contrast to the bipolar formulation of the black diaspora, we show that multiple geographies were and continue to be engaged by ethnic Chinese whose earlier diasporas are continually evolving into a network of family ties, kinship, commerce, sentiments, and values spread throughout regions of dispersal and settlement' (Ong, 1999: 12). As a Vietnamese interviewee stated, 'I can go almost anywhere in the world and do business with my Vietnamese contacts. Doing business in Vietnam is an option, but there are many other options' (Informal Interview, 12 September 2005). The Viet Kieu are constantly in motion through formal and informal global networks (See Map 2).

One interviewee, a part of the northern Vietnamese community who took citizenship in Britain several years ago, referred to herself in hyphenated terms describing herself as ‘Vietnamese-British. That means I’m Vietnamese origin but a British citizen, so I have to support both countries’ (Nga Nguyen Interview, 15 May 2009). ‘Supporting’ both countries can mean a number of things such as voting in elections, paying taxes and being involved in civic duties, but also involves being active transnationally in local communities situated in both of these nations and taking responsibility for some daily activities that reach across the national borders. These transnational activities might involve work, play, religious practise, family duties, financial responsibilities and any number of other categories of human interaction (Ahmed, 2003: 3; Vertovec, 2009: 3).

Another interviewee, who arrived as a young boy during the ‘refugee era’ of Vietnamese immigration into Britain described his identity in the following way: ‘Feeling and being British is a huge aspect having grown up and being schooled from a young age. I am also extremely Vietnamese. [I] enjoy Vietnamese food, [am] proud of being Vietnamese, and wish to see Vietnam develop as a successful economy. Yet, at times I am also aware of my difference’ (Toan Interview, 17 March 2009). In addition to agreeing with the ‘both-and’ perspective of Nga above, Toan points out the fact that there are, of course, differences that arise through interactions with the two nations of Britain and Vietnam. The ‘nation’, for these and others interviewed, is a factor in everyday life. Using terminology such as ‘support’ and ‘pride’ indicate the significance attributed to the nation, at least in the discourse of an interview. All of these migrant designations involve travel across national boundaries at some point in the migration trajectory, however, transnational identities are characterised by a consistent and intentional crossing of national boundaries for the purpose of carrying out business, trade, engaging in religious teaching, the arts or some other industry. These crossings are part of one’s everyday activities. A transnationally active individual is either travelling or preparing to travel across boundaries at any given time as is seen in the following section.

1.6 Transnationalism Defined

If the ‘nation’ is the referent in the term ‘transnational’, what then, does this notion called ‘transnational’ mean? There are many perspectives on the concept of ‘transnationalism’. I first present a partial bibliography that has been useful in the process of this research. I will

then go into more detail in defining ‘transnational’ in terms apropos to the findings of this project.

Several categories have emerged in relation to the notion of transnationalism. In business the term has been applied to ‘transnational corporations (TNCs), or transnational companies (see Jenkins, 1991; Castells, 1996; Yeung, 1998; Castells, 2000; Pries, 2001; Letto-Gillies, 2005; and Vertovec, 2009). Politically, the concept has been applied to efforts to affect policy through ‘transnational social movements’ (R. Cohen, 1998; Kriesberg, 1997; J. Smith, 1997; and Cohen and Rai, 2000). With regard to media, there has been a growing array of literature around the transnationalisation of media and its global influence (see Spivak, 1989; Gillespie, 1995; Morley and Robins, 1995; Robins 1998; Curran and Morley, 2006; Hafez, 2007; and Thussu, 2007). The variety exhibited by these categories indicates the widely divergent trajectories of transnational research. As the research is carried out, decisions must be made as to the direction and literature resources most appropriate to the findings in the field. My own focus in this work, takes place at the level of individual identities and their involvement in transnational activities through relational networks across national borders. Primary works addressing transnational issues related to migrant identities include, Hannerz, 1996; Smith and Guarnizo, 1998; Guarnizo, et al. 2001; Portes, 1997, 2001a, 2001b, Portes, 1999; and Vertovec, 2001, 2009. Key terms used in the literature include ‘migrant transnationalism’ (Vertovec, 2009), ‘social fields’ and ‘social spaces’ (See Glick-Schiller, et al, 1992; Basch, et al 1994; Castells, 1996; Goldring, 1996, 1998, 2001; Pries, 1999, 2001; Faist, 2000; and Vertovec, 2009), ‘translocalities’ (See Appadurai, 1995; Goldring, 1998; and R. Smith, 1998), and finally the notion of ‘transnational identities’ and ‘connections’ (See Gilroy, 1987; Glick-Schiller, et al, 1992; Clifford, 1994; Castells, 1996; Gupta and Ferguson, 1997; Nonini and Ong, 1997; Ong, 1997; Fortier, 2000; Cohen, 2008; and Vertovec, 2009). The concepts represented by these terms are useful in getting at the practicalities of transnational activities. I now narrow the focus and present several definitions in order to lay a foundation for a discussion of the notion of transnationalism as it relates to Vietnamese Londoners.

The concept and practise of ‘transnationalism’ has been in existence long before the modern nation came into existence as people connected with one another through networks across spaces. However, the modern and certainly post-modern eras ushered in the possibilities of a much wider realisation of transnational activity. Portes points out three key factors in the

current process: ‘First, the near instantaneous character of communication across national borders and long distances. Second, the numbers involved in these activities; and third, the fact that, after a critical mass is reached, they tend to become “normative”’ (Portes 1997: 16-18). In an early definition explaining the concept, Basch, Glick Schiller and Blanc-Szanton state that:

We define ‘transnationalism’ as the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders.... An essential element is the multiplicity of involvements that transmigrants sustain in both home and host societies (Basch, Glick Schiller, and Blanc-Szanton 1994: 6).

I take issue with this definition in that the focus is limited to the duality of ‘home’ and ‘host’ societies. In this definition, there is no allowance for networks and connections with other similar communities in other ‘third’ (fourth, fifth, etc.) nations. Alejandro Portes brings out a different element as he makes three assertions:

1) That the emergence of transnational communities is tied to the logic of capitalism itself. They are brought into play by the interests and needs of investors and employers in the advanced countries. 2) That these communities represent a distinct phenomenon at variance with traditional patterns of immigrant adaptation. 3) That because the phenomenon is fuelled by the dynamics of globalization itself, it has greater growth potential and offers a broader field for autonomous popular initiatives than alternative ways to deal with the depredations of world-roaming capital’ (Portes 1997: 4).

I would like to move beyond the idea that transnationalism involves communities and is simply a movement associated with economics. Transnationalism spans many cultural industries through the use and appropriation of multiple resources in its many forms by individuals imbedded in local communities. Portes goes on to say that ‘what common people have done in response to the process of globalization is to create communities that sit astride political borders and that, in a very real sense, are “neither here nor there” but in both places simultaneously’ (Portes 1997: 3). I would add to this comment by Portes that they may be in *multiple* places sometimes simultaneously depending on the context in which they are interacting and the actual or virtual industries in which they are involved such as offering immigration advice to Vietnamese in multiple nations, or managing a globally linked, on-line publication or radio service.

Guarnizo and Smith focus on ‘social relations’, defining the concept as ‘the process by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement’ (Guarnizo and Smith, 1998: 272). Aihwa Ong describes transnationalism as ‘the condition of cultural interconnectedness and mobility across space – which has been intensified under late capitalism. I use the term *transnationalism* to refer to the cultural specificities of global processes, tracing the multiplicity of the uses and conceptions of “culture”’ (Ong, 2006: 4, emphasis in original). Aspects of these ‘global processes’ have been put forward in this chapter and will be more fully developed in the chapters that follow.

Vertovec adds to the body of literature stating that “transnationalism” refers to multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across borders of nation-states’ (Vertovec, 1999:1). Vertovec then goes on to add that there is present in the transnational consciousness, a definite “linkage” to multiple “localities” as well as the presence of what Stuart Hall calls “malleable identities” (Ibid: 5) and Ong has described as ‘flexible citizenship (Ong, 1999: 6). Vertovec then discusses the notion of transnationalism in terms of a ‘social formation spanning borders’ (Vertovec, 1999: 3). If complex ‘malleable identities’ and ‘multiple localities’ are hallmarks of the identities and experiences of Vietnamese transnationally involved Londoners, then the strategic application of specific resources is key to the observable, everyday life activities of those identities.

1.7 Resourced Identities: Beyond the Notion of ‘Capital’

Vietnamese narratives associated with the transnationalisation process provide an opportunity for research that gets at the issue raised by Foner, that ‘today...some groups are likely to be more transnational than others – and we need research that explores and explains the differences. Within immigrant groups, there is also variation in the frequency, depth and range of transnational ties’ (Foner 2001: 50). Harking back to Burrell’s (2000) article cited in the Introduction, it would seem unlikely that the Vietnamese communities in London would be prime candidates for one of the groups Foner describes as being ‘likely to be more transnational’ (Ibid.). This is due to the well-publicised negative attributes associated with descriptions of the Vietnamese experience of integration into British society such as poverty, crime, drugs and isolation. It would seem that there would be little of what many scholars term ‘capital’, accessible to the Vietnamese community under these conditions. I argue that this is not the case. In fact, there are multiple sources of capital, or resources,

available to Vietnamese in London, which are utilised for the purposes of transnational activity. Before moving on to a discussion of these resources and the activities they make possible in the following chapters, I present a case for an examination of the use of ‘resources’ as a basis for the identification of some factors as to what it is that makes some groups ‘more likely to be transnational’ than others (Foner, 2001: 50). I begin with a brief analysis of the often-used concept of ‘capital’ and then expand the perspective in favour of the use of the term ‘resources’.

Beginning with Marx, the theory of the use of ‘capital’ extends into a wide range of fields, from economics to social theory. Marx addressed the social aspects of the production and use of capital within the capitalistic societies of Europe in the 19th century (Marx, 2003). Within the last quarter-century, the notion of ‘capital’, has been applied in a social research context, and has been described as ‘linguistic’, ‘symbolic’, ‘cultural’ and ‘social’ (Bourdieu, 1999), while Ong adds the notion of ‘network capital’ (Ong, 1999:155). In each case, these terms imply the possession, and the use or application of certain types of resources. Of these terms, the concept of ‘social capital’ has been debated extensively. (See Bourdieu, 1986, 1993, 1999; Lin, 2001; Coleman, 1988, 1990; Flap, 1991, 2001; Burt 1992; Putnam 1993, 1995, 2000; Fukuyama, 1996; and Erickson, 1995, 1996). Bourdieu defines the concept as ‘the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition (Bourdieu, 1986: 248). Lin points out that social capital is not a ‘possession’ of the individual, but is ‘embedded’ in and ‘accessible’ through a person’s ‘direct and indirect ties’ or relational network (Lin, 2001: 44).

In the course of this research as well as in interviews with Vietnamese and having observed Vietnamese communities extensively for a number of years, I found the term ‘capital’ limiting in its scope and descriptive capability. One of the issues surrounding the use of the term ‘capital’ concerns the perspective that according to de Soto, the ‘essential meaning of capital has been lost to history. Capital is now confused with money... only one of the many forms in which it travels’ (de Soto, 2000: 41). In seeking a more inclusive terminology, I examined specific definitions of ‘social capital’ in search of a common terminology used in many of these definitions. Putnam describes ‘social capital’ as ‘features of social organisation such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit’ (Putnam, 1995: 67). Lin describes ‘social capital’ as

‘resources’ available through an individual’s ‘direct and indirect ties’ (Lin, 1982: 132). Bourdieu defines the term as ‘the actual or potential resources... linked to possession of a... network of more or less institutionalized relationships’ (Bourdieu, 1986: 248). Flap uses the term ‘accessible resources’ (Lin and Erickson, 2008: 4), and Coleman describes ‘capital’ as ‘these social-structural resources’ (Coleman, 1990: 302). Given this widespread use of the term ‘resources’ as a basis of definitions of ‘capital’, I use the notion of ‘resources’ in this work. The term ‘resources’ encompasses both of these meanings, the ‘more or less institutionalised’ resources (Bourdieu, 1986: 248) as well as the ‘social organisation’ aspects (Putnam, 1995: 67). I will utilise the term ‘capital’ in specific instances, however, in general, I will apply the term ‘resources’ to discussions of identity and social interactions. A more in-depth examination of resource-based identities is presented in Chapter 4. I turn now to the interrelationship of the researcher and those being researched with particular reference to biography.

1.8 The Role of Embedded Biography

In this work, I am writing from the point of view, not only of an historian (my first degree), but also as one who experienced the ‘Fall of Saigon’ having lived in South Vietnam from infancy in 1962 to April, 1975, roughly my first thirteen years. Thus, the role of my own biography entered into the discourse as another ‘perspective’ to be considered. As E. H. Carr put it, ‘When we take up a work of history, our first concern should not be with the facts which it contains, but with the historian who wrote it.’ (1990: 22) In this regard, I am an American-born, British national with growing connections into the Vietnamese communities in London, Germany, America and in Vietnam. I recognise the conflicted nature of my role as researcher and the ethnical considerations at work. Said pointed out that ‘no one has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life, from the fact that his [sic] involvement (conscious or unconscious) with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position, or from the mere activity of being a member of a society’ (Said, 2000: 76). This is, of course the reality for any researcher, but doubly so for those researching ‘others’ with whom his or her life has been intertwined for a significant time. While this project is not primarily a postcolonial project, the colonial and post-colonial realities and perspectives of history are certainly present in the minds of both researcher and researched. Said goes on to say that:

For a European or American studying the Orient there can be no disclaiming the main circumstances of *his* [sic] actuality: that he comes up against the Orient as a European or American first, as an individual second. And to be European or American in such a situation is by no means an inert fact. It meant and means being aware, however dimly, that one belongs to a power with definite interests in the Orient, and more important, that one belongs to a part of the earth with a definite history of involvement in the Orient almost since the time of Homer (Ibid: 77)

No matter how much my own history intersects that of the Vietnamese in London or elsewhere, I remain a ‘hyphenated’ European-American. However, there is a significant role to be played, and statements to be made by those whose lives have been lived in proximity to and amongst ‘others’ during significant periods of history.

A major contribution to the theoretical and practical nature of this research has been the work of Ien Ang who points out that her story validates her argumentation, bringing an authenticity into the academic context. Ang, quoting Stuart Hall, writes that ‘autobiography is usually thought of as seizing the authority of authenticity. But in order not to be authoritative, I’ve got to speak autobiographically’ (Ang, 2001: 23). In the words of Ien Ang, ‘the themes I focus on in this book are not merely personal, but coincide with some major cultural and historical developments which have taken place in the past thirty to forty years or so, a period in which the configuration of the world has changed dramatically’ (Ang, 2001: 5). As I delved deeper into the transnational Vietnamese context in London, I found myself continually faced with opportunities for the interweaving of my own story with that of my interviewees. I was keenly aware of the dangers of becoming sidetracked into blind alleys of self-discourse and, as Ang admits, ‘coming over as self-indulgent or narcissistic, of resorting to personal experience as a privileged source of authority, uncontrollable and therefore unamenable to others’ (Ang, 2001: 23). I was also aware that my experience is not an easy one for some older North Vietnamese Londoners in that I am a product of South Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s during the ‘American War’ or ‘Vietnam War’ (depending on which side one is addressing). As such, when I spoke Vietnamese, I had a southerner’s accent and my vocabulary was dated.

However, I found that the inclusion of various pieces of my story in conversation seemed to act as a key to opening a door here and a window there. It is a shared experience. As Trinh Minh-Ha beautifully described it, ‘the story is me, neither me nor mine. It does not really belong to me, and while I feel greatly responsible for it, I also enjoy the irresponsibility of

the pleasure obtained through the process of transferring. ...no repetition can ever be identical, but my story carries with it their stories, their history...' (Minh-Ha 1989: 122) It is this mutual 'transferring' that allows for the interweaving of our stories that then brings a sense that we are telling our story though we may have only just met one another. In a Vietnamese restaurant in Hackney, I was introduced to a cook who grew up in 'my' neighbourhood in what was then known as Saigon, now Ho Chi Minh City. As we shared memories of places and told stories of times gone by, we relaxed and there was an ease to the conversation. In the end, we exchanged a warm handshake with both hands – a physical touch, cementing the connection, a 'gesture' of past, present and future as Minh-Ha put it (Ibid.)

The trajectory of my life has also intersected a number of significant world events. These intersections are a critical aspect of this research in that there is a 'common-ground' on which we are able to walk together. Autobiography becomes a useful 'positioning of oneself in history and culture' as Janet Gunn points out (Ang, 2001: 24-25). This 'positioning' (Ibid.) is the sharing of space in which the participants sense and 'feel' the result of the 'connections' brought about by the communication of shared experience in history. Ang goes on:

In this respect, I would like to consider autobiography as a more or less deliberate, rhetorical construction of a "self" for public, not private purposes: the displayed self is a strategically fabricated performance, one which stages a useful identity, an identity which can be put to work. It is the quality of that usefulness which determines the politics of autobiographical discourse. In other words, what is the identity being put forward for (Ang, 2001: 24,25)?

In light of Ang's reflections, I found that sharing my story in the context of conversation with Vietnamese involved in transnational activities was an intentional act of 'positioning' (Ibid.) my experience with the other's experience in a shared historical context. Care had to be taken in that, as an American-born British national, I come from a Western root with all the baggage that comes with that identity. As a member of a power community, I am aware of the fact that my presence in a group is not a neutral one. In fact, my background can be very confusing and, at times misleading to my Vietnamese friends. Often, when initiating conversation in Vietnamese with a stranger, I found their reaction to be one of disbelief and undisguised surprise. 'How is it that you speak Vietnamese?' they quickly asked. As stated above, my accent and vocabulary betrayed me as having come from Saigon in the era of the

1970s. In reflecting on these interactions, I found the notion of hybridity to be useful as a touch point in theorising the complexities of identities.

1.9 Identity/Hybridity

Identity is a process, a ‘grounded-in-life’ exercise involving ‘resources’ which ‘sustain’ it in its historical contexts (Hall, 1996: 4). Identities ‘are produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices’ (Ibid.). I would add that in the context of this research, the grounding in ‘historical and institutional sites’ is ‘multi-sited’ (Basch, et al, 1994), that is, identities are located in ‘social fields’ or ‘social spaces’ (Glick Schiller, et al, 1992; Castells, 1996; Goldring, 1998; Pries, 2001; Leavitt and Glick Schiller, 2004). The multiple ‘fields’ discussed here provide what Bourdieu calls a ‘space of possibles’ that ‘transcends individual agents, functions as a kind of system of common reference which causes contemporary directors, ...to be objectively situated in relation to the others to the extent that they are all interrelated as a function of the same system of intellectual coordinates and points of reference’ (Bourdieu, 1993: 176).

Globalising Bourdieu’s perspective, this is the basis on which interaction takes place across boundaries, that is, when individuals live out their identities in multiple fields across national borders. What they share in common such as resources, values and perspective, opens up possibilities for communication, interaction and shared activities.

In talking with Vietnamese transnationally active Londoners, it was clear that the lifestyles of these Londoners exhibited many similarities in spite of the varied Vietnamese communities in which they live. One of the common themes running through discussions of identity involves the idea of hybridity. The concept of hybridity ‘captures the complexities and ambiguities of any politics in an increasingly globalized, postcolonial and multicultural world, a world in which heroic, utopian ideas of revolutionary transformation seem seriously out of touch even as sites of social struggle and political conflict have multiplied’ (Ang 2001: 3). The ‘tactical’ activities associated with the idea of hybridity ‘should be taken ... seriously as the very concrete instances in which people work out specific, situationally determined modes of ‘hybrid accommodation with national and transnational forces’ (Clifford 1998: 367). Hybridity, here, should not be ‘dismissed pejoratively as the merely contingent and ephemeral, equated with lack of commitment and political resoluteness’, but should be valued, as ‘a pragmatic response, making the best of given (often bad) situations ... in limited historical conjunctures’” (Ibid: 366). Again, there is the focus on the

rootedness of identity in historical contexts, but the notion of hybridity opens up the possibility for multiple identities to be lived out in multiple spaces.

In an interview recorded in a collection of oral histories, a Vietnamese computer consultant described the importance of roots in the midst of the often-stormy ‘historical conjunctures’ associated with the development of identity.

I think it’s enriching, a person that has a deep root, to know where he or she came from... you also have a tree... You have four seasons the leaves change, but the tree is the same. It’s the same tree, and if you... help the roots, when the storm comes, you may get blown over, but if it has a strong root, it grabs onto the ground, it doesn’t matter which ground it is, whether in Vietnam or in England, you [remain a] strong, steady tree... (Graessle, 2003: 94).

This is a great illustration of Clifford’s ‘pragmatic response’ and Ang’s ‘situationally determined modes’ of adjustment and adaptation mentioned above. According to this perspective, the tree may be planted in either location. What is crucial is that the tree remain the same (integrity of identity) and the root be firmly planted (identity security) in a world which swirls with the storms of adversity. According to Ien Ang:

[The] importance of hybridity [is] as a basis for cultural politics in a world in which we no longer have the secure capacity to draw the line between us and them, between the different and the same, here and there, and indeed, between Asia and the West. We now live in a world of what anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1998: 148) has characterized as “a gradual spectrum of mixed up differences”. This is a globalized world in which “people quite different from one another in interest, outlook, wealth, and power” are “contained in a world where, tumbled as they are into endless connection, it is increasingly difficult to get out of each other’s way” (ibid: 147).

Ang’s point is well taken, that we live in a world with few absolutes so that ‘hybridity is a necessary concept to hold onto in this condition, because unlike other key concepts in the contemporary politics of difference - such as diaspora and multiculturalism – it foregrounds complicated entanglement rather than identity, togetherness-in-difference rather than virtual apartheid’ (Ang 2001: 3). This is the ‘messiness’ of life in the mix of cultural contexts.

Bringing this discourse back into the London space, I introduce several Vietnamese who have given insight into their own experience of ‘otherness’. One woman interviewed for the Vietnamese Oral Histories Project (Graessle, 2003) shared openly about her own experience with this ‘entanglement’. As an American-born Vietnamese working in London states: ‘It’s

a shame that I don't see myself as Vietnamese, I see myself as an American or as British, as a white person, basically, not a Vietnamese person... [it's a shame] because I want my kids to grow up in the Vietnamese community, I want to see my kids going around with Vietnamese people' (Graessle, 2003: 86). A Chinese-background Vietnamese young man, born in Scotland and now living in London illustrates Ang's 'complicated entanglement'.

My mum is Vietnamese, or half Vietnamese, or something like that. And, yeah, a lot of my family are... I'm not sure if they're fully Vietnamese but they speak Vietnamese... On forms for nationality I put British down. Yeah. And when I was at the airport not long ago the man at, I think it was at customs or something, he asked me where I was from so I said "London". No, I said "England". Yeah, so I wasn't sure what he wanted to know. Then he said "Are your parents English?" I said "No, they're Chinese". And yeah, then, yeah, that was it. So I wasn't sure what they're asking when they ask that, like "Where are you from?" (ibid.: 85).

Another participant speaking about the Vietnamese Oral History Project states:

I think for me it started on a personal level in a sense that I just felt that I am now in this country as a refugee from Vietnam. Prior to that some of my ancestors came from China, settled in Vietnam for generations – all of a sudden I didn't know anything about that part of my background, that part of my roots and [yet] I was told that I was Chinese and that I must leave the country [when the war with China broke out]. How did that leave *me* a sense of myself, my country and my roots...? I don't want that to be repeated again. And I felt at the time very strongly that I was raising four children who are a quarter of everything – a quarter Chinese, quarter Vietnamese, quarter Irish and quarter Jewish. How are they going to know about my roots and things like that unless I make some effort? I didn't want in a few decades time [to realise], I'm nobody and they wouldn't have a sense of who I was. I just wanted to be down somewhere, recorded, so that like it or not, even if they are not interested now, they can trace back, they can find out. Whereas in my case, I couldn't do that about my ancestors (Graessle, 2003: 91).

The complexities of race and culture explicitly stated in these revealing personal commentaries speak to the fact that even in the enunciation or description of cultural perspective, meaning is elusive. Grappling with meaning and identity, the woman quoted above states clearly her desire to be known, 'I just want to be down somewhere, recorded... so they can trace back' (Ibid.). These statements are not simply about one's roots or passing on a few bits and pieces about geographical backgrounds. The struggle for meaning in these words is all about the entanglements associated with the confluence of multiple streams of individual identity, particularly in relation to race and culture.

1.10 Race as a Social Construct

An interaction with a socially generated definition of race involves a short discourse with a Vietnamese interviewee based on a comment made by a young 5 or 6-year old Vietnamese girl in Vietnam. On hearing a Caucasian speaking Vietnamese well, she said, 'I've never met a white Vietnamese before.' When told of this interchange, an interviewee with this project stated that, 'she adopted him as a Vietnamese, but it's funny. He's still a foreigner' (Interview Hai 28 March 2009). As Sowell states, 'race is a social reality' (Sowell, 1994: xiv) and as such, a person is regarded as belonging to a particular race because they are 'socially regarded' as being part of that particular race (Ibid: xiii), or not, as in the response above.

Race for some Vietnamese seems to be more about how society views the individual, which is, at times in opposition to the ways in which the individual views her or himself. Vietnamese can be divided as to who considers another individual Vietnamese and who does not. From a broad perspective, including those who were rejected by the Vietnamese State as 'Chinese', race is not only about national belonging and its tie with the 'nation-state'. The political divides that have disconnected some Vietnamese migrants from the nation of Vietnam have done little to deter their own sense of being and feeling 'Vietnamese'. Those in the diaspora who are no longer 'citizens' of Vietnam continue to consider themselves and one another Vietnamese. This situation is beginning to change as the Vietnamese government has initiated a policy of 'wooing' former citizens back into the 'fold' for investment purposes as will be seen in later chapters. This change in government policy also affects those Chinese-descent Vietnamese who were pressured to leave Vietnam during and after the border conflicts with China in 1979 and 1980. This is of particular importance to Viet Kieu, or overseas Vietnamese who had been identified as 'non-Vietnamese' by 'racially Vietnamese' nationalists in Vietnam (as will be seen in Chapter 3). Taking an historical view, Paul Gilroy argues that the 'imperial systems', which he describes from a 'raciological' perspective as being 'exploitative', stretch 'far beyond Europe's geobody' (Gilroy, 2000: 58). In keeping with Gilroy's argument 'against race' (Ibid.), in this thesis, there will be a much greater emphasis placed on the realities of Vietnamese 'lived-out activities' as it relates to identity rather than on the contested notion of 'race'.

1.11 Everyday Life, Local Encounters and Active Identities

In bringing into focus the transnational, there is an opportunity to expand the discourse around the daily 'life practises', that is, the 'everyday life' (Barthes 1993, de Certeau 1984, Lefebvre 1996, Moran 2005) of Vietnamese in the urban mix of London's multi-ethnic population. Franklin, describing de Certeau, states that 'for de Certeau, "everydayness" comprises a "proliferation of stories and heterogeneous operations that make up the patchworks of everyday life"' (Franklin, 2004: 51-52). Franklin goes on to discuss the 'strategic and tactical operations of everyday life', with particular concern for the dichotomy between those with access to resources and those without access (Ibid.). It is important to note that in interacting with Vietnamese in London, it is precisely through the observation and examination of everyday practises and the activities in which specific individuals engage that transnational identities can be observed and engaged and the presence or absence of resources can be observed. These identities are not fixed in any way. Identity is performed in the everyday acts of life. In the case of Vietnamese Londoners who are actively appropriating resources in order to develop and maintain transnational identities and networks, the acts they perform, in many cases, take them beyond the norms of Vietnamese 'homeland' culture in its boundedness. Fortier, enlisting the arguments of Butler, states, "the performance of identity, then, is not merely about routine or the reiteration of practices within one individual's life... On the contrary: the performative act 'works' because it draws on and covers the constitutive conventions, which, through repetition, effectively produce what appears as eternally fixed and *re*producible (Fortier 2000: 4, emphasis in original). This perspective on the local orientation of the production of everyday life is echoed by Hannerz who writes that the everyday is lived out in the local. The local is also linked to face-to-face and bodily encounters (Ahmed, 2000). According to Hannerz, each of these experiences localises the individual in a bounded space, the space of the local everyday (Hannerz 1996).

It is at this point that Vietnamese acting transnationally transcend the 'conventions' of the norm and establish new paths of performance which stretch out of the local and across national and other boundaries. This notion of 'performance' is the subject of this project and the focus is on the activities of these transnationally-linked Vietnamese as they are lived out on an everyday basis. De Certeau (1984) discusses the practice of everyday life and theorizes on his local observations, as does Lefebvre (1996). However, Joe Moran, in his

volume, *Reading the Everyday* presses the debate forward, addressing the localised, everyday, but also those activities that transcend the local. Moran writes:

The spaces and practices of modern daily life were not always boringly routine but were, in the recent past, sites of leisure, consumption and tourism; standard-bearers of technological innovation, urban regeneration and modernist aesthetics; and sources of political controversy and popular protest. Unearthing these historical traces subverts what Certeau calls 'the modern mutation of time into a quantifiable and regulatable space', revealing 'a sort of ant-museum' that is 'not localizable' (Moran 2005: 26).

Those Vietnamese in London who network across the globe with other Vietnamese and also with other individuals and communities in their fields are often involved on a daily basis in activities that are far from 'boringly routine' as Moran put it. In fact, there are multiple activities in which many are involved that represent historical turning points. Moran centres the everyday in an historical context that pushes the debate beyond the narrow confines of the few square metres of urban space surrounding the individual. He states that 'when the study of daily life is historically contextualized, it points to the reality of uneven development, the co-existence of innovation, inertia and obsolescence in modern capitalist societies' (Moran 2005: 26). It is this 'unevenness' in many aspects of Vietnamese life in London that shows through interviews, discussions and observation. The urban spaces occupied by Vietnamese Londoners are the sites of these lived lives to the extent that both local and transnationalised activities are represented. Smith makes this point quite clearly as he relates it to his 'reconstruction of urban theory':

My purpose is to free the notion of everyday life from its frequent association with purely local processes or with a fixed local level of analysis. My discussion of the social construction of these imagined communities, as in the case of my earlier discussion of Koreatown in Los Angeles, illustrates key points of articulation in contemporary urban politics and culture, where 'place-making' within bounded political jurisdictions overlaps with a transnationalized, network-based conception of politics and social life (Smith 2001: 15).

This expansion of perspective with respect to everyday life, that is local 'place-making' which 'overlaps' with the establishment of 'transnationalized networks', opens up possibilities for changes in access to resources. Vietnamese Londoners move in and out of transnational activities and, therefore, in and out of resourced transnational identities. These

‘flexible citizens’ (Ong 2006) and ‘flexible’ identities characterised by ‘infinite layers’ (Minh-ha 1989), are at the basis of transnational identities that are neither fixed nor permanent. This point was made clearly in an interview with a former leader of a multi-national Vietnamese charity, who described himself as ‘at one time very involved in global Vietnamese networks, but now, I am so focused on my work in London that I have no time for those activities’ (Informal Interview 4 April 2004). This research is focused on those Vietnamese who *are* linked into global networks through various industries and resources, linkages that *are* acted out in everyday life.

1.12 Belief and Values in Practise Amongst Vietnamese Londoners

In introducing the role of belief and its subsequent practises as observed and discussed amongst Vietnamese interviewees, I first note that studies of ‘transnational religion’ from an individual point of view are only recently beginning to be undertaken. According to Ebaugh and Chafetz, ‘while studies of transnationalism have increased in the past several decades, one dimension of the process has been virtually neglected: the role of religion’ (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2001: 4). Vertovec echoes this point stating that, ‘given the boom in transnational migration studies... there is a surprisingly much less research concerning religious links maintained between post-migration communities and their origins (Vertovec, 2009: 145). Recently, however, in the United Kingdom, I have noticed a rise in the number of conferences and calls for papers in this subject of religion and diaspora, which indicates that the general lack of research in this area is being addressed. In the case of this study, it was not my intention to carry out an extensive study of religion amongst Vietnamese Londoners. My intent was to explore the ways in which Vietnamese interviewees acted upon their values and beliefs, and how the practise of religion affected daily life and transnational activity.

In my analysis of the roles of values and belief in the interactions of Vietnamese interviewees, I sought to follow the admonitions of Levitt (2001) who argued that studies of transnational religion must ‘examine the everyday, lived practice of religion in both home and host countries’ (Ebaugh and Chafetz, 2002: 5). I used as the basis of my research the ‘premises’ as outlined by Blumer, who postulates that:

Symbolic interaction rests... on three premises... that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings they have for them... that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction

that one has with one's fellows... that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he [sic] encounters (in Prus, 1997: 5).

Applying Blumer to the experiences and perspectives shared by Vietnamese Londoners, it is possible to explore the 'meanings' placed on various aspects of Vietnamese community life in London through interactions with other Vietnamese. For those Vietnamese who are involved in transnational activities, the fact that 'social interaction' occurs both within and between the multiple Vietnamese communities in London and abroad, introduces a complexity to the discourse that reflects the plethora of influences in everyday life from within and outside London's Vietnamese communities. At this point, I note that it is through the application of Cooley's 'sympathetic introspection', what is now 'more commonly referred to as ethnographic inquiry, participant-observation, or field research (Ibid: 6), concepts discussed in chapter 2, that the interrelationship between 'meanings' and 'social interaction' can be examined. Practical, London-based examples and research findings are discussed in depth in chapter 4 in which perspectives on everyday religious activities are presented. Findings indicate that while there is a great discrepancy in the beliefs and types of adherence to religion or Communist ideology, there was a surprising similarity in the values described by interviewees. This seems to indicate that the role of Confucian-based values is at the base of societal structure, rather than a specific religious belief system or institution.

1.13 Conclusion

Vietnamese have been scattered across the globe in dozens of nations. Through interviews I have identified Vietnamese living in London who have developed both local and far-flung relationships through extended family, friendships, village, town and city contacts, as well as through new relationships based on common interests, business, career involvement, travel and social networking. Both the London-wide and the global extent of the networks established and maintained from London through these relationships are illustrated in Maps 1 and 2 and in Appendixes II, III, and IV.

This current study included an examination of some of the geographical and relational connections that result from the use of the resources and the roles and global reach of Vietnamese transnationals in everyday life. At this stage, I can conclude that as Vietnamese Londoners network through relationships across the many boundaries that transect London

life, there are multiple opportunities for interaction from a wide variety of perspectives. Through a study of literature relevant to migration identity and the transnational experience, several primary themes have emerged including the notion of the 'other' or 'stranger'; the role of perspective in identity formation, the usefulness of 'biography' in the research process, issues around 'hybridity', and identity in everyday life experience. As a researcher, in order to interact with interviewees on these issues, it was necessary to first establish relationships with Vietnamese Londoners. The methods associated with the establishment of those relationships and the subsequent interviews and conversations are the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 2. Narrating a Methodological Journey

2.1 Introduction

The initial stages of this research process began with informal conversations with Vietnamese in the Borough of Hackney in London. These interactions produced two quite different perspectives on the Vietnamese experience in London. One of the first responses to those early interactions was a young lady in a Vietnamese restaurant who exclaimed: ‘I’m surprised to hear that someone is doing research and writing about the Vietnamese here. No one really knows we’re here. Most people think we’re Chinese!’ (Informal Interview, 3 December 2003). There are similarities between Vietnamese and Chinese immigrant experiences in London and some Vietnamese move in and out of these two ‘roles’ depending on the social situation. In fact, one Vietnamese young man stated that, ‘It’s easier just to tell people I’m Chinese’ (Informal Interview, 26 April 2009). Because a number of Vietnamese Londoners are of Chinese origin, their families having migrated to Vietnam in the last three to four centuries, this movement back and forth is not uncommon. Other Vietnamese in London are adamant about the differences and go to great lengths to distance themselves from London Chinese. It is through interviews, conversations and observation that it is possible to interact with these issues of identity and belonging.

A second perspective was revealed when another Vietnamese Londoner stated, ‘Tell them that we’re not all criminals!’ (Informal Interview, 9 January 2004). These responses revealed the self-consciousness of some Vietnamese Londoners and how they felt and saw themselves within the wider London society as illustrated in the Introduction to this thesis. These statements also reveal the stereotypes applied to Vietnamese by other Londoners as described by Vietnamese interviewees. In response to these perspectives, one Vietnamese community worker gave me several names to follow up describing them as ‘examples of Vietnamese who are changing the way people see the Vietnamese community’ (Informal Interview, 12 February 2004). These interactions lie at the heart of the methodological considerations that are key to this research. Through these conversations, my research questions were shaped and refined as I sought to find out what it means to be a Vietnamese, transnationally active Londoner. Through the dialogic process of this ethnographic research various perspectives were shared revealing the complexities of everyday life for Vietnamese in London.

In this chapter I identify the methodological underpinnings of this research as incorporating ‘reflexive ethnography’ (Aull Davies, 1999) with an emphasis on autobiography and the ‘insider-outsider’ complexities of interrelationships between the ethnographer and interviewees. Other methodological considerations include the performance of identity, particularly in light of everyday lives; urban spaces as the sites of identity formation and hubs of transnational activity; and then, the role of the narrative or story. I begin the chapter with discussions related to the methodological task, then the research process, grounded theory, ethical considerations and finally, issues, challenges and opportunities.

2.2 The Methodological Task as an Ethnographic Task

It was through dialogue and interaction with Vietnamese at work in London in a wide variety of roles and industries (such as medicine, business, fashion, food service, beauty industries, media and politics) that several questions began to bubble to the surface (cf. Tables 1 and 2). What does it mean to be a Vietnamese ‘Londoner’, particularly one who interacts with other Vietnamese outside of London in ways beyond family visits and tourist excursions? The migrant experience often involves the embedding of a life into the host country with perhaps visits ‘home’ in order to maintain familial, cultural and linguistic ties. However, what is at issue here involves those Vietnamese in London who transform the migrant experience into a transnational one. This involves the utilisation of specific resources for the establishment and maintenance of transnational networks, creating spaces for interaction across cultural and national divides. The first task from a methodological perspective was to explore the two major and most visible Vietnamese communities in London, Kingsland Road and Mare Street in the Borough of Hackney. I visited Vietnamese individuals, and the shops of those Vietnamese living in neighbouring boroughs (such as Southwark, Lewisham and the Thamesmead area) but who access services and build relationships in these two major Vietnamese ‘nodes’. ‘Nodes’, according to Kevin Lynch in his highly acclaimed 1960 study of city dimensions are:

The strategic spots in a city into which an observer can enter, and which are the intensive foci to and from which he [sic] is travelling. They may be primarily junctions, places of a break in transportation, a crossing or convergence of paths... or simply concentrations, which gain their importance from being the condensation of some use or physical character, as a street-corner hangout or an enclosed square (Lynch 1960: 47).

The initial steps involved conversations in both Vietnamese and English with members of Vietnamese communities moving through or working in these nodes or concentrations of the Vietnamese population in London. My desire was to walk in what Lynch calls the 'pathways' along which Vietnamese travel (Ibid). My intention was that through conversations with these members of the Vietnamese community who live and work in a wide variety of spaces across the city, I would begin to narrow the field of my research through my interactions with their suggestions and perspectives. Early on, I realised that the individuals to whom I was consistently directed had a number of things in common, and I developed four key activities that represent my efforts at gaining access to the people and information pertinent to this research. First, I attended university lectures and carried out a review of literature around the themes of nationality, migration, transnationalism, ethnography and auto-ethnography, transnational media, and the strategic use of resources or 'capital'. Second, I identified the types of activities, networks and resources necessary for a transnational lifestyle such as language ability, networks in multiple locations around the world, specific skills or training and employment in companies or organisations that opened up transnational opportunities. Third, I began to ask questions of those acquaintances I already knew in the Vietnamese community in order to identify potential interviewees who were involved in transnational activities. And fourth, I carried out interviews, which broadened my perspective and led me to further questions, deepening my understanding of the processes and methods associated with a transnational lifestyle.

Ethnography has been defined in numerous ways. In many cases the focus is on the participant or interviewee in the research process. Burgess describes ethnography as the examination of 'situations from the participant's point of view' (Burgess 1984: 3).

Ethnography, in the context of this study, follows what Clifford Geertz refers to as 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973: 17). Defined in terms of action, Geertz states that:

Behavior must be attended to, and with some exactness, because it is through the flow of behavior – or more precisely, social action – that cultural forms find articulation. They find it as well, of course, in various sorts of artefacts, and various states of consciousness; but these draw their meaning from the role they play ... in an ongoing pattern of life, not from any intrinsic relationships they bear to one another (Geertz 1973: 17).

Ethnography, then, is the observation of, interaction with and writing up of those involved in social action through behaviour. Ethnography can involve the way people behave, not only in a local community context, but also the way people influence and are influenced by the wider world around them, beyond national borders. I am concerned not only with the interaction of Vietnamese Londoners and local behaviour in London, but also the activities in which these Londoners are involved on a global scale. It must be noted here, that the purpose of presenting, in the early chapters of this thesis, a sweeping history of immigration into Britain and the Vietnamese role in that history was due, in part, to this focus on an embedded-in-the-world ethnography. I have taken seriously Marcus' critique that:

Ethnographers of an interpretive bent – more interested in problems of cultural meaning than in social action – have not generally represented the ways in which closely observed cultural worlds are embedded in larger, more impersonal systems. Nor have they portrayed the role of these worlds in the sort of events and processes that make history (Clifford and Marcus 1986: 165-6).

Ethnography involves a focus on the 'other' as the researcher interacts with the identity and environment of that 'other'. I seek a balance in this research process, focusing on the transnational activities of some Vietnamese Londoners, but also on the cultural meanings that are a complex part of those activities. Therefore, the move to include the researcher in the research process through autobiography is a move toward this balance by engaging in the process as one who is also active in transnational ways. Moon states that, in addition to the focus on the interviewee, the researcher's positionality must also be taken into account: 'When researchers perceive themselves as positioned and embodied beings – gendered, racial, sexual, and social class – we can begin to acknowledge how these particularities shape our research' (Asante 2008: 18). With an appropriate emphasis on the role and identity of the researcher, the balance seems to be addressed. However, warnings of going too far in the direction of 'auto-ethnography' or 'ethno-autobiography' by transforming the project into a researcher-focused exercise are to be taken seriously (Coffey 1999: 154-5). In this study, I employed autobiography as a tool of engagement, both in the interview and observation process and in the writing up of my findings. Autobiography can provide a valuable part of the methodological process, but should not become a preoccupation with the self. Nor is autobiography as a methodological basis something necessarily new to

ethnography, although it has not always been accepted as a part of ethnographic or anthropological enquiry. George Marcus describes autobiography as a 'style of ethnography' and 'a kind of reflexivity' that has its root in Feminism. However, he states emphatically that in his view, 'subjectivist reflexivity dead ends in anthropological ethnography' (Marcus 1998: 193-4) as it holds the 'other' at a distance, relying on observation and interaction with minimal input or attention given on the part of the anthropologist. Spradley, in his 1979 classic on ethnography does not mention a role for autobiography. The closest he comes to a discussion of the role and the involvement of the ethnographer is that 'you [the ethnographer] must enter the cultural scene you hope to understand. You must get inside the language and thinking of your informants' (Spradley 1979: 205). With what 'baggage' one enters and how one is affected by the 'entering' is not dealt with in any detail. In addition, more negative responses have come from other scholars (Gellner 1988; Llobera 1987; and Babcock, 1980). Each of these perspectives, particularly those of Llobera and Babcock, focus on the self-centredness and self-absorption inherent, in their view, in reflexivity and autobiography. One response to these arguments lies in the succinct and realistic view of Judith Okely who writes:

The autobiography of the fieldworker anthropologist is neither in a cultural vacuum, nor confined to the anthropologist's own culture, but is instead placed in a cross-cultural encounter. Fieldwork practice is always concerned with relationships (cr. Campbell 1989). The anthropologist has to form long-term links with others across the cultural divide, however problematic. The autobiographical experience of fieldwork requires the deconstruction of those relationships with the rigour demanded elsewhere in the discipline (Okely 1992: 2).

The links with Vietnamese Londoners and the interplay of my story and that of several Vietnamese contacts, established in the early stages of this project, were extremely beneficial to the direction of the research. Cosslett, Lury and Summerfield state that, 'the ways in which the autobiography of the researcher is involved in the research are not just limited to the initial standpoint or subject position taken up. Research can have an impact on the researchers, changing their sense of self; and research may become a part of their 'private' lives... (Cosslett, Lury and Summerfield 2000: 14). I would add that it is indeed the experience of interaction with interviewees, but also the mechanics of the research process that change the researcher.

Reflexivity as a process creates a context, which brings the ‘private life’ of the researcher into the equation, thus allowing space for the examination of the effects on the researcher, the researched and the act of carrying out the research. These effects include the development of friendships beyond the confines of the project and involvement in interviewees’ personal life and family. The role of autobiography goes beyond that of the involvement of the ethnographer in the research as a process. As Davies points out, ‘the uses of autobiography in ethnographic research are varied. The most common is the inclusion of autobiography, both in terms of past experiences and fieldwork-based experiences, in the analysis of data and reporting of findings (Aull Davies 2008: 228). But more than this, as Ang points out, autobiography is a ‘deliberate, rhetorical construction of a “self for public, not private” purposes’ (Ang 2001: 24). It is a way of interacting with others in a useful or strategic way for specific purposes. As will be seen in this chapter, my own autobiography enters the frame in a variety of ways, particularly in the engagement within Vietnamese communities in London as I solidified the purposes of the project and narrowed the field in terms of interviewees. This process of applying autobiography thus links closely with the reflexive nature of the kind of ethnography I found most useful.

Reflexivity has been defined by Davies as referring ‘to the ways in which the products of research are affected by the personnel and process of doing research’ (Aull Davies 2008: 4). As I entered the ‘frame’ (Goffman, 1986) in which the social realities of Vietnamese Londoners were being lived out, I came as my ‘self’, with the baggage and cultural ‘trappings’ associated with my experience and personality. Malcolm Crick aptly describes the ‘self’ as ‘something of a catch-all term for pieces of cultural baggage, personality traits, values, psychological defences and so on – that still require unpacking’ (Crick 1992: 175). This focus on the ‘self’ in the process of carrying out and writing up research is not a ‘narcissistic’ procedure, but it is an essential element in the negotiations between the researcher and the researched. Hendry states that ‘we are concerned with the “self” of the anthropologist, but also with the “self” of the “other”, and the way each “self” acting in pursuit of professional enquiry may come into conflict with the interests of their personal “selves”’ (Hendry 1992: 164).

The research process has been described by Denzin and Lincoln as a ‘sixth moment’ in the six eras in the historical development of the field of qualitative research. This moment ‘towards which we are currently moving [is] characterized by reflexive, experiential texts

that are ‘messy, subjective, open ended, conflictual and feminist influenced’ (Coffey 1999). While Coffey disputes to some extent the ‘too neatly packaged’ nature of the notion of ‘moments’ put forward by Denzin and Lincoln, pointing out that there are elements of different moments that bleed over into one another (Ibid.), the point remains that in recent times reflexivity has become more acceptable within ethnography. Crick goes on to say:

Clearly a most important kind of ethnographic data is what is going on *inside* the researcher. If anthropology is about “otherness”, any definition of our subject matter necessarily involves a corresponding self-definition. The fact that anthropology has always been implicitly about “ourselves” is now clear; what is required is that the implicit become explicit (Crick 1976: 153, 1982: 288, 307-8). We require that our “selves” become objects for scrutiny in the same way that our research has rendered ‘objects’ those other selves with whom we have interacted in the field (Crick 1992: 175).

This focus on the self is crucial, particularly in my own case as one having many years of life experience in Vietnam. How, and on what bases, I relate to Vietnamese Londoners is a direct consequence of that experience. When do I speak Vietnamese and when is it ‘better’ or more socially appropriate to speak English? At what point, and with whom do I share my story of migration and how much of the story should I reveal? Finally, what line of questioning should I pursue and how much should I pry into the personal experiences of interviewees, given that I have a more intimate understanding and knowledge of Vietnamese history, religious beliefs and values as well as relational realities than a researcher without my autobiography? These were the questions at the root of my thinking in the early days of this project, when one of my interviewees, on hearing of my project and becoming interested in the interplay of migratory experience, invited me to his flat for lunch ‘so that we can talk about our research projects. It will probably take several hours!’ (Interview Hai 28 March 2009). I travelled to his home a few weeks later and we spent five hours grappling with issues around transnational experiences. We discussed identity from a Vietnamese perspective and how to engage Vietnamese Londoners. I gained insight into various Vietnamese communities and networks while, at the same time, we grappled with ‘otherness’ from both his and my perspectives. It was the reality of journeying together, attempting to get at reality as a mutual project, that caused me to think of the perspective of Trinh T. Minh-Ha, who offered a critique of anthropology:

Trying to find the other by defining otherness or by explaining the other through laws and generalities is, as Zen says, like beating the moon with a pole or scratching an itching foot from the outside of a shoe. There is no such thing as a “coming face to face once and for all with objects”; the real remains foreclosed from the analytic experience, which is an experience of speech. In writing close to the other of the other, I can only choose to maintain a self-reflexively critical relationship toward the material, a relationship that defines both the subject written and the writing subject, undoing the I while asking “what do I want wanting to *know* you or me?” (Minh-Ha 1989: 76) (italics in original).

Minh-Ha speaks of the need to focus on the interplay between the studied and one studying, the complex relationship that defies complete understanding on both sides. She also writes ‘no anthropological undertaking can ever open up the other. Never the marrow.’ (Ibid.). So what is the ethnographer to do? One must arrive at a ‘*suspension* of language’ (Minh-Ha 1989: 76, italics in original). That is, one must come to a ‘suspension’ of one’s own language of description of the ‘other’ that does not include the perspective and vocabulary that come through a dialogical process of relating to the ‘other’. Minh-Ha goes on to say that one must ‘understand the necessity of a practice of language which remains, through its signifying operations, a process constantly unsettling the identity of meaning and speaking/writing subject’ (Ibid.). Minh-Ha’s illustration of never being able to get at the ‘marrow’ (‘beating the moon, scratching through a shoe’) is a truth that rings true to me, particularly in the use of language that is separate to the other, or language that does not take into account the reality as described and lived out with the researcher in a participatory way. It is not enough in this research process to simply observe and report. Gillespie sums up ethnography thus:

Ethnography shares some of the epistemological and political problems of qualitative methods more generally: the subjectivity of the researcher; the power relations between subjects and researcher; the status of evidence and knowledge; the power and authority presumed and taken to represent others. But ethnography is more than a set of neutral tools or methods. At its best it is also an ethos based on reciprocity and respect (Gillespie, 2005: 180).

What one can hope for is that even through the ‘problems’ of the dialogic process of research, characterised by an ‘ethos of respect’, there is a give and take that brings the researched and researcher closer to understanding and, therefore, closer to a shared sense of

what the 'reality' is. Gillespie concludes that 'as the case studies show [ethnography] bears witness to the sheer versatility of our human resourcefulness and resilience in making our lives, creatively and at times playfully, from the cultural resources available to us' (Ibid.). Ethnography must be a shared journey or understanding is reduced to the researcher's description of the 'other' in the researcher's terms and through the lenses of the researcher's perspective, which runs the risk of being far distant to the perspective of the other with little resemblance to their world.

2.3 The Notion of 'Insider – Outsider' in Connecting with the Field

As mentioned above, the methodological backbone of my attempt to address questions at the heart of this project was to utilise the narrative or story, as a communication tool in the process of filling out the theoretical framework. Theory is embedded within the story, which informs and places the story into a context for examination in the communication process. The value of the story or anecdote is that it 'makes it possible to involve us pre-reflexively in the lived quality of concrete experience while paradoxically inviting us into a reflective stance vis-à-vis the meanings embedded in the experience' (van Manen, 1990: 121). I purpose to draw from the stories of relationship recorded here, a framework for the rest of this thesis. This is not an easy task, as Brian Wicker explains, 'to anyone versed in history there should be nothing surprising about this rift between the "sophisticated" value-free language of the philosopher and the "savage" metaphorical language of the poet and storyteller. The times when the two have danced harmoniously together have been very few' (Wicker 1975: 6). While my purpose here is not to argue these particular philosophical issues at a deep level, it is my desire to examine and interact with several philosophical aspects of the research process, particularly those related to human communication and the complexities of that communication across national and cultural boundaries. From a methodological perspective, it is out of the interactions between interviewee and researcher that these philosophical issues are teased out in an accessible and engaging way, thus bringing them into the light of relational reality. Van Manen goes on to say that 'the important feature of anecdotal as well as phenomenological discourse is that it simultaneously pulls us in but then prompts us to reflect' (van Manen, 1990: 121). Thus, at this point in this chapter on methodology, I offer a narrative of my own in order to facilitate and set the stage for the reflective process from a methodological perspective.

Having fled Vietnam in 1975 following the Fall of the Republic of South Vietnam and unification of the country under Communist rule, I left most of the Vietnamese relationships of my first 14 years of life behind. Those early years had been filled with the influence and stories of my American parents as well as of Vietnamese friends and neighbours. As a result, I am a product of both Western and Vietnamese values. I grew up bi-lingual, speaking English at home and at school, and Vietnamese with neighbours and mates in the streets. Following the change of government in Vietnam, I had little contact with Vietnamese until I moved to London in 1996. On various levels and in various places, I began to seek relationships and conversation with people from Vietnam. One of the most complex realities in carrying out this research project has been to navigate between the values of the East in interactions with some interviewees, and the values of the West in presenting those interactions in ways familiar to the academic process in Europe. Appropriating different values and behaviours in different spaces is one of the key elements of this thesis, and the methodological framework reflects this reality. One of the most significant relationships that led me into multiple Vietnamese communities in London was with a young family, newly arrived from the United States via Canada. Through my interactions with them, I was introduced to a number of key Vietnamese leaders through attending workshops and celebrating Tet (Vietnamese Lunar New Year) at the Mental Health Services and the Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodian Centre. Early on, I was also invited to attend the European Annual General Meeting of the Vietnamese Professionals Society, which was held in London that year.

I was learning a great deal about a minority population made up of multiple communities finding their way into the fabric of one of the world's mega-cities. This was a significant group of people who were now settled, finding spaces for multiple identities in a far-away land. There were tales of success (by their own definitions) and more recently by those of the wider population as men and women were elected to government and children earned awards in school leading to jobs in various sectors of society. In this busy, highly multicultural city, these stories were hidden for the most part. After a meeting with one community leader, I was told, 'we must collect all the Masters and Doctoral Theses, articles, books and papers written by Vietnamese and put them in a library here in our Centre!' (Informal Interview, Vu, 10 November 2003). Vietnamese networks were being forged across community, diasporic and 'intra-cultural' divides with regard to the Northern and Southern communities.

Utilising techniques and applying the methods described below, I determined to seek relationships with Vietnamese in order to answer questions related to both the identities and activities of Vietnamese who were part of multiple networks across multiple boundaries. With this basic starting point I sought answers to the questions outlined at the beginning of this project, knowing that there would be multiple nuances to the answers due to the multiplicity of spaces occupied by Vietnamese. From a wider perspective, I wanted to find out what national and international networks are part of the transnational Vietnamese experience. My desire was to explore the identities of Vietnamese transnationals, both those 'imagined' identities (Anderson, 1991) and those acted upon in the everyday of London life. From those beginning conversations with Vietnamese in the nodes and along pathways the process of identifying 'storytellers' (transnationals) and gathering stories began.

As the research process matured, a number of techniques and resources were used and developed. These included interviews, both formal and informal, the use of oral histories, various publications put out by local Vietnamese community centres and organisations, resources from BBC Vietnamese and newspapers from Europe and Vietnam, as well as conference presentations and unpublished articles in Vietnamese, English and French. This research includes, at the core, the carrying out of a series of in-depth interviews with 16 Vietnamese individuals involved in transnational networks from London. In addition to these key individuals, informal interviews and conversations were carried out with other Vietnamese Londoners. In addition, I interviewed non-Vietnamese individuals, who were aware of Vietnamese transnationals and had a story to tell about those individuals. The purpose of these interviews was, with their informed consent, to obtain perspective and insight from a wide selection of individuals and groups. A major outcome of these interviews was to describe the concept of the transnational in the Vietnamese context. I began setting up meetings with Vietnamese refugees and transnationals in the Peckham, Hackney and Tottenham areas of London (See Map 1), eliciting the assistance of local community centres, businesses, charities and media production entities (cf. Tables 1 and 2). It is in these districts of the city that Vietnamese have either been settled by local councils or have chosen to settle as families and individuals have become more affluent and able to afford housing.

In addition, there has been a steady intra-migration northwards across the river into Hackney and Haringey. In the Borough of Hackney, for instance, seed money was offered in the past for Vietnamese who would start local businesses (cf. Appendix VI). The purpose was to encourage and provide space for business development that would benefit both the borough and the Vietnamese community. I drew up a series of questions (cf. Appendix VII) as a basis for the interviews and to provide a beginning structure for the conversations. These questions were ‘jumping off’ points for further exploration and inquiry. The questions were designed for the purpose of uncovering and explaining the transnational process with its relational networks, cultural considerations, political links and limitations and finally the source and role of key resources, that is, the cultural, personal, financial and social resources which seem to drive, or at least inform the transnational experience. In addition to using these questions as guidelines in interviews, they were also modified and used in some cases in a questionnaire (both in interviews and as attachments through email). Interviewees were asked to connect on a graph those communities of Vietnamese around the world with whom they were in regular and sustained contact. This graph, called a ‘Global Connection Map’ included a list of cities both in the diaspora and homeland (See Appendix X). In addition, a map illustrating Vietnamese transnational networks from London was developed (See Map 2), along with a corresponding list of global cities (See Appendix II).

While interviews make up the backbone of this research, there are a number of other aspects, which need to be mentioned as part of the methodology of this work. As in the beginning stages, informal interviews, or semi-structured interviews were carried out as opportunities arose and, in some cases, as initial opportunities for conversation were followed by formal interviews. I selected five or six interviewees from a wide variety of spaces within London’s Vietnamese community. This initial group was selected on the basis of definitions of the ‘transnational’ originating in the writings of Alexandro Portez (1997). This process of selecting an initial group out of a diverse pool of Vietnamese communities could best be described as ‘opportunity sampling’ (Brown and Dowling 1998: 29). It is important to note that these initial relationships had been developed prior to the initiation of this research and came out of a variety of activities in which I had been involved that took me into London’s Vietnamese networks.

Following on from this initial sample of interviewees, the selection process followed a process known as ‘snowball sampling’ (Ibid: 30) From the initial interviewing set,

suggestions were taken for the next interviewee, then the next and so on. This provided the opportunity for a much more widely dispersed interviewing pool, from which questions about Vietnamese transnationals in London could be discussed and answered. An example of this selection procedure took place not too long ago in a local Vietnamese restaurant. After a meal with my family, I went to the back of the restaurant to pay the bill. I discovered that our server was actually a secondary school teacher ‘helping out’ in the family business. As we talked, I mentioned my research project and described a few aspects of the idea of the transnational. The young lady immediately looked at her sister behind the counter and said, ‘that would be our sister who lives in the Middle East. She is always travelling between London, the Middle East and Vietnam’ (Informal Interview, 3 February 2007). I immediately asked if it might be possible to interview both our new friend as well as her sister in order to get at both sides of the story.

Also useful for both background information and source material were publications produced in the UK such as an oral history volume (*Every Tree has its Roots*) highlighting the diasporic experience of Vietnamese in the United Kingdom. Also, newsletters and periodicals published by Vietnamese community centres, conference presentations such as the Vietnamese Professionals Society, which met in London in 2004, and the ‘30 Years of Immigration’ conference at London Metropolitan University in 2005 were extremely useful in the establishment of contacts. In order to gain a broad perspective on the ‘forced migration’ experience, films and documentaries were viewed and critiqued, with particular emphasis placed on diasporic media. This process has not only been helpful in relation to what the media itself has to offer, but also as a starting point for discussions about how media provides insight into the everyday lives of transnationals within the Vietnamese communities in London either through entertainment, cultural maintenance or education.

2.4 Grounded Theory

The notion of ‘Grounded Theory’ (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, 1998; Goulding, 2002 and Denscombe, 2003) served as a basis of the methods associated with this research, having already utilised it unconsciously on an informal basis. In the years prior to my entry into a degree program, I was already interacting with Vietnamese individuals and with Vietnamese communities in London. The research challenge was to allow patterns of behaviour, ideals, dreams and perspective to surface through interviews, observation, and oral histories. Davies describes the aim of grounded theory as ‘the generation of theory from qualitative

data' (Davies 2008: 236). I accept Davies' criticism of grounded theory in that the researcher can come to the research process with 'a naïve assumption that data can initially be interrogated from a theoretically neutral position, as well as for not allowing sufficient development of more interpretive forms of analysis' (Ibid.). Along these lines, I made the decision not to start with a definition of a 'Vietnamese transnational' and go out looking for those I had defined, but to go out talking and interacting with Vietnamese who seemed to be globally networked on various levels. I wanted to see what emerged from these interactions, to discover what identities might come to the fore, which could then be compared to what was being described in the literature as 'transnational'. The key was to identify and dialogue with Vietnamese distinctives, those aspects of the transnational identity that were uniquely Vietnamese, while at the same time interacting with literature, with theories of identity, performance and everyday life.

In addressing the research questions, it became clear that in order to get at the deeper issues of the transnationalisation of Vietnamese in London, methodologies for doing so would have to be innovative. A stated purpose of this research was to tell the story of the development of transnational individuals and their networks amongst the Vietnamese in London. The future is about the peoples of London finding their spaces of identity and appropriate productivity in this city, not as defined by the power structures of society, but self-defined from within, from what Alison Wylie describes as an 'epistemically privileged' position that allows for an 'inversion' of the historical process of those in privileged positions having the power to define and label knowledge, position and identity (Harding, 2004: 339). She states that 'those who are subject to structures of domination that systematically marginalize and oppress them may, in fact... know different things, or know some things better than those who are comparatively privileged (socially, politically), by virtue of what they typically experience and how they understand their experience' (Ibid.). This 'lived' experience places value on the Vietnamese Londoner, giving a platform from which to 'speak' out of his/her experience and personal/cultural values. Undeniably, this process of 'speaking out' is most often heard only within Vietnamese communities. There are only a few examples of Vietnamese who are 'privileged' in that they have a voice recognised in wider London communities. One of these is Councillor Khanh Thanh Vu of the Hackney Borough Council. In the majority of cases, the strong voices of those who know, are embedded in the Vietnamese communities in which they are able to exercise influence. Again, methodologically, this project was not simply about the researcher

reporting on his findings. It was more about utilising a space for dialogue, for conversation in which each participant in the process, this researcher included, has an opportunity to tell stories out of their own experience, with all its limitations and possibilities, interweaving and inverting stories of the so called marginalised with those considered by some, 'privileged' in an outsider-insider 'double helix'. These interactions raised ethical questions which are addressed in the next section.

2.5 Out-sider In-sider: Ethical Considerations and Informed Consent

During the period of setting up and preparing for this research, a number of conversations took place with regard to the ethics of the interview and research process. Questions were asked about the potential infringement on the privacy of individuals and the moral aspects of 'taking' information from participants. It was decided that due to the personal nature of many of the interviews, some names had to be changed or avoided in order to protect the privacy of individuals. In all cases, the default was in the direction of sensitivity and anonymity.

I began this chapter by addressing the theoretical underpinnings of the methodologies selected for this project. I now move on to a discussion of the 'insider-outsider' aspects of connecting with the research field. Connecting with the field was as much a personal as an academic decision. I had met a number of Vietnamese through the normal shopping and eating habits of everyday life. The idea of interviewing these new acquaintances was attractive, though I did not think deeply about the possible consequences of the mixing of research and friendship relationships. The reality was that I lived in London, in close proximity to those I sought to interview, so the fact was, that as we began to relate on a more frequent basis, the lines began to blur between friend and interviewee. Coffey provides a warning on this point stating 'clearly the issue of personal and fulfilling friendship in the field demands that some attention be paid to notion of over-familiarity and over-rapport' (Coffey 1999: 47). I decided at the outset to be careful, to hold myself in check and not become too familiar. As Crick noted, drawing on the work of Gorges and Jones in 1980, 'mutual dependency may produce a strong bond in a relationship, but it invariably entails a deep ambivalence and a smoldering explosive potential as well' (Crick 1992: 187). I had these types of warnings ringing in my ears as I carried out my first interviews and participated in activities within local Vietnamese communities. It was with relief that as I read literature in the field, I found some solace, again in the words of Coffey.

However, it is simplistic, and in many cases unhelpful, to argue that we should avoid friendship in order to remain marginal and able to provide a critical perspective. The essence of the ethnographic enterprise is predicated on shared understandings and reciprocal arrangements. Good ethnographic practice, data collection and analyses rely upon genuine empathy, trust and participation. It is inevitable that prolonged fieldwork will promote emotional ties and personal attachments that go beyond the parameters of the field (Coffey 1999: 47).

As the project continued over several years, some of my relationships with Vietnamese Londoners became closer, with trust developing and opportunities for further contact increasing. In light of this, it has been of great interest to me that my relationships with participants in this research have actually taken a number of forms and have led to several different outcomes. While some interviewees have simply drifted away, others have become quite involved in the research process, asking questions as to the progress of the project and offering various types of assistance. Along these lines, Max van Manen points out, in his discussion of the 'hermeneutic interview', that the researcher or interviewer often develops this kind of relationship with the interviewee. He states that 'the interviewee becomes the co-investigator of the study', that the participants of the study often 'invest more than a passing interest in the research project in which they have willingly involved themselves... and accordingly, the researcher develops a certain moral obligation to his or her participants that should prevent a sheer exploitative situation' (1990: 98).

This point came clear to me when, as I completed a line of questioning with an interviewee, she reached into her bag, pulled out a digital camera and said matter-of-factly, 'I'll take your photograph now' (Interview, Nga 15 May 2009). I was taken aback, and when I asked about the purpose of the photo, she replied, 'for the article I'm writing about you in my magazine' (Ibid.). If a course is to be steered around the potential pitfalls of an 'exploitative' and hierarchical perspective, a part of this 'moral obligation,' it seems to me, is to live in a shared ownership of the project with those about whom I am writing.

Methodologically, this provides opportunities for on-going conversations, expansions of perspective over time and also leads to further contact with Vietnamese through revealed networks. Already as this research project draws to a close, one of my interviewees has published a book. While relaxing one evening with an interviewee toward the end of the

project, I was surprised to hear him say ‘You know, you and I could move back to Vietnam and open a college. You could teach some subjects and I’ll teach others. We could do it, you know’ (Informal Interview, 9 December 2009). We had completed the interviews for this project and now we were acting as friends. The insider-outsider complexities were at work as I pondered his suggestion. Was it realistic? Did he really mean what he was saying? Or, was he being gracious and encouraging to me? These are the issues at the heart of the insider-outsider debate. As Davies states ‘the question of being an insider in any given situation is nearly always problematic’ (Davies 2008: 221). It is my contention, that in many cases it cannot be crystal clear when the researcher is an insider and when an outsider. There is a flow in and out of this positionality and it has to do with language, shared history, shared geography or spaces, and perhaps a shared interest in the topics of research and discussion. There can be a cost in that disappointments and unmet expectations are always possible. Joy Hendry speaks to this point:

The tale (of a two-decade long friendship “between author and member of the society where research has been carried out several times”) illustrates the advantages and dilemmas for the anthropologist of turning a friend into an informant, but it also exposes problems for the informant of having an anthropologist as a ‘friend’. Ultimately, professional enquiry can only benefit, in a depth not possible with shorter-term, less intense relationships (cf. Foster 1979; Caplan, this volume), but in exposing feelings and expectations of the individuals involved, the chapter raises the issue of the personal cost of the knowledge acquired (Hendry 1992: 163-4).

While the cost may be high on a personal level, and it may increase exponentially with the passage of time and the depth of closeness, there are identifiable advantages and disadvantages to these positions. Mitchell describes the disadvantages of having previously lived and worked in and around the facility in which he carried out his research.

There is always a danger that an informant will fill in little detail of a subject or incident if they are aware the interviewer has similar knowledge. There were also many times, on reflection, when I did not ask for more detail when I should have, as I knew about what was being described or alluded to, but most would not. Perhaps sometimes I was so confident about the facets that I wanted to touch on that I did not allow the interviewee to establish the things that were most important to him or her (Mitchell, Unknown Date: 32).

Familiarity with the research subject demands particular discipline in the interview process. Letting the interviewee run with a thought instead of ‘cutting them off’ because the researcher is familiar with the situation is often difficult. I found myself, on numerous occasions, going back to interviewees for clarification when I realised, as I transcribed recordings, that I was filling in blank spaces out of my own knowledge and understanding. This is perhaps the greatest value of return visits and subsequent interviews, emails and Skype calls. Also interesting from Mitchell’s perspective are the advantages to being an ‘insider’:

These work and family familiarities certainly eased my way into people's homes to record and set up an initial trust in me. I do not suggest that it would have been impossible for an outsider to record some of these people, **but** I am fairly sure that some others would not have co-operated at all. Latterly, as word circulated in the community, I was being approached in pubs by nursing staff and offered interviews (emphasis in original) (Mitchell, Unknown Date: 30).

There is great value in being part of a community, and in my case I was able to interface with Vietnamese Londoners on numerous levels, in various communities and for various purposes. After several years, I began to be approached by Vietnamese who had heard about the project and who knew me by sight, and began to offer the interviews of other Vietnamese. ‘Oh, you should interview my sister, she travels to Vietnamese communities all over the world for work’. Another might say, ‘I’ll gather together a group of young people and you can interview them at the community centre. How many do you want and when can you meet with them?’ (Informal conversations, March 2009). These opportunities sometimes led to productive interviews and other times were politely declined as they were not completely relevant to the research, but they point out the importance of being ‘in’ the community (Malinowski, 1957). However, by following specific procedures and keeping to the structures of the research process, these relationships are given boundaries that act as guidelines. These boundaries are extremely helpful in limiting appropriately the amount of time spent with interviewees and in providing a distance, so that the researcher is able to maintain a facilitation role, and not become ‘one of the group’ in such a way that he or she is caught up in the emotion and trauma of the narrative process.

An example of this trauma took place recently as I was interviewing the owner of a Deptford Vietnamese restaurant. As she began to tell the story of the loss of several family members to starvation and dehydration in a small boat out on the open ocean, tears suddenly sprang to her eyes and she excused herself, rushing back to the kitchen. I was left, stunned and struck by the power of her emotion, called up by an event that took place thirty years ago (Informal Interview, 24 May, 2010). When she returned a few minutes later, there was an awkwardness in the encounter and she directed the conversation to topics around her current life in London. This encounter resurfaced my concerns about being ‘in’ the community. Ahmed addresses the ethical and communicative implications of the ‘encounter’ arguing that ‘such encounters always conceal as much as they reveal: they involve trauma, scars, wounds, and tears that are impossible to forget, or to present or to speak’ (Ahmed, 2000: 158). Am I a friend, confidant, researcher, or voyeur? These are the irresolvable, but valuable questions brought up in the course of the intertwining of stories and experience in the give and take of the interview process. In a sense, I am all of these things at different moments in the encounter. Again, Ahmed asserts:

What allows us to face each other is also what allows us to move beyond face, to hear and be touched by what one cannot grasp, as that which cannot be assimilated in a moment of recognition for either “the Other” or the stranger. ...an ethics that keeps alive the circuit between mouths, ears and skin is hence not about making her body present. It is the act of getting closer to this other’s skin that prevents us from fleshing out her body *as* “the stranger’s body” (Ibid.).

It is necessary to wrestle with these questions and their implications in auto-ethnographic research in order to move beyond assumptions and examine the results of our histories, that is, what are we doing now? How can we encourage and assist one another through this encounter, now, in proximity to one another? In light of my research project, how is this woman in a restaurant in London acting transnationally, and how does she describe her actions? By focusing on and interacting with her actions in everyday life, in that moment I am less inclined to ‘label’ her as ‘other’, and less likely to slip into assumptions about her identity as a ‘stranger’ to me. Taking Back’s admonition to sociologists seriously, that ‘thinking of our interlocutors next to us as we write offers a corrective to the liberties we are prone to take with their lives’ (Back, 2007: 151). Back reminds me that her voice is in my ear, her face is in my mind’s eye, and her body is next to me (Ibid.). Even as I sit writing, her presence is not so far away.

My role as researcher involved the careful utilisation of stories shared in trust and confidence. In this capacity, care had to be taken to keep interviewees aware of the process and periodically offer opportunities for engagement with the material if desired. It was essential that I make available an ‘out clause’ which empowers interviewees by giving them the right of refusal should they become uncomfortable with the use of their own narratives in the research process. It would be possible for an individual to share with me aspects of his or her life, thoughts, opinions, and stories, primarily because we have developed a personal friendship. That individual would need to have the right to rethink the possibility of their information being shared in the public domain.

Informed consent provides the framework for this possibility to become a protected reality. Regarding the rights of interviewees, each individual was given an opportunity to understand and give consent to their involvement in the research process. As Cohen and Manion describe it, each participant has the right ‘to freedom and self-determination. Being free is a condition of living in a democracy and when restrictions and limitations are placed on that freedom they must be justified and consented to, even in research proceedings’ (Cohen and Manion 1994: 350). These limitations and restrictions refer to fact that information provided by the participant could be used by the researcher and perhaps others in ways and for purposes specifically not known by the one providing the information. The participant, therefore, must have the right to withdraw or refuse further participation at any point (Ibid: 350). Guidelines for this process of receiving permission to use information gathered through interviews are gathered in Appendix VIII. A copy of the consent form is included in Appendix IX of this thesis.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I concluded that the most appropriate methodology for this project was to conduct interviews in order to hear and record Vietnamese Londoner’s stories. In the process I was able to select individuals for formal interviews, asking questions related to Vietnamese involvement in transnational activities. I also concluded that it was best to apply autobiography in order to bring my own background in Vietnam into the research process. The inclusion of my own story gave opportunities to access Vietnamese Londoners and their stories because, on various levels, we had a shared experience, language and perspective. It was crucial that I acknowledged my own background and role as a researcher in the ‘insider-

outsider' aspects of relating to and communicating with Vietnamese interviewees and their communities.

Finally, I determined that every interviewee had the right to choose to participate and to withdraw that permission at any point in the research process through informed consent. The importance of 'voice' was stressed in the dialogical process. I was committed to Vietnamese telling their stories in their way, and to their involvement in the ways in which information was gathered and disseminated. This took place as Vietnamese interviewees recommended others who they considered would benefit this research. In addition, discussions took place with Vietnamese participants during follow-up interviews around the uses of the information given, and ways in which it would be shared with others.

Chapter 3: A History of Migration into Britain: The Vietnamese Experience

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I utilise two distinct perspectives in getting at the intersections of Vietnamese and British interactions through history. The first approach is to provide a timeline, locating these intersections in a linear, chronologically-based history. Then, I shift the focus, turning to the Vietnamese who provide, not a linear approach, but a more community-based perspective with less concern with timelines and more concern with ‘who relates to whom’. These perspectives make up the two parts of this chapter on a migration history of the Vietnamese into London. These parts are divided into two sections.

The first section outlines a brief history of migration into the United Kingdom with a particular focus on London. From ancient times to the present, London has been a settling place for peoples arriving from all over the globe. My purpose in this discussion is to highlight the fact that the Vietnamese experience of immigration into Britain is not unique, particularly in relation to the immigration history of London. The second section places an emphasis on the particular migration experiences of Vietnamese immigrants moving into London. Highlighted in this part, are the variety of ways in which Vietnamese have entered the United Kingdom, the first major migration as refugees following the original, massive out-migration from Vietnam that began in 1975, and then in other ways. Since those early years, a variety of Vietnamese communities have developed in London, often based on their varied experiences of exit from Vietnam and entry into Britain. I am reliant on Vietnamese Londoners and their perspective for the identification of these communities.

3.2 Destination London: A Historical Perspective on London Immigration

London has been the centre of immigration narratives since its founding in the first century (Merriman 1993). For a brief, general history of immigration into London see Appendix VII. While it is not my purpose here to go into an in-depth recounting of this history, it is important, at this point, to set Vietnamese London experiences in the context of the long-standing history of the settlement of quite varied peoples into London’s urban spaces. In discussing the realities of immigration into London from beyond Europe, historians Colin Pooley and Ian Whyte write that, ‘in considering such immigration we are not restricted to a limited range of immigrant and refugee groups; instead, we can point to a wide range of

newcomers' (Pooley and White, 1991: 195). Even in its early days as a settlement, a cross-section of the population would reveal a surprising array of inhabitants.

From the very beginnings of London's history there are stories of its diversity as a crossroads and hub of human activity. Historian Peter Ackroyd categorically states, 'London has always been a city of immigrants' (Ackroyd 1993: 701). John Morris writes of pre-Roman Britain:

Long before the Romans came, these islands and their inhabitants were known by the general name of British. They were not yet a coherent single people. They were descended from immigrants who had come at different times from different places; some had absorbed their predecessors, or been absorbed by them, others had remained distinct (Morris 1999: 7).

This description could have been written about the population of London in our own era, with the experiences of the City's newer immigrants with its longer-term inhabitants having similar outcomes. Against this backdrop, I present a short analysis of the most recent era of immigration into London with particular reference to the Vietnamese. I begin after the Second World War.

3.3 Post-World War II Immigration into the United Kingdom

The purpose of this section is to highlight the fact that refugees have often arrived in Britain under very difficult conditions, however the numbers and variety of immigrants in the last period are unprecedented. There are multiple reasons for resettlement and immigration and, as Castles and Miller point out:

It is important to realise that all the [migration] movements have common roots, and that they are closely interrelated. Western penetration triggered off profound changes in other societies, first through colonisation, then through military involvement, political, cultural and environmental change, which arise from decolonisation, modernisation and uneven development. These processes seem set to accelerate in the future, leading to even greater dislocations and changes in societies, and hence to even larger migrations (Castles and Miller 2003: 165).

This 'Western penetration' on both sides of the North-South Vietnamese divide did indeed trigger major changes. Both Marxism and Capitalism were received from the West and the subsequent 'divides' resulted not only in economic difference, but also war. The 'dislocations' and 'uneven development' pointed out above are key issues in this discussion.

The complexities behind the reasons for flight and migration abound, particularly during the last 60 years. Ian McAuley writes, ‘if there is a long period of foreign settlement in London, it is the period following the Second World War which stands out as *the* age of immigration, both in the numbers involved and the variety of countries from which they came’ (McAuley 1999: i). Resettlement has been defined as ‘a process involving the organised movement of selected refugees from their country of first asylum to a third country for permanent settlement and integration. It is a specialised protection process for recognised refugees’ (Wright, Peach and Ward, 2005: 6). Refugees recognised as candidates for resettlement by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are selected by various nations participating in the resettlement initiative and brought to the ‘third country’ for their protection (Ibid: 7). According to UK Home Office documents, resettlement procedures are available to asylum seekers according to the following objectives:

Our objectives in providing resettlement are to: provide a sustainable and long-term solution to those refugees whose lives, liberty, or other fundamental human rights are at risk where they are living; remove from those most vulnerable refugees a perceived need to seek the services of a people smuggler if they want to reach the UK; and contribute to solving any regional need for asylum. The resettlement programme will operate in addition to current asylum determination procedures... in conjunction with UNHCR, along with other non-governmental bodies (AAPD, Home Office, 2003: 69).

It was under guidelines such as those outlined above, that Vietnamese refugees, particularly the ‘boat people’, arrived in London, the first wave travelling to Hong Kong and then on to Britain as a ‘third country’. In the following discussion, I place the Vietnamese immigrant experience in its post-war context, and provide some insight into the issues and attitudes surrounding immigration in this period.

The government of the United Kingdom continues to evaluate its policy on the settlement and resettlement of refugees. The following six resettlement programmes began just after the German invasion of Poland at the start of World War II, when approximately 300,000 Polish military exiles were settled in the UK. The second group involved 28,600 Ugandan refugees expelled in 1972 by the Idi Amin government. Then, between 1974 and 1979, 3000 Chilean political exiles arrived, fleeing the Pinochet regime. Between 1979 and 1982, 11,450 Vietnamese refugees arrived in Britain, and another 3,150 were added who had been rescued at sea. Finally, 3,850 Vietnamese were added through the Family Reunion

Programme. The last two groups settled in the UK were 2,585 Bosnian and 20,000 Kosovan evacuees in 1992-1995 and in 1999 respectively (Robinson, 2003).

In summary, the Vietnamese came to London as one of several peoples who were part of a 40-year process of policy-making and experimentation with regard to resettlement of refugees in Britain. It is important to note that the above presentation of refugee quota groups includes only those refugees for which the British government took direct responsibility for settling. There are other refugees from these populations who perhaps experienced similar difficulties leading to their out-migration, but who arrived in the UK through other means, applying for asylum on arrival. In continuing the process of narrowing this discussion from a wide perspective of general immigration into Britain to that of the Vietnamese as an individual people, it is necessary to provide insight into the direct history Britain has had with the peoples of Vietnam, a non-Commonwealth nation. The key lay in what was then, the British colony of Hong Kong. Suddenly, Britain had a refugee issue. A people who had been a distant 'other', were now a people in desperate need, as well as a pressing humanitarian and foreign policy issue for the British government.

3.4 Great Britain and Vietnam: A Relational History

One of the most striking aspects of research on migration to Great Britain in general, is the massive body of literature available on both Commonwealth and New Commonwealth migration to this country. This is indeed due to the significance of post-empire population flows and the swirl of political and social issues surrounding them. Also significant is the fact that these South Asian, African and West Indian populations have now been in the United Kingdom through multiple generations, providing ample opportunity for academics and journalists to explore the experience of coming to and living in Britain. Less has been written about populations such as the Vietnamese due to the relatively recent phenomena of significant non-Commonwealth migration into the United Kingdom. Moreover, relatively little has been written about the history of the relationship between the United Kingdom and Vietnam prior to 1975. Modern British involvement in the lives of the Vietnamese occurred when, for a short period of time, Vietnam came under British protection and control after the Japanese were driven out of Southeast Asia. Britain quickly ceded authority back to the French, continuing the 'Indochine' status quo. The New Internationalist describes the event in the following way:

Japan surrendered in August 1945 and Allied leaders agreed that Britain would occupy the south of Vietnam and China the north. But the Vietminh marched down from the hills to liberate Hanoi before the Chinese arrived. On 2 September 1945 the Democratic Republic of Vietnam was proclaimed, with Ho as President. His inaugural speech quoted from the US Declaration of Independence and reflected his hopes of US support. But even Moscow failed to recognize the new republic. The British ruthlessly suppressed the Vietminh in the south and helped the French to re-establish their old colonial system (New Internationalist, 1991).

This brief but violent backdrop to the relationship between the Vietnamese and Great Britain perhaps explains the relatively minor significance each nation has played in the other's history up until 1961. In that year, as Western concerns over the expansion of Communism grew, a decision was taken by the MacMillan government that Britain would initiate involvement in South Vietnam in its fight against the Communist North by sending the British Advisory Mission (BRIAM). There were two reasons for this, the first having to do with the success of British attempts to overcome insurgency in Malaysia in the 1950s. The second had to do with MacMillan's confidence in Britain's ability to make a strong contribution, and his desire to show Britain's solidarity with the allies in the Cold War struggle (Busch 2001:69). Britain's concern about the effect of Communism would be further acted upon some 20 years later under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, through the acceptance of Vietnamese refugees fleeing the Communist takeover of the Republic of South Vietnam and subsequent crackdowns by the Communist government on ethnic Chinese-Vietnamese during the Sino-Vietnamese War in 1979-1980. This would be one of the first times in modern history that Britain would invite immigrants according to a quota system of immigration. It would also inaugurate one of the first major immigration movements into Britain of a non-Commonwealth, non-European people since the Polish military exiles arrived in 1940.

The three post-Vietnam War migrations from Vietnam to the UK include a first period from 1975 to 1982, during which the vast majority of Vietnamese arrived in the United Kingdom as so-called 'boat people' from what was the British colony of Hong Kong. The second migration period lasted from 1983 until 1988. The numbers of Vietnamese remained fairly small but steady during this time. Then in 1989, there was a need to once again manage the flow of refugees through Hong Kong. It was during this time, 1989 to 1992, that the '2000 Programme' was enacted in which roughly 2000 refugees were admitted into the country

directly from Hong Kong (Ibid.). These three historical periods established the Vietnamese in the United Kingdom.

3.5 The Crisis of the ‘Boat People’: The First Period (1975-1982)

In April of 1975, the population in Vietnam experienced a political re-unification of the nation-state. Vietnamese had already been coming to London in small numbers for a number of reasons which included study, business and Vietnamese Embassy employment. Prior to 1975, the vast majority of Vietnamese in Europe were located in France, due to the pre-1954 colonial relationship. Those in France were typically educated French speakers from the Vietnamese middle classes and were generally well received (Joly, 1996). Meanwhile, during the first months after the collapse of the South Vietnamese government in 1975, Britain accepted very few Vietnamese in comparison to the United States and France, due presumably to the distant relationship between the United Kingdom and Vietnam as outlined above. During a two-week period of exodus from Vietnam in 1975, the United States received 130,000 refugees, France accepted 9,500 and Britain took in 32 refugees and accepted the asylum applications of a further 300 who were already in the United Kingdom (Duke and Marshall 1995: 1).

By 1979, the refugee crisis had reached enormous proportions. China had invaded the north of Vietnam and ethnic Vietnamese harassment of Chinese-background Vietnamese forced many to flee as ‘boat people’ (Duke and Marshall 1995: 1). The concern of the international community had grown to such an extent that a Geneva conference was called in July of that year by the United Nations Secretary General in order to come to some agreement regarding the distribution of Indochinese refugees who had fled by the thousand to neighbouring countries such as Hong Kong, Thailand, and the Philippines (Joly 1996: 89). At the Geneva conference, Margaret Thatcher issued an ‘invitation’ for 10,000 Vietnamese to enter Britain through the refugee camps in what was then, British Hong Kong, where they had been given admission as a ‘country of first asylum’ (Cohen 1994: 55). This period is illustrated by the life of an interviewee who went on to become the first Vietnamese in Britain elected to a council seat. Councillor Khanh Thanh Vu came to the UK under the following conditions:

I came to this country in October, 1979. I stayed in [the] Selby Reception Centre for a week. And after that, the Home Office opened a new centre at Thorney Island [RAF], near Chichester to bring 25,000 Vietnamese from Hong Kong to Britain. So, I had been appointed as a Field Worker to work in

the Centre, and I worked there three years until the Centre closed down in 1982. And straight away, I worked for Vietnamese [people] from 1979 until now. After I left Thorney Island, I went to London to study at SOAS for my MA degree, and also to start to set up a Vietnamese community [Centre] in 1982 (Interview, Cllr Vu 24 October 2007).

Councillor Vu has taken a place in civic leadership both nationally and internationally from the An Viet Community Centre that he founded in 1982. The story of another successful Vietnamese refugee who endured great hardship follows:

My [first] husband died in Vietnam. When my daughter was six months old, we went to Hong Kong. We stayed there for five or six years and then we were brought to Britain in December 1992. My husband is Vietnamese. When we were in Hong Kong, we met and married there. We didn't have any relatives in the UK (Interview, Mary 5 January 2010).

Mary and her second husband now own one of the largest and most successful Vietnamese supermarkets in London. As I interviewed her, she pulled out of a tattered folder several articles from local newspapers and magazines highlighting her shop. She pointed excitedly to one of the photos, 'That's me! That's me right there!' (Ibid.). She offered to photocopy the small stack of clippings and allow me to use them in my research. These Vietnamese Londoners provided the first insights of this research on some members of the wider community who had come through very difficult times and who persevered, becoming active in London life as community workers, shopkeepers, etc.

3.6 The Perspective of the British Public on the Arrival of the 'Boat People'

At this point, prior to moving on to the second period of migration of Vietnamese into Britain, it is important to address the attitude of the people of the United Kingdom to the very visible arrival of the Vietnamese during the initial period of resettlement in Britain. The following includes several accounts from informal conversations and the news media providing insight into the British reaction from several angles.

In the initial stages of the escape of the 'boat people', television sensitised the British population to the plight of the Vietnamese. On the one hand, images of overcrowded vessels bursting with humanity narrowly escaping disaster with each swell awakened the British populace to the needs and vulnerability of desperate refugees. Then came footage of dramatic sea rescues as British captains idled their engines to allow desperate refugees to climb aboard. This more emotional aspect of the multi-faceted role of television took its

place in helping to shape British attitudes and move them in the direction of the government's policy of acceptance. As one English interviewee stated, 'I remember thinking, 'How very sad. Something must be done to help these poor people!' (Interview, North London, 4 May 2004). During this period, there was also public sympathy with the plight of the 'boat people' who were arriving into camps in Britain, particularly as images of the arrivals were broadcast across the nation. However, the news media covering the story did, at times, seem a bit insensitive in attempts to show this 'plight'. Scott Hughes of The Independent published a 1997 interview with Julia Somerville of ITN News in which she stated:

I became very aware of my own role in the media when the first Vietnamese boat people were admitted to this country in the late Seventies, and I was sent to cover their arrival. These people got off the plane, each carrying just a carrier bag, and were herded into a place where they were given a meal at long tables. I was in radio, but the TV journalists were allowed to go in and film them, and this made me think that we were putting them in the position of being like animals at the zoo. I saw the way the media can behave without realising it sometimes, and that gave me an uncomfortable feeling (Hughes, 1997).

It is important to note that for most people in Britain, it was a distant issue, not one that affected one's daily life. As one English woman put it, 'I did not think a great deal about it. I do not think there were any negative attitudes, but then, I never saw any Vietnamese as they didn't come to our area' (Interview, North London 4 May 2004). The perspective of the British public on the relationship between the Prime Minister and the President of the United States, and how this related to the arrival in Britain of Vietnamese refugees, was illustrated in an interview with an English woman in North London. Having asked about the attitude of the English to the acceptance of Vietnamese into the United Kingdom during the 1980s, she replied that it seemed to her that Prime Minister Thatcher's willingness to receive such a large number of Vietnamese 'had something to do with the close relationship between Margaret Thatcher and President Ronald Reagan' (Interview, London, 4 May 2004). This interviewee felt that the decision on refugees was taken as a gesture of support to Reagan during a crisis period in United States history.

Several other English persons who lived in London at the time of the refugee crisis were interviewed in the Boroughs of Barnet and Hackney. These interviewees pointed out that the acceptance of Vietnamese into Britain was simply a policy of the government. Some stated

that it must have been a good thing that Britain provided for the Vietnamese waiting in Hong Kong (Interviews, London, 3-4 May 2004). While this may have been true in the initial stages, as more refugees entered the country, the attitude of the nation began to change and sympathy waned. The ‘boat people’ became the brunt of local humour in some circles. One local ‘hoaxster’ revealed his penchant for winding up his and his mates parents. ‘In his early teens, he and his mates would phone up each other’s parents and pretend to be the council telling them that a group of Vietnamese boat people would be staying in their houses’ (Cook 1997: 2). The reaction was predictable: “‘Obviously, they’d go mad,” laughs Dave. “It was so funny, we’d see them turning up at the council together to sort the problem out”” (Ibid.). Perhaps as a reaction to these more negative attitudes, as well as to a stated tendency to focus on work, the Vietnamese led unobtrusive lives as they settled into life in Britain. A Vietnamese restaurant owner, quoted in The Guardian, described the Vietnamese community and their relationships with other members of Hackney’s communities:

‘We get along with the Turkish people all right, and the black people OK - but we don’t really talk to them much. We mostly keep ourselves to ourselves, and so do they.’ Phan’s tone is friendly, but realistic. ‘Black people have the Hackney Empire and do a lot of party organising. Vietnamese families concentrate more on the work side of things than they do on [social] activities’ (Benedictus, 2005)

The Vietnamese refugee crisis continued to develop and the world-wide response began to shift to a long-term perspective. It was clear that the Vietnamese settling in Britain were permanent as there were likely to be no changes in the Vietnamese government position. This prompted further thinking about the need to address not only the process of out-migration with regard to the dangers of sea journeys, and the lack of order in the initial stages of flight, but also the issue of family members now separated with refugees seeking to reunite with loved ones left back in Vietnam. These discussions led to a further development in the timeline of Vietnamese migration to third countries.

3.7 The ‘Orderly Departure Programme’ The Second Period (1983-1988)

As time went on, the 10,000-person quota increased to 18,000 as the government continued to accept further applicants on a family reunion basis (Cohen 1994: 78). The ‘family reunion policy’ relates to the British government’s decision to allow family members residing in Vietnam and Hong Kong to join those Vietnamese who had already entered the United Kingdom and had received ‘leave to remain’. During this second phase of immigration into

Britain, the numbers of Vietnamese coming out of the homeland were relatively small compared to those of the previous few years. There was no 'quota' to be filled, and while 'boat rescue' cases continued to be processed, the majority of arrivals were actually family re-union cases, many of them handled through the 'Orderly Departure Programme' or ODP. This programme, carried out during this 'Intermediate Arrivals' phase of the overall migration of Vietnamese 'was the result of an agreement between the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) and Vietnam to facilitate select immigration and reduce departure by boat' (Duke and Marshall 1995: 2). The scale of the refugee crisis was overwhelming and finally forced all parties to the negotiating table. The result was that:

In 1989, a 'Comprehensive Plan of Action' was adopted by the countries of origin, the countries of first asylum and the countries of resettlement. People already in the camps were to be resettled, while any new asylum seekers were to be screened to see if they were really victims of persecution. Those found to be economic migrants were to be repatriated. This led to voluntary or even forced repatriation, particularly from the overcrowded camps of Hong Kong. Vietnam introduced an 'orderly Departure Programme' to permit legal emigration, particularly of people with relatives in overseas countries (Skeldon, 1992: 49-52; Hugo, 1990; UNHCR, 1991) (Castles and Miller, 2003: 163).

Two interviewees who had relatives in London described their 'orderly departure' experiences. '[I was] born in Vietnam [in the South], moved to London when I was five [years of age]. Yeah, I have a few memories but not many. I've been in London almost all my life, so this is my life' (Interview, Tu 17 March 2009). And an elderly business woman describes her reunion with her husband:

My husband left Vietnam first and went to Hong Kong. We hoped he could make enough money to bring our family to him some day. It was a very difficult time. We had so little money. We were separated for years. Then I was finally able to join him in London with our children. Now we have a good life and our children are grown and have their own families (Informal Interview, 27 April 2004).

It was during this second migration period that the Vietnamese population already in Britain began to settle into local communities. Twenty years later, with a number of Vietnamese community centres well established, the landscape was quite different to the original 'building years' of the early arrivals as one interviewee put it (Informal Interview, 21 February 2004). While difficulties remained and some members of the various communities had fallen into or chosen routes into illegal activity (Burrell, 2000), most

Vietnamese arriving in the first two migration periods had indeed settled and were finding ways of building new lives. The experience of one elderly man illustrates this point.

Mr. Nguyen was one of the early arrivals to Britain in 1980, through the first quota of 10,000 Vietnamese. He brought his family out of Vietnam in 1984, during this second period of migration into Britain, through Hong Kong, under the 'family re-union policy'. He stood up to speak at a Hackney workshop (in 2004) for Vietnamese transmigrants interested in starting businesses in the Borough. [The meeting was held in the Community Centre for Refugees from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia (VLC Centre) and was carried out in Vietnamese with English translation.] The participants were given practical information on issues applicable to those either involved in or seeking to establish businesses in the areas of restaurant management (food preparation) and the nail shop industry. [Nail shops are a highly specialised aspect of the beauty industry in which manicures and pedicures are given with multiple options.] Presenters were from both the British government and the private sector.

During the time for audience participation, Mr. Nguyen, described as one of the most successful businessmen in the Vietnamese community in London stood to speak. He was the picture of a typical Vietnamese 'Co', (a highly respected elderly man). His dark eyes twinkled as he collected his thoughts, and his hand smoothed a thin grey-white beard, then he spoke: 'I arrived in this country in 1980 and was warmly welcomed by the British government. I had good education and economic prospects' (Nguyen Presentation, 21 February 2004). Mr. Nguyen went on to express appreciation to the government for their assistance. He described his relationship with the British government as that of a 'child in a wealthy family' (Ibid.). He knew that if he were not successful on his own, he would have to return to his 'family' and become dependent on the state. But things were different in London. He wanted to be successful and to support his newly arrived family without government assistance. Mr. Nguyen described how all of his children were now educated. He wanted to pass on some words of advice to the large group of young to middle-aged Vietnamese, primarily Chinese-background, crowding the hall. He went on:

Invest in property. Keep good records and pay close attention to administration. Be a good citizen and be prepared to take the next step in business. If your workers are family, be patient, success will come. My last advice is that you should participate in community projects, training and other

things. We did not have these things when I arrived in the 1980s (Nguyen Presentation, 21 February 2004)³.

Mr. Nguyen, who arrived during the first migration had turned a corner, as it were. He was setting up successful businesses in London, and had the resources to bring family members to Britain through the ODP. This process was stabilizing the community, and as the hostility between Vietnam and 'the West' diminished, networks were being established between Britain and Vietnam. Like Nguyen, as Vietnamese in these developing communities became more affluent, many were moving beyond the influences of past Vietnam-based conflicts.

Another Vietnamese, a woman from the North of Vietnam, working with a local charity in London, presented part of a workshop focused on business development. She stated emphatically that Vietnamese business people must 'step out and join the public sphere. Do not do business behind the scenes, but make your voice heard to the government!' (Informal Interview, Business Advisor, 21 February 2004). She went on to focus on the need for the Vietnamese community to move ahead in a unified way with business being the common activity which would draw the community together and network business people across boundaries, even across the North-South Vietnamese cultural and political divide (Ibid.).

In spite of the positive developments in the resettlement process, it must be noted that divides did and still do exist, particularly related to the differences between those Vietnamese who arrived from the north of Vietnam and those from the south. One worker in a community centre stated, 'There are differences between those Vietnamese from the North and those from the South. It is difficult for them to trust each other and so they stay apart' (Informal Interview, Community Centre London, 21 Feb. 2004). These differences often led to a tacit separation between members of two communities for which the 'American War' was still an issue and for whom the divides between those in the Communist North and those in the American-supported South were still deep. This phenomenon will be addressed in later chapters, however, at this point it is important to note these deep divides within the Vietnamese population in London. These fractures in the community led to the development of several different and separated Vietnamese communities in London, some with experience in South Vietnam with an anti-communist agenda, while the majority of Vietnamese in London arrived from the north, seeking little involvement in politics.

³ Vietnamese Community Meeting, Community Centre for Refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos (VLC), London, 21 Feb. 2004, trans. by the Author and Peter Hong Le

While the 'settling in' process continued apace in London, there were major developments across the globe in Hong Kong. Negotiations had begun in earnest regarding those Vietnamese remaining in camps in Hong Kong. These talks between the British and Chinese governments led to a final phase of organised and quota arrivals into the United Kingdom.

3.8 The '2000 Programme': The Third Period (1989-1992)

This third period of Vietnamese refugees entering the United Kingdom had at its origin a very different purpose and motivation. These were historic times in Britain's Hong Kong colony. The 'handover' to China was to take place in 1997, and the issue of Vietnamese refugees still languishing in camps was a 'problem' the Chinese government refused to inherit. This led to a 'stepping up' of a process of forced repatriation that had to go through a series of political minefields. Both the Hong Kong and British governments sought satisfactory ways of clearing the population of some 40,000 to 50,000 mostly ethnic Chinese-background Vietnamese in the colony, eventually agreeing with the government of Vietnam that along with a guarantee of safety, cash incentives be given to those returnees willing to repatriate to Vietnam (Cohen 1994: 57). The first of these 'Orderly Return Programme' flights left Hong Kong in 1992, returning Vietnamese back to the country from which they took flight, in many cases, four to five years before. However, those who qualified for refugee status in the United Kingdom entered a second quota called the '2000 Programme'. This programme allowed the entry of another 2000 Vietnamese from Hong Kong into Britain. Forty percent of Vietnamese arrivals into the UK during this third migration came through this particular Programme (Duke and Marshall 1995:2). Other Vietnamese on 'refugees status' arrived through the existing family reunion programme, while at the same time and overlapping the arrival of 'refugees', there was a growing number of Vietnamese arriving in Britain under very different circumstances. In the rest of this chapter, I present a series of 'groupings' that characterise the bulk of Vietnamese arrivals separate to those refugees who entered the country due to conflict.

3.9 Work Permit Arrivals from Vietnam

Following the Vietnamese refugee crisis of 1975-1992, and as stability and normalcy took over once again in relations between Britain and Vietnam, it became possible to apply for and receive permission to work in the United Kingdom. This development created a new group of Vietnamese with a very different history and background to those already in the

country. This was the second group of arrivals from Vietnam into Britain. There were, and are, marked differences between these new arrivals and those who experienced the years of flight and resettlement. An interviewee who is illustrative of two phases of the out-migration from Vietnam in other countries, but who arrived in Britain on a work permit is Peter who arrived in the United Kingdom in 2003. Peter explains the circuitous route he took after his experience as a 'boat person' and how he eventually arrived in Britain:

So, we were 'boat people' by that time, during the year of 1979 to 1981. [I] lived in Canada for 8 years, became a Canadian citizen there. And then I left Canada, came to Dallas/Ft. Worth, America, to study and to work in a local church from 1990 to 1997, and after that I left Ft. Worth and moved to New Orleans, for another 6 years. But during my time in Canada, I remember back in 1988, I spent that 3 month summer in Paris. After those 3 months, I fell in love with Europe, especially the needs among the Vietnamese people. I had a chance to visit several countries such as: Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany. So I returned to Canada, continued to study [and] finished my BA in Religion and Music. Then in 2003, we got to go back to Europe ...so that's how we end[ed] up in London, England. (Interview, Peter 14 January 2008)

In Vietnam, as a teenager in the years after 1979, Peter and his family experienced the Communist government crackdown on ethnic-background Chinese-Vietnamese referred to previously. Moving through three different nations, and now in London, Peter incorporates his experiences in multiple spaces as resources in his role as a community worker in London's Vietnamese Community Centres. While he arrived from North America, others were moving west from Eastern Europe, also on work permit status. North Vietnam joined the Communist Bloc after the 1954 United Nation decision to divide the country, following the defeat of the French forces in North Vietnam by the Viet Minh. Following partition, and during the 'American War' as many Vietnamese refer to it, aid poured into North Vietnam from other communist nations around the world. After reunification in 1975, in repayment of those debts, Vietnam sent students and workers to Eastern European nations such as the former East Germany, Poland and the former Soviet Union. Councillor Vu from Hackney in East London explains:

So that is the term of 'Viet Kieu' [Overseas Vietnamese]. It means that Vietnamese labour abroad mainly after 1975. And then, another source of Viet Kieu is only in Eastern Europe. That is the labourers from the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. [There was an agreement] to allow Vietnamese to come to work to pay the debts during the War. So, in Eastern Europe, each country, like Poland, the Czech Republic and the other countries as well [received workers]. The total in each country is 30-50,000 Vietnamese (Interview, Cllr Vu 21 November 2007).

Within the last ten years, those Vietnamese who went to Eastern Europe have begun to migrate to third countries including the United Kingdom on work permits. The following accounts from two interviewees detail their experience of coming to Britain from Poland to work for the British Broadcasting Corporation:

In Hanoi I went to high school and university, first year, and then I was selected to go to Poland. So I had to leave, sort of leave a bit of my identity at home and, you know, embrace a new identity in Poland, at a time of great changes. The Berlin Wall, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the new democratic government under Mazowiecki and Walesa in Poland too. So, I had become quite international, in a sense from one Communist country to a transitional Communist country. And then I worked in France and here in London [for the BBC]. I've been here for six years. But I still maintain very close contact with Poland because my wife is from there, and I try to go there twice a year, taking my children to Granny and family. So, I belong to so many places. And I value all of them (Interview, Giang 15 April 2006).

Giang is currently the Director of the BBC World Service' Vietnamese Section. As he stated, he remains deeply connected to Poland and also, in further conversations discusses his connectedness back to Vietnam and to many other places due to his work with the BBC. Another interviewee with deep connections back to Vietnam told his story of being offered a producer role at the BBC and the circumstances around his acceptance:

[I got married] before the tip to the UK in 2002. So [because I just got married], I didn't want to work for the BBC. I travelled [from Poland] to Vietnam and I decided that after marriage, I [would] stay in Vietnam. You know, to go on interviews or something like that... then I went to Poland to prepare everything to finish my business there. And suddenly, one day [my wife] said something like she wanted to do one year of study here [in the UK]. So, 'OK' [I said]. At the same time, the BBC repeated the offer. So [we were on] an internet chat. I told her, they offered again, but I will reject that, and then suddenly, 'No, no. I want to go to study. Is that OK?' I said 'Yeah, it's a good thing' (Interview, Hai 28 March 2009).

These two narratives illustrate the 'serial migration' (Ossman, 2007) experiences of many Vietnamese who arrived in London after the implementation of 'Doi Moi' reforms in Vietnam in 1986. These reforms brought about a 'softening' in relation to Vietnamese foreign policy and an opening up of the economy to more capitalistic practices within the framework of a more liberal socialist economy. With this opening, came a flood of opportunities for Vietnamese citizens, both inside the country and abroad as travel controls eased. One group that began to take advantage of this 'opening' were students.

3.10 International Students from Vietnam

A third group of arrivals into the United Kingdom are those who continue to arrive from Vietnam as international students. These young people are eager for credentials and experience abroad that will increase exponentially their chances of lucrative employment back in Vietnam. As one young interviewee stated, 'if we are successful in our studies here [in London], we will have many opportunities in Vietnam, especially in the big cities where the salaries are higher' (Informal Interview, student leader 2 May 2005). He added 'if it is possible, I would rather stay in London and work for much more money!' (Ibid.). There developed around these students support structures that eased the process of application, entry into Britain and adjustment. A student leader in the Vietnamese Students Association in the UK discussed his role and some of the aims and issues surrounding the organisation:

I came to London from Vietnam two years ago as a Masters student. I was making contact with Vietnamese students here even before I left my home. So, when I came here, I wanted to help other students in London and in Europe. So I joined the student organisation and now I'm in the leadership. My purpose is to encourage and support Vietnamese students in the UK, but also to network with students in other countries in Europe. We are very active in many ways. We meet up with students from other countries in Europe. Sometimes we go camping or we have conferences. We help students in Vietnam who want to come to the UK to study. We help them with information like English tests, air tickets, where to live in London or the UK, things like that. It's very good for them to have friends here already when they come (Informal Interview, student leader 11 November 2004).

Vietnamese international students tend to be networked quite closely, due to their shared student experience, ties to the homeland and to the Vietnamese Embassy in London. One student informed me that it is 'expected' that students attend functions associated with the Vietnamese Embassy as this assists the Vietnamese government's ability to 'communicate with students and assist them more appropriately' which means that they can make certain that students are 'obedient citizens' (Informal Interview, student leader 2 May 2005).

Another leader did not see this as necessarily a negative thing as 'it is easy to get lost in this big city when you don't know anyone and you don't know how to get around and what to do' (Informal Interview, student leader 2 May 2005). In any case, Vietnamese students do not always return to Vietnam after completion of their studies. Three graduates share briefly their experiences as students in London:

I came to London from Sweden in October 2000 with my husband, because he received a scholarship for a PhD in Maths at Goldsmiths College. After a few months I've got a job at Winchmore School. Then I've got an offer to study MSc. in Computer Systems and Networking at London Southbank University. After [I] graduated, I set up Tri Thuc Viet magazine in 6/2006-12/2008 (Interview, Nga 15 May 2009).

I was born in Hanoi, Viet Nam, from a middle class family, grandparents are known authors and writers in Vietnam. My mum is a journalist, my dad works in the Film industry. They all speak different languages, English, French, Hungarian, and travel to many countries in the world. I, therefore, was brought up to be a cultural, music, art-aware girl. I learned to speak English since I was 10, was sent to all the best schools in Vietnam until 18 [when I] won a scholarship and went to study in Bromsgrove school, Worcestershire, UK. [I spent] 2 years in boarding school, 3 years undergrad doing business studies and 1 year doing Vocal artist training at the British Academy. [I] was scouted, then entered and won Miss Face of Asia in 2006, graduated, and then became an international model, travelling and working in many countries (Interview, Ha Anh 15 September 2008).

I came to the UK four years ago to study business and now I'm working for a Vietnamese company in London (Interview, Dao. 30 April 2009).

These three narratives reveal the complex processes behind the scenes of transnationally active and networked Vietnamese Londoners. Each one has a unique story and much can be learned from the journeys of these individuals such as how students settle into their specific roles and identities through the processes of settling into the London's Vietnamese communities, as well as how London-based, transnational networks are established. I turn now to an examination of a somewhat darker nature. These are the experiences of those Vietnamese in the final grouping of Vietnamese arrivals in the United Kingdom who have no legal status in the country.

3.11 Non-Legal Immigrants from Vietnam

Non-legal immigrants are the fourth group that Vietnamese interviewees identified as emerging out of 35 years of Vietnamese migration to the UK. This is the most recent grouping to have been widely identified in London. Here, I note two stories related to me after several years of interaction with the wider Vietnamese communities in London. Trust is not easy to establish amongst those concerned about their status, who seek to remain anonymous. These two individuals maintain transnational networks and were willing to speak briefly. One is employed in a restaurant and the other in a nail shop.

I met the first interviewee outside a restaurant in London, as he was on break taking a smoke. We talked briefly in Vietnamese and I asked a few questions, after explaining my role as a teacher and researcher who was trying to understand the Vietnamese communities in London. He did not share openly the first time, but on subsequent visits he became more open and eventually told me his story. 'I paid a lot of money to come to England. I was able to get into London after coming through Europe. It took a long time and I was very nervous. Now I have a big debt and I have to work long hours to try and pay back my debt. I hope to save money for the future' (Informal Interview, restaurant worker 12 May 2008). A second interviewee, I first met in a Vietnamese shop, stated: 'I was able to find work in a nail shop through a friend in London. I came here to try and make money for my family, but I had to pay so much to get to London I know it will take a long time before I can save money to send back to my wife and mother and father' (Informal Interview, nail shop worker 18 May 2008).

Both of these workers illustrate what a number of other Vietnamese interviewees described about the non-legal immigrant experience. One interviewee in particular explained the reasons and processes by which non-legal immigrants arrive in the UK:

In the past 5 years, another source of Vietnamese trying to come abroad is the illegals, trying to come to this country – not only to the UK but everywhere. And that also involves the labourers... because in the UK there is a much, much higher salary than in Vietnam (Interview, Cllr Vu 21 November 2007).

Thus, according to Cllr Vu and others, the primary reason for illegal entry into the UK and other countries is economics. The cost is high, but the promise of a higher salary than in the homeland 'pulls' many Vietnamese into this trajectory. A second description was given by Peter Le:

The last category is illegal immigrants. It's happened a lot in England, not only the Chinese illegal immigrants, but also the Vietnamese. Why they choose England, they told me, firstly because they can get paid much higher in England, the pound currency is double compared to the US dollar (Interview Peter Le 14 January 2008).

Both of these accounts provide some insight on why England is attractive as a 'target city' for non-legal immigrant Vietnamese. The fact that the United Kingdom has had a comparatively strong economy coupled with a strong British pound is an attractive option, particularly for those sending remittances back to the homeland. As one non-legal

Vietnamese immigrant said, ‘I can send a lot of money to my family in Ho Chi Minh [City] because the pound is high compared to my currency and I live a simple life in London (Informal Interview, 10 July 2009).

Several Vietnamese community leaders and individuals have described coming to Britain as an illegal immigrant as a very expensive and involved process. The amounts of money are high and the risks are great. A non-legal Vietnamese immigrant describes her process saying that she ‘borrowed a lot of money from relatives. I was so nervous [coming across to Britain] I couldn’t eat. Now I’m nervous because I have so much to pay back’ (Informal Interview, 12 June 2009). The emotional cost of the Vietnamese illegal immigrant lifestyle is a significant factor, but must be left for another project. An overview of the process follows:

And they try to come over here and they have to pay, per head, from £10,000 to £15,000 to come over here. If you have more money, you can have a flight direct from Vietnam to the UK. If less, you will have to go to Russia, and then from Russia you take a lorry or a different way to come to Eastern Europe, and then they borrow the passport of Vietnamese here because they say... before they do that they try to fit the passport photograph with the haircut and the immigration officer just lets them go – like that. And they also [had] to pay around £3000 or £4000 from Paris to come over here by car. Some, you see, pass the control and some are arrested later. Or the other sources, they came to France, and then by a secret way they are not to go direct to the controller, they go by way of the gate of the worker in the airport. And then [they need] somebody to bring them to Paris and try to arrange transportation to come over here. In the UK, from my knowledge, every year around 2000 [people arrive in Britain]. This means [over] three or four years... it’s now around 10,000 [illegal immigrants], or something like that (Interview, Cllr Vu 21 November 2007).

Councillor Vu is uniquely situated as a community leader and has access to both individuals from this grouping as well as to the information and stories related to their experience. Cllr Vu is often called upon to assist with advice, documents and support. Often, Vietnamese with various difficulties make contact with Peter Le as well for advice and guidance. He states that there are other reasons for Vietnamese to attempt the trip to Britain without the necessary documentation:

The second reason is England speaks English. If they are not allowed to stay in England in the future, if they have to go back to Vietnam, they still have their English [language] skills, at least they can communicate a little bit, so they hope they can work [in] overseas companies in Vietnam. [So, it’s an

investment.] Both money and language skills, so that's why we have so many illegal immigrants in England (Interview Peter Le 14 January 2008).

The reality is that the English language is a valuable 'resource'. To obtain a facility in English is an investment many Vietnamese hope to make, and to be successful is a 'win-win' for Vietnamese immigrants whether or not they remain in London or the UK. A discussion of 'resources' follows in the next chapter. Peter went on to say that:

Six months ago when I was in the Czech Republic, the Vietnamese people there, the northern Vietnamese, told me some of their friends still target London, they want to come to London. They are willing to pay money in order to get into London because of those two reasons. Some of them have tried, but not successfully. They could not enter the border, because it's very difficult to get into England now (Interview Peter Le 14 January 2008).

The realities of 'serial migration' (Ossman, 2007), apply to both legal and non-legal immigrants. This notion relates, not only to those who receive work permits and move from one location to another on the basis of their desirable status as skilled workers, but also to the 'underclass' of 'illegals'. That is, those who take the risk of travelling, without documentation, across national borders for the purpose of making a living by one means or another.

It is understandably difficult to establish relationships with individuals in this group of non-legal immigrants, and it takes a great deal of time engaging with people on multiple levels in order to be introduced to someone, 'bump into' another, or over time, see a person often enough that trust is established. In the development of the complexities of Vietnamese communities in London, this is the latest grouping to be identified.

3.12 Conclusion

In this chapter, the purpose has been to present an historical survey of the migration patterns of Vietnamese into the United Kingdom. Through this research, I concluded first, that the Vietnamese people are one of the later immigrant peoples into London and join the community of Londoners, many of whom, come from somewhere else. London has been and continues to be a space where immigrants, bringing and utilising a wide variety of resources, have become urban participants, engaged in a plethora of activities across ethnic and national boundaries. This study also shows that the peoples of London are connected, not only to the Commonwealth, but, through more recent immigration, to non-

Commonwealth nations and communities across the globe including Vietnamese residing in many nations world-wide.

Far from being a monolithic population in London, this research has shown that there are four different types of Vietnamese immigrants, from which various and complex Vietnamese communities have emerged over the last 35 years. These four groupings, as described by some Vietnamese Londoners, include refugees, overseas workers, overseas students and illegal immigrants. In this chapter, I have concluded that the Vietnamese have come to Britain over a number of years in a variety of ways. As will be seen in the next chapter, the Vietnamese in London are a people who possess and utilise resources that expand the influence and opportunities available to many of them on a transnational scale. Through the use of these resources, transnationally active identities are formed and lived out in the various communities and global networks established by Vietnamese from London.

Chapter 4: Transnational Identities In and Through London

4.1 Introduction

Having addressed the history and realities of Vietnamese multiple migrations into the United Kingdom and more specifically, London, I now turn to the effects of that migration on certain individuals whose identities have been shaped by people, processes, useful resources, environment, and of course, the choices that took them into spaces of migration. In this chapter I address various aspects of transnational identity including inclusion-exclusion, pragmatic identities, the role and reach of identity, hybridity experiences and transnational roles in London contexts. I begin with an examination of the difficulties associated with defining Vietnamese ‘identity’.

Hai is a citizen of Vietnam. He is also a Vietnamese Londoner and serial migrant, having lived previously in Poland prior to coming to Britain with BBC World Service, Vietnamese Section. Complexities of identity emerged through a discussion of the divides that affect the way individuals live out everyday life in national arenas. These are the divisions and fractures found within the borders of contemporary nations that caused me to question the monolithic nature of the ‘nation’, so common in stereotypes and generalisations. I came to this realisation as Hai told me how he grappled to come to terms with his own identity as a Vietnamese through the confusing interplay between the global and the local (Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1991). Hai explained his background:

My father is from the South, and the father of my mother is from the North. But he went to the South very early. So, my mother is from the North, but was born in the South. So my family is, you know, like... And, in the beginning when I tried to find the answer, I came to the conclusion that there’s no Vietnamese-ness, no Vietnamese identity. Because, like me, I’m always divided between the North and South. Other people have got the middle as well. So, if you always have three parts of Vietnam, how can you tell about one [identity]. But now, when I’ve changed my perspective, I see it as one. ‘Artificial’ is a better way. It’s just a better way (Interview Hai 28 March 2009).

In our interview, Hai discussed his identity in terms of being ‘artificial’ in the sense that it is not possible to come to a ‘concrete’ or ‘definite’ understanding of a Vietnamese identity. Identities are conflicted and complex, and can only be categorized as monolithic in ‘artificial’ terms. Appadurai speaks to the difficulties associated with these processes:

What is new is that this is a world in which both points of departure and points of arrival are in cultural flux, and thus the search for steady points of reference as critical life choices are made, can be very difficult. It is in this atmosphere that the invention of tradition (and of ethnicity, kinship, and other identity markers) can become slippery, as the search for certainties is regularly frustrated by the fluidities of transnational communication. As group pasts become increasingly parts of museums, exhibits, and collections, both in national and transnational spectacles, culture becomes less what Pierre Bourdieu would have called a habitus (a tacit realm of reproducible practices and dispositions) and more an arena for conscious choice, justification, and representation, the latter often to multiple and spatially dislocated audiences (Appadurai 1996: 44).

Identity is linked to habits, and habits are lived out in daily life in specific spaces. The migration process, however, breaks some habits and separates identities from familiar spaces. This process can lead to three ‘lived-out’ identity options. In one instance, migration leads to the performance of old habits in new spaces, recreating ‘home’ in the new space, which is ‘cultural maintenance’. In the other, new habits are formed in the new spaces creating new opportunities of ‘home’. And then, in the everyday activities of a transnational lifestyle, there are opportunities to perform multiple activities, living out complex and multi-sited roles and habits in widely varied spaces. Aihwa Ong speaks to these when she asserts, ‘our challenge is to consider the reciprocal construction of practice, gender, ethnicity, race, class, and nation in the processes of capital accumulation. I argue that an anthropology of the present should analyze people’s everyday actions as a form of cultural politics embedded in specific power contexts’ (Ong, 2006: 5). In previous chapters, I have discussed the importance of the notion of ‘everyday life’ (de Certeau, 1984; Lefebvre, 1991; Moran, 2005; Franklin, 2004) both in the process of carrying out this project, as well as in the use of the concept as a basis for the discussion of the complexities of transnational lifestyles. I now turn, in the following pages, to identities and the specific and multiple roles played by Vietnamese acting transnationally. Through stories and experiences of Vietnamese Londoners, I examine definitions of identity, then identity as roles played out in a variety of contexts, the complex nature of contextual roles, and finally the power and usefulness of identities in specific contexts.

4.2 Identities: Inclusion and Exclusion

Zygmunt Bauman tells the story of a Polish census in his book, *Identity*, with which I can somewhat identify. He describes the villager’s and forest-dweller’s astonishment at having to describe their ‘nationality’ or what some would call today their ‘ethnicity’. The answer of

the villagers was that they were 'from here' meaning they were 'locals' (Bauman 2004: 18-19). Bauman goes on to say that the need to ask the question of who one is never entered their minds. 'After all,' he states, 'asking "who you are" makes sense to you only once you believe that you can be someone other than you are; only if you have a choice, and only if it depends on you what you choose; only if you have to do something, that is, for the choice to be "real" and to hold' (Bauman 2004: 19). Asking the question 'Who are you?' is, in actuality, a hostile question that intentionally 'others' the Other. It is a demand for proof that one belongs or it confirms that one does not. In any case the 'other' is put on the defensive. One is included, the 'other' is excluded.

I found myself in my early years simply living the life of an expatriate in Vietnam, the eldest son of four children of American expatriates, a professor and a nurse. Like Bauman's description of the Poles, I did not examine or analyse the activities of my life, I simply lived them. I had longings for relationship with American family and other people, a desire to possess American things and I knew that when I crossed the 'border' into America I used a passport (green at that time) with my picture in it. To me it was simply a tool that got me to a place I enjoyed visiting, but I never really entertained the possibility of making a home there. At the same time, on each return to Vietnam, I had a deep sense of rootedness. I settled into the language, tastes, sounds and smells familiar to me and quietly connected with the people who passed through my daily routines. At that time, it was not necessary to choose one or the other. They were both 'there,' coexisting. In my blissful ignorance of the need to choose one or the other. Like the villagers in Bauman's story, I too was living a 'way of being-in-the-world [which] stripped the question of "identity" of the meaning made obvious by other ways of life – ways that our linguistic usages prompt us to call "modern"' (Ibid.). The realisation of my own identity began to become clear as I matured and interacted with members of communities who had lifestyles different to my own, at times with the harsh reality of rejection in a war-torn society.

Identities are indeed forged in relation to other identities, and this was my experience over the years 1973 -1975 as our family moved closer to fleeing the on-coming Communist Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces. In April of 1975, we locked the doors of our home, leaving behind all but what we could carry and flew on a commercial jet to Hong Kong. This was our experience of forced migration, though certainly not as traumatic or dangerous as many who left Vietnam at that time in boats and through the jungle. I was fourteen, and

was in the process of developing my identity based on many varied, and at times, traumatic experiences. These experiences led, ultimately, to an ‘ease of migration’ which has characterised my life since. Reflecting Susan Ossman’s concept of ‘serial migration’ (Ossman 2007), I have lived and worked in six different nation-states with various organisations, government departments and charities.

As I interviewed Vietnamese for this project, it became clear that there was a shared background between us with regard to the experience of migration in and out of multiple states, and in the case of some Vietnamese, a shared transnational experience. In some conversations, I was an outsider as Vietnamese spoke amongst themselves about issues related to their own personal and community experience. In other cases, I found myself ‘invited’ into conversations as an ‘insider’, one who had experienced similar life circumstances and history. This movement in and out of the experience of ‘belonging’ within Vietnamese communities characterises my transnational experience.

4.3 Transnational Identities: Active, Pragmatic

In an interview, I asked Giang’s perspective on his own identity development. I present a brief transcript below in order to examine the breadth and depth as well as the developmental process of one Vietnamese Londoner’s transnational perspective. Included here are some of the influences that affected Giang from his boyhood as well as the results of choices he made (and choices which were made for him) that placed him on a transnational journey. One of my questions involved his perspective on the notion of being transnational:

In my case, I have been considered as sort of trans-regional already in Vietnam because I was born in Son La in a mainly Thai ethnic area on the border with Laos, when my parents were simply assigned by the Communist Party to work there. You had no choice. You had to go. So, my parents were born Vietnamese in the lowlands around Hanoi. But then, after university they were asked to go to build Socialism in the mainly Thai Province, Thai and Hmong. So, I was born there and when I went to school I had mainly Thai friends. When I was six or seven, my parents moved to Hanoi, (because they had three children), to give us a better education. So then in Hanoi, in the beginning, I felt a bit, sort of, alien. But again, I was a young kid so I made friends with the boys and girls in Hanoi, and went to high school and university, first year, and then I was selected to go to Poland. So I had to leave... sort of leave a bit of my identity at home and, you know, embrace a new identity in Poland, at a time of great changes. So, I had become quite international, in a sense, from one communist country to a transitional

communist country. And then I worked in France and here in London. I've been here for six years. But I still maintain very close contact with Poland because my wife is from there. So, I belong to so many places. And I value all of them. I still want to go back to Son La one day. So I still want to preserve very good feelings about that. But, I want to take my son to Son La one day. So, I feel very, sort of transnational... deep inside, I'm feeling that I am a Vietnamese who has been around the world for a while. But deep down, I am quite attached to the Vietnamese culture in a critical sense. I want to criticise it. But not sort of, you know, revere it. But with my son, he was born here; he knows that he's Polish-Vietnamese, but he said that he loves school here! He has "no friends in Vietnam or in Poland"! So I wonder, with my son or my daughter, how they will feel later on. I mean, it's a question and it's very interesting to look at them and how they will develop, I don't know, as world citizens. But for me, I mean, I still feel that I have Vietnam there' (Interview, 31 March 2006).

There are a number of key perspectives in the narrative that highlight certain aspects of a transnational identity that are useful in setting the stage for the rest of this chapter. The first has to do with the role of the 'nation' in transnational interactions. As Giang's experience illustrates, the nation serves as a platform, a space from which Giang is able to develop interactions. His role as a transnational has been influenced greatly by the multiple cultures in the nations in which he has lived over his lifetime. At the same time, he has a strong 'attachment' to the Vietnamese 'culture' which seems to keep him grounded in Vietnamese communities and provides him with the resources to live out a transnational lifestyle on an every day basis from London. Appadurai, quoted earlier, addresses the 'departures' and 'arrivals' inherent in this globalised world stating that 'the search for steady points of reference as critical life choices are made, can be very difficult' (Appadurai 1996: 44). The key point is that Giang has not assimilated into each of the nations in which he lived to the extent that his Vietnamese identity and connections have been lost. In each place, he continues to reach back to his Vietnamese roots, while at the same time, opening himself to the influences, learning and transnational roles made available by each new space. Giang makes choices at each juncture, which affect the next steps of his journey, each 'arena for conscious choice', as Appadurai put it leading to another 'spatially dislocated audience' (Ibid.). On the other hand, Giang expresses interest in the future reaction of his children, the next generation. What choices will they make? Without a significant, 'grounded' experience in the nation of Vietnam, will Giang's son and daughter 'have Vietnam there' as Giang said? Will they want anything to do with the nation? What meaning will it have for them? Giang's son's profound comment brings out the importance of community in tying individuals to the nation as he states that he 'has no friends in Vietnam or Poland'

(Interview, 31 March 2006). It is the complex and sometimes convoluted interplay between the role of the nation on the one hand and the roles of transnational Vietnamese on the other that is the subject of this chapter from this point. For a brief examination of a history of ‘national’ Vietnamese identity, see Appendix XIII.

4.4 The Role of the ‘Nation’ in Complex Transnational Identity Contexts

I argue at this point, that individual Vietnamese Londoners can be described as ‘transnational’ on an active, practical basis. My definition of ‘transnational’ answers the question ‘What does a transnational do?’ rather than ‘Who is a transnational?’ We turn now to the national contexts in which transnationals carry out transnational activities. Carrying on from Chapter 2, etymologically, the term transnational finds its root in the nation. As Aiwa Ong asserts:

For this reason, I prefer to use the term *transnationality*. *Trans* denotes both moving through space or across lines, as well as changing the nature of something. Besides suggesting new relations between nation-states and capital, transnationality also alludes to the *transversal*, the *transactional*, the *translational*, and the *transgressive* aspects of contemporary behavior and imagination that are incited, enabled, and regulated by the changing logics of states and capitalism (Ibid. emphasis in original).

This notion of ‘changing logics’ is the subject of this section, with the constant ‘changing of gears’ as it were with regard to the transnational lifestyle. Having focused on the transnational use of resources, here, I discuss the interplay of identities between the host culture and Vietnamese communities in London and abroad. In an early interview with Councillor Vu, one of the first Vietnamese refugees to enter Britain after the ‘fall of Saigon’, I was made aware of the difficulties around the notion of transnational identities and their relationship with the nation. Cllr Vu states that, ‘now I’ve been in this country [UK] since 1979 and I have never been back because from the beginning, I was a refugee and I carry on to fight for freedom in Vietnam. So I’ve never been back to Vietnam’ (Interview Cllr Vu 24 October 2007). This perspective, that Vietnam is currently governed by an unacceptable regime that must be, at the very least, reformed and at most, replaced is quite common amongst those who left during the aftermath of the Communist ‘takeover’ and subsequent ‘Family Reunion Programme’. Referring to the current political situation in Vietnam and the reforms associated with ‘doi moi’ (economic reconstruction), one interviewee wrote in a recent email, ‘the events in Vietnam are moving rapidly at our

advantage. Therefore I think this Tiger year will be ours!’ (Email Correspondence 20 February 2010). This note was written by another Vietnamese Londoner who associates himself with ‘Vietnameseness’, but not with citizenship of the current nation of Vietnam. The discourse associated with these interviewees revolves around a longing for a change of government so that they might return to a ‘liberated’ homeland.

In this discourse, I was reminded of the experience of the post-1979 Persian diaspora (Naficy, 1993), which mirrors this perspective in that there are also two contrasting identities within the Persian diaspora. Those with a history of flight, who fled the 1979 Revolution refer to themselves as ‘Persian’, while those who left later, and who do not have the painful memories of the upheaval of the coup in Iran, refer to themselves as ‘Iranians’ in a linguistic characterisation of the identity complexities inherent in diasporic populations. The two statements written by Vietnamese above, reveal one aspect of identity in which there are, within London’s Vietnamese communities, those who identify with ‘Vietnameseness’, as I have referred to it, but have no desire to associate with, or carry on an official relationship with, the current government of the nation called the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

On the other hand, there are those who are deeply connected to Communist-led Democratic Republic of Vietnam either officially or unofficially, as students, British work permit holders, government representatives in Britain and British-Vietnamese who do not hold the memory of a divided, pre-1975 Vietnam. For some, ‘Vietnameseness’ is very much a part of an identity tied to the ‘nation’. Ha Anh, a Vietnamese supermodel based in London who entered Britain as a student, explains her perspective on this point:

If you don’t find out about your own culture, you don’t know who you are or where you come from. I was brought up being quite patriotic about my country. It’s a good thing in a way. When I was in Vietnam, I didn’t realise how important my country is. When you go abroad, you realise what you had. Now you miss things, shopping on the street, fruits and food – aspects of a different lifestyle. It’s important for young people like me to remember these things and remember where we came from. Being from a small country – some people can feel intimidated – like feeling held back or being from a backward society. So people try to blend in and fit in with other people, like from larger countries. I don’t want to be that way. Some people change their name and say they are from somewhere else. I am proud of who I am, my values and where I come from (Interview Ha Anh 17 September 2008).

Ha Anh describes herself as having stepped outside of her usual lifestyle spaces, having received the benefit of being able to look back at the world from whence she came. The importance of having another experience with which to compare one's familiar world allows Ha Anh to bring aspects of her identity (values and background) to the surface. She states that she now has a more conscious pride in 'who' she is, in her 'values' and in 'where' she has come from (Ibid). Citing her experience with other Vietnamese who act less 'patriotic' toward their own links to Vietnam, Ha Anh is adamant about her own perspective and strong tie to the nation. Travelling back to her hometown of Hanoi recently, during the celebrations of 1000 years as a city, she wrote in an email, 'Yes, the country is buzzing with exciting opportunities... I am learning many things from my own country' (Email Correspondence 3 December 2009). This positive discourse is in direct contrast to the more negative and sober conversations above, yet both live and work in the same London spaces. The difference is the timing of the historical entry into London, and the context of each one's arrival, whether refugee or work permit arrival. These notions of ethnicity, community belonging, homeland and diaspora identifications are, as has been said extremely complex. Peter Le elaborates on some of the complexities of identity in relation to the Vietnamese in London mentioned by Hai at the beginning of this chapter:

In London, 60% of [Vietnamese] are Vietnamese-Chinese, came from the North. And 80% of the 30,000 are Northern Vietnamese. The Southerners are not many in London. But, they still look back to the Southern regime. They still hold values of the old flag. They do not support the govt. in Vietnam. [So], the majority of the Vietnamese population in London are Northerners, and they do not care about [politics]. All they care is to earn money here, to have a better lifestyle, quality of life here. And to be able to send back some money to support their families back home. They still value human rights, but they look at it differently, they will fight for it, gradually, not like the Southerners who live outside Vietnam. They [Southerners] want everything quickly. The Central and the Southerners are one, they are more integrated, very well adapted to the new cultures, to the new countries, work hard, willing to sacrifice everything for their children. But for the Northerners in England, because their backgrounds were not in the big cities, but most of them came from rural areas, like in the border between Vietnam and China, so they lack lots of education. So lack of education, their family backgrounds, family structure were not so healthy. So when they came over here, they struggled because of the new culture. Their parents could not adapt to the new culture, their language barriers, so somehow they are stuck. They could not integrate well to the British culture and now they have discovered the problems in their family. Their children [are] acting more like British citizens (Peter Le Interview, 14 January 2008).

Once again, as Peter Le brings out the practical aspects of Vietnamese identities, it becomes more clear that there are deep divides, not only in history and geography as above, but also in terms of political allegiances, tolerance for the rate of political and economic change, work ethic, adaptability, education level, generation, and language ability in Britain. These divisions in perspective make it all the more difficult for the Vietnamese in London to be seen as a monolithic Vietnamese community. A final illustration of the deep-rooted divisions occurring within the Vietnamese communities relates to the long-held animosity between inhabitants of particular cities in Vietnam, which was then brought into the new spaces of migration. As one interviewee informed me, 'He's from Hanoi. Normally, Hanoi and Haiphong, they're against each other' (Informal Interview 23 March 2007). There are, therefore, multiple identities and multiple expressions of 'Vietnameseness'.

I use the term 'Vietnameseness' as a community-based, 'imagined' (Anderson, 2006: 6) or 'artificial' identity (Hai's words above), in order to navigate through the various meanings and connotations associated with the vocabularies of culture and ethnicity. As Ha Anh clearly stated above, these elements are sometimes found to various degrees within the same ethnic experience and in the same national space. Ha Anh asserts that while she has certainly been affected by her association with people outside of Vietnam, she 'was brought up in an open minded, culturally traditional Vietnamese [family] with an open mind about the world' (Interview Ha Anh 17 September 2008). These notions seem to be at odds on the surface, but within the context of Ha Anh's experience, each serves a significant part in her roles in various spaces of society. What Ha Anh seems to be describing is a 'traditional' values base, with an 'open' perspective regarding her relationship and roles with the world around her. In effect, these two identities allow for movement across boundaries and borders characteristic of transnational activity. Ha Anh can be accepted at home, having conservative values appropriate to that setting. On the other hand, she is able to travel and work abroad in New York, Paris or Shanghai due to her 'open mind' and ability to adapt.

The same can be said for the development of identities amongst some transnationally active Vietnamese who were brought to the UK and raised as children in London, that is, the 1.5 generation. Toan, having studied computer engineering and law and now working at a London university, described his background in terms of the influences of two different cultures that, instead of creating a 'mixed' identity, at least in his case, brought about a discernable set of 'useful identities' (Ang 2001). Toan states that he was:

Born in Vietnam, moved to London when I was 5. Feeling and being British is a huge aspect having grown up and being schooled from a young age. I am also extremely Vietnamese, enjoy Vietnamese food, proud of being Vietnamese, and wishing to see Vietnam develop as a successful economy. Yet, at times I am also aware of my difference. I have retained my Vietnamese identity due largely to my parents, particularly through talking with my dad who remains actively involved with the community (Interview Toan 17 March 2009).

Being 'aware of difference' is part of the usefulness of transnational identities. As is mentioned above, it is this self-awareness in the midst of multiple loyalties ('being British' and 'being Vietnamese') that can, in many instances, result in a consciousness of identity that makes 'usefulness' possible through the choices and activities of everyday life. Self-awareness of the identity roles one is acting out allows for the kind of introspection that creates intentionality and purposefulness in the making of everyday choices that affect future activity. In this way, 'Vietnameseness' and reified ethnic identity become less of an issue and are recognised as 'artificial', as Hai put it, in favour of identities of 'action', choice, and usefulness.

4.5 Resource-Based Identities

It is possible to identify many highly influential Vietnamese individuals exhibiting characteristics of the everyday life activities of a transnational lifestyle, a number of whom have been interviewed for this project. The experience and networks of these individuals shed much light on the reasons that some Vietnamese in London are living in transnationally active ways. Faist describes transnationally active individuals as 'a relatively small cadre of highly interested and resourcefully tied people [who] produce migrant networks. It is not the effort of the average member of the community' (Faist 2000: 151). Vertovec states that 'most scholars recognize that not all migrants develop transnational practices, and many do so only in one area of their lives' (Vertovec, 2009: 18). Transitioning from more sedentary, migrant identities that are embedded to some extent in the nation, to identities that catalyse and maintain intricate networks across the globe is a process that requires relational and other resources that extend into multiple national spaces around the world. Portes describes this phenomenon stating that 'the end result of this cumulative process is the transformation of the original pioneering economic ventures into transnational communities, characterized by dense networks across space and by an increasing number of people who lead dual lives

(Portes 1997: 16-18). While Portes is describing ‘communities’, I argue that not every member of Vietnamese communities are transnationally active in these ways. Therefore, it is more appropriate to focus on individuals within these communities. Again, these ‘highly interested and resourcefully tied people’ (Faist 200: 151) amongst the Vietnamese population of London are those with whom I interacted for this research.

According to Alejandro Portes’ observations, ‘members are at least bilingual, move easily between different cultures, frequently maintain homes in two countries, and pursue economic, political and cultural interests that require a simultaneous presence in both’ (Portes 1997: 16-18). The activity that differentiates a transnational from a migrant, is that the individual acting transnationally has the ability to utilize his or her resources, that is experience, linguistic ability, personal networks, family connections, personality, history and socio-cultural understanding in addition to personal wealth (or lack of it), to influence those in his or her sphere of contact which would typically include multiple cross-border spaces. These resources come in many forms, put to use in order to occupy and thrive in multiple spaces whether they are physical in the case of cities or neighbourhoods, social spaces in the case of multiple communities, or virtually in the case of transnational media. ‘Success’ ...depends on the capital held (in its various types), says Bourdieu: ‘Indeed, for the occupants of a given habitat the likely chances of appropriating the different material or cultural goods and services associated with that habitat come down to the specific capacities for appropriation each one has....’ (Bourdieu 1999:128). In other words, transnationally active Vietnamese utilise what I would term ‘life resources’, that is, the multiple resources human beings collect by virtue of living in certain environments with specific opportunities and challenges. These Vietnamese transnational actors are, in a sense, chameleons in the positive sense of the word, able to adapt and adopt as the situation and need arises while still maintaining the basic integrity of their cultural identity.

In fact, it is cultural identity which gives rise to the possibility of transnational activity. Individuals, based in local communities, reach beyond one space and into others. As one interviewee stated quite clearly, ‘politically I am British, culturally, I am Vietnamese’ (Cllr Vu Interview 21 November 2007). This idea will be developed later in this work, but for now, it clarifies some of the complexities of the Vietnamese transnational experience in London, and also introduces a significant point, that Vietnamese, with transnational

networks and experience, can be valuable assets to Vietnamese and non-Vietnamese businesses, organisations and government bodies who interact internationally.

Other forms of capital or ‘resources’ include remittances, language resources, citizenship as a resource and media and its networks as a resource. To begin, this fixation on the monetary nature of the term must be addressed before we move on to describe other forms in which capital, or resources, might ‘travel’ (de Soto, 2000: 41). Hernando de Soto asserts that capital remains an abstract concept until it becomes ‘fixed’, that is, capital in its potential form, must be ‘converted’ into a useful form if a society (or individual) is to benefit from its use (Ibid: 39). What we have seen and are seeing in the Vietnamese context is that a scattered population of Vietnamese, once maligned as ‘traitors’ in official Vietnamese rhetoric, has now become a major contributor to the development of Vietnamese societies. Vietnamese around the globe have overcome the negative pull of the past and are now sending remittances to the homeland, providing skills training and serving as conduits for job placement abroad, all this through networks amongst Vietnamese communities scattered across the globe.

4.6 Remittances: Investing Back into the Homeland

According to Cllr Vu, the Vietnamese government ‘encourages them [Viet Kieu or Overseas Vietnamese] to invest in Vietnam or to visit Vietnam’ (Cllr Vu Interview, 21 November 2007). Another interviewee, community worker Peter Le refers to the changing situation regarding the Vietnamese refugee investment in Vietnam stating that, ‘when I use the term refugee, that means they did not agree with the government, now, that’s why they left Vietnam... but now they volunteer to go back to Vietnam to buy houses, to live as a normal citizens in Vietnam. Why? The Vietnamese government granted their right to go back and to live as citizens’ (Interview Peter Le, 14 January 2008). With this change in government policy has come a renewed connection to the homeland that is evidenced by a massive investment of monetary resources into the country. Once again, Cllr Vu states: ‘The official calculation from the United States government, say[s] that now, the Viet Kieu bring to Vietnam [each] year, 10 billion US dollars. Including ...investment. But the money sent to their relatives direct, ...not the investment sources ...brought about 4 billion US dollars. So that is the equivalent to 20% of the total budget in Vietnam now’ (Cllr Vu Interview, 21 November 2007).

Peter Le corroborates these figures: ‘The Viet Kieu now are more welcome to go back home, because, every year... the Viet Kieu, the Overseas Vietnamese, from all over the world, three million people, send about 4-6 billion to Vietnam’ (Interview Peter Le, 14 January 2008). Figures released in 2007 show that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs estimated that, ‘Remittances from the Viet Kieu (Overseas Vietnamese) community this year could exceed US\$7.5 billion... based on figures from local commercial banks. In all of Asia, Viet Nam ranks fourth in the amount of remittances, behind India (\$24.5 billion), China (\$21.07 billion) and the Philippines’ (MoFA, 14 July 2010).

These levels of investment originating in worldwide Vietnamese overseas communities (many of which were at odds with the Vietnamese government only fifteen years previous), illustrate the resources available to Vietnamese living outside of the homeland. While not every overseas Vietnamese who invests in Vietnam is living out a transnational role, many are transnationally active. Having discussed above the monetary resources utilised by Overseas Vietnamese or Viet Kieu, I now turn to another resource, that of language ability and use.

4.7 Use of Languages as Resources

In switching from one language to another, it seems, language ability can be seen as a resource, a sort of ‘ticket’ facilitating a much more smooth journey across borders. However, many Vietnamese Londoners struggle with the English language and its usage, finding communication at times closed down rather than facilitated by a native speaker’s speed, accent and use of idioms, which illustrates the ‘politics of power’ in language usage as Ang pointed out (Ang, 1992: 209). A key is in the appropriate use of languages in terms of time, place and audience.

In interviews with transnationally active Vietnamese Londoners, I asked the question: ‘What languages do you speak and with whom/in what communities do you speak them?’ Dao stated that she speaks ‘Vietnamese in Vietnamese communities, English at work and social life’ (Interview, Dao Hanh, 30 April 2009). Interestingly, she goes on to answer a related question: ‘In what ways do you relate (family, business, education, pleasure, arts...) to other Vietnamese in London (languages you use, when you use them, social networking, skills and experience that helps you to network, etc.)?’ In ‘business and social life, we use both Vietnamese and English’ (Ibid.). The same answer was given to a question about relating to

Vietnamese outside of London. It seems that like many who navigate through transnational waters, languages were applied according to the circumstance and community, purpose and role. Access to English language media and other English speakers became a resource through which Dao was able to engage more easily in transnational activities, utilising English-speaking London as a base from which she could operate. The borders of relationship are the locus for the negotiation of linguistic resources. Moving from the use of language as a form of capital, I turn to the relationships with whom Vietnamese live their lives in London.

4.8 Citizenship and Community Belonging as Resources

Citizenship, as a sense of ‘belonging’ is both real and imagined. Hackney Councillor, Khanh Vu, described his own identity in terms of citizenship stating that he is ‘British politically and Vietnamese culturally’ (Vu Interview, 21 November 2007). Cllr Vu has given us two aspects of that sense of belonging, one being that grouping of people who consider themselves to be part, for a variety of reasons, of that nation-state called Britain, but also he views himself connected to that other grouping of people who see themselves as Vietnamese. With the former, his perspective is one of a political connection related to task, while with the latter it is a cultural, values-based or perhaps lifestyle connection to which he is referring.

In the following chapters, the focus is on the historical eras and multiple Vietnamese communities in which Vietnamese Londoners are involved. At this point, with regard to identity, the focus must remain on the fundamental notion of belonging. As one Vietnamese stated with a grin, ‘we Vietnamese always find our Vietnamese brothers wherever we go. We don’t live alone!’ (Informal Interview, 10 June 2004). The nuances of this sense of belonging include membership of a local community, but also involve the more broad notion of belonging as a citizen. Probyn describes these notions of belonging as that which ‘a group, a people cobble together from the past and the present’ (Probyn, 1996: 68). This would indicate that those with similar pasts and those connected in some way in the present would likely belong to the same group. Fortier elaborates on this point stating that, ‘practices of group identity are about manufacturing cultural and historical belongings that mark out terrains of commonality, through which the social dynamics and politics of “fitting in” are delineated’ (Fortier, 2000: 2). This perspective recalls the ‘imagined communities’ as described by Anderson (Anderson, 1991) with his emphasis on the role of the collective

imagination of communities in establishing the parameters of belonging (Ibid.). Fortier goes on to use the term ‘migrant belongings’ which is ‘meant to capture the productive tension that results from the articulation of movement and attachment, suture and departure, outside and inside, in identity formation’ (Fortier, 2000: 2). One of the areas of contested belonging is that of ‘citizenship’. As Fortier points out, there are complexities about belonging, and this is particularly true in reference to the nation. For those who are transnationally active, belonging is a much more complex issue due to the multiple spaces of belonging involved.

Political citizenship is lived out in certain ways that include activities related, in Cllr Vu’s case above, to membership in and responsibilities to a particular political party and government entity. It is a role in society in which his daily life is spent making decisions and assisting others with decisions that affect the daily life of other citizens and immigrants such as creating or maintaining jobs, recruiting business into the Borough of Hackney, housing issues, inter-ethnic, inter-racial and inter-community relationships, schools and education as well as job-skills training issues and programs. In another case, Nga Nguyen is the founder and editor of a Vietnamese language magazine originally published in London for Vietnamese in the UK and France, however, the magazine has now shifted to an online format allowing for a global voice. As Nga put it:

Since Tri Thuc Viet changed to the Online news, we also changed the strategy by focusing on the higher level, that means more educated people. We focus on education, culture and law. We think we go the right way now. Many Vietnamese people go to Tri Thuc Viet online to read. They are from Australia, Vietnam, UK, France, Czech [Republic], Hungary, Poland, Denmark and Sweden. [Also], we’re going to open Tri Thuc Viet online bookshop soon. We would like to transfer Vietnamese knowledge & culture to the UK, to give British people another, better view of Vietnam and also to promote Vietnamese writers to the UK (Nga Interview, 15 May 2009).

One of the interviewees’ mentioned above, arrived in the UK as a refugee in 1979, while the other came to Britain with her husband who entered with his family on a student visa. Both are now citizens of the United Kingdom. Not in contrast, but at the same time, the cultural citizenship of Cllr Vu and Nga Nguyen is a second type of ‘belonging’. It involves the maintenance and promotion of Vietnamese culture. Nga Nguyen and Cllr Vu continue their activities as global Vietnamese citizens. Whether organising a foundation or publishing an on-line magazine, both of these Vietnamese Londoners operate with a mandate to preserve and promote Vietnamese culture, assisting in efforts to improve the living standards of

Vietnamese locally in London and Britain, but also globally in Vietnam and in Vietnamese communities world-wide.

4.9 Media and its Networks as Resources

What Aksoy and Robins (2000) hit upon through their critical view of the use of media by Turks living in Germany is also emerging as true amongst Vietnamese transnationals in London. The common factor seems to be that while descriptions of disparate, diasporic audiences, creating for themselves ‘imagined lives, [both] their own as well as those of others living in other places’ (Appadurai, 1996:35) apply quite accurately to many Vietnamese Londoners, those who live a transnational lifestyle have the opportunity of what could be called a ‘system of checks and balances’. This system brings a more grounded perspective, offering regular reality checks for transnational Londoners who communicate with and who may travel amongst other Vietnamese communities in both the homeland and diaspora. These opportunities to interact with others keep members of these communities from ‘fossilising’ into an imagined community based on memories of past experience (Aksoy and Robins 2000: 363 and Naficy 1993: 34). It also keeps these Vietnamese Londoners from assimilating completely into the host, British cultural mindset and value system. Sinclair and Cunningham argue that ‘the instability of cultural maintenance and negotiation can lead, at one extreme, to being locked into a time warp with the fetishised homeland – as it once might have been but no longer is or can be – and, at the other, to assimilation to the dominant host culture and a loss of place within one’s originary culture’ (Cunningham and Sinclair 2001:20). The ‘back-and-forth’ nature of Vietnamese transnational activities and lifestyle, as well as the opportunities for exposure to the developing and changing Vietnamese communities in the homeland and transnational diaspora serve a stabilising role.

In the same way, connecting with various Vietnamese media audiences may also provide broad exposure and the ‘reality check’ that prevents or lessens the fossilisation process. Rather than playing into a sort of identity confusion as transnationals ‘dip’ in and out of these communities, the ‘touches’ afforded by each border crossing event, whether real or virtual in the form of media, information or access to goods and services, keep up a fresh perspective on the ‘real-time’ developments of and within these communities. Moving on to the specifics of the ways that some Vietnamese Londoners move in and out of communities

through networks, I apply a framework to the activities of these transnationally active individuals.

4.10 Transnational Roles and Reach: Useful Identities in Context

Having laid the groundwork for the complexities of Vietnamese transnational identities, I now apply three elements in a framework of the so-called ‘post-national’ or as I prefer, ‘global’ groupings of diaspora or Viet Kieu with a particular focus, not on transnational communities as has become fairly common as noted in chapter 1, but on active transnational identities within those communities. In interviewing Vietnamese Londoners, who on an everyday basis live lives characterised by national border crossings of various types, three key elements seemed to be present for each individual. Resources make it possible for an individual to have a trans-national ‘role’ to play, a ‘reach’ to various spaces across the globe, and ‘pathways’ through the utilisation of networks. I address roles and reach at this point saving ‘pathways through networks’ for chapter 6.

The first of the three elements at the core of transnational Vietnamese identities involve the actual ‘roles’ that are played out in the multiple spaces of a transnational lifestyle. Ang described these as ‘useful identities’ (Ang 2001: 24). Addressing the notion of autobiography, which is essentially the ‘self’ speaking for ‘itself’ for specific purposes in my view, Ang writes that ‘the displayed self is a strategically fabricated performance, one which stages a *useful* identity, an identity which can be put to work. It is the quality of that usefulness which determines the politics of autobiographical discourse. In other words, what is the identity being put forward *for*’ (Ibid. emphasis in original)? As Vietnamese in London live out transnationally active, everyday lives, each interviewee acts out specific and identifiable roles in various communities, both Vietnamese and otherwise. In each case, interviewees have transnational roles, that is, there is the presence of everyday interactions across national borders of a significant and productive nature.

Vietnamese Londoners intentionally act in ways and in contexts, which expand their own horizons across national borders well beyond London, exercising a ‘reach’ far beyond the borders of Britain (cf. Map 2). This process can be described as an intentional choosing and living out of specific identities in specific contexts. Nga is the editor of a London-based, Vietnamese-language magazine. She describes her role with its multiple contexts:

So I have to work full time at School then part time for the magazine. But it was not easy to get benefit from selling magazine since not much Vietnamese like to read. From 2009 I changed to Online Newspaper (Vietnamese language), I can save printing costs and many other costs related for printing magazine. We're going to open Tri Thuc Viet online bookshop soon. We would like to transfer Vietnamese knowledge & culture to the UK, to give British people has another better view of Vietnam and also to promote Vietnamese writers to the UK (Interview, Nga 15 May 2009).

Nga typically moves in and out of several different contexts. She works at a local Primary school and edits a web-based magazine that now reaches Vietnamese across the globe. She is also an administrative assistant and consultant at a large London-based company and travels to Vietnam, Paris and other parts of Europe. Nga is in the beginning stages of establishing a publishing house for the purpose of disseminating books and information about Vietnam for a British readership. The role that she plays is a key communication one both within and for the Vietnamese communities in London as well as, increasingly, for the wider Vietnamese and English-speaking populations.

On a theoretical basis, Asu Aksoy and Kevin Robins' concept of 'thinking across spaces' serves as the platform on which discussions of the 'reach' of transnational identity are constructed. The reality is that Vietnamese individuals who are engaging in transnational interactions in London exhibit different types of behaviour, use different languages and are involved in different activities, all based upon the spaces they are occupying at any given time. Identity then, is based on the activities one performs in the spaces one occupies more than on some sort of reified cultural designator, race or label assigned according to one's look, language, ethnicity or background. This reality of being involved in two or more cultures is a critical aspect of the transnational identity. Vietnamese Londoners in transnational lifestyles speak in similar terms. As Giang stated above, 'so I wonder, with my son or my daughter, how they will feel later on. I mean, it's a question and it's very interesting to look at them and how they will develop, I don't know, as world citizens. But for me, I mean, I still feel that I have Vietnam there' (Interview, Giang 30 March 2006).

Giang's comment, 'I still feel that I have Vietnam there' is a very poignant statement of connectedness. In the case of the Vietnamese in London who are living out transnational lifestyles, it is more than simply a 'here and there' perspective. There is a distinct and complex phenomenon that involves the 'sideways' sliding of the individual into multiple

activities, languages, relationships, and communities. Nowhere is this more evident than in the second generation Vietnamese immigrants who are choosing to involve themselves in transnational activities and jobs that take them across the globe such as travel agencies, modelling, music or sport, buyers for Vietnamese shops, international media and the like. Aihwa Ong provides an extremely helpful analysis at this juncture. She argues that:

A model that analytically defines the global as political economic and the local as cultural does not quite capture the *horizontal* and *relational* nature of the contemporary economic, social, and cultural processes that stream across spaces. Nor does it express their *embededness* in differently configured regimes of power (Ong, 2006: 4, emphasis in original).

Having ‘Vietnam there’ in the background, even though he and his family have lived as a transnational family on two continents, with three languages and two careers, one in Eastern Europe and the other in Britain, seems to provide Giang a sense of connectedness in multiple spaces.

One question that has been asked in conversations with Vietnamese Londoners has to do with the longevity of the transnational scenario, that is, the seemingly chameleonic lifestyle of regular change and adjustment, depending on the context in which one finds oneself. There are multiple influences on immigrants to ‘settle in’, to ‘adjust’ and to ‘join the mainstream’. These powerful ‘pulls’ are particularly strong for Vietnamese youth. The question of maintaining connections with the homeland and other Vietnamese communities abroad, over time, seems to be directly related to the degree to which Vietnamese Londoners live a lifestyle characterised by transnational practises. One of the most informed scholars on this point of assimilation and identity maintenance over time is Hamid Naficy, quoted earlier, who has researched and interacted with Iranian immigrants in the United States for a long time. He describes the Iranian cultural experience as being one of slow assimilation over time for many immigrants. He states:

The delicate balance between home and host cultures cannot be maintained forever. Liminality is flexible but fragile. As it recedes for many exiles, the infusion of the host into the syncretic mix becomes stronger, gradually replacing much of the original contents with consumer ideology and products. This is because popular cultures are structurally linked with and promote consumerism (Naficy 1993: 59).

Naficy's contention is that it is through consumer interaction with the host culture that assimilation may take place. Naficy concludes his explanation by postulating that:

If the exilic popular culture so successfully bleeds into the mainstream culture, the host society's popular culture, which depends on novelty, change, and crossfertilization for its continuing vitality, is likely to incorporate it by aestheticizing and commodifying exilic difference and otherness into a nonthreatening ethnic and multicultural gloss (Ibid.).

At present, I would argue, that with the activity of a number of key and strategically placed transnationally active individuals within London's Vietnamese communities, the experience of the majority of Vietnamese Londoners has not reached this point of 'multicultural gloss'. Through interactions with the various experiences of Vietnamese Londoners, a common theme emerged that might characterise Vietnamese transnational activities and interactions. In the next section I discuss the values base that seems to be a common element amongst Vietnamese interviewees.

4.11 Values-Based Identities

One aspect of transnational identity includes values and beliefs. I found it important to examine the effect on the activities of individual Vietnamese Londoners that beliefs have. As one whose beliefs and associated values are an influential aspect of my everyday life, I am more concerned about the values and the activities associated with them than I am about religion as an institution. Less has been written about the belief-based activities of transnationally networked individuals than about the transnational networks associated with various religions (See Basch, et al, 1994; Castells, 1997; Eikelman, 1997; Rudolph, 1997; Levitt, 1998; Miller and Slater, 2000; Vertovec, 2004, 2009. Notable exceptions to this point are Hinnells, (1997) and Miller and Slater, (2000), in which the former addresses the impact of Western societal values on immigrants coming from non-Western faiths, and the latter discusses pastoral leadership via the Internet.

In order to address the values and belief practises of individual Vietnamese interviewees as a part of this research, I asked participants a series of questions related to their religious practises, beliefs and values (cf. Appendix VII). Responses to these questions indicated two points: First, different interviewees indicated an adherence to different religions, Communism or atheism. Interviewees stated that they were Buddhist, Catholic, Communist,

or Christian-Protestant. There was no ‘majority’ religion represented amongst interviewees. Second, interviewees’ responses pointed to a common understanding and description of a loose set of values that closely resemble the teachings attributed to Confucius. These values seemed to be present even if the interviewee had not been formally taught the teachings of this scholar. Once again, it seems that Vietnamese Londoners’ identities are characterised by a complex set of influences and trajectories, while at the same time, there is a values base on which decisions are made and relationships maintained. Striking in the responses was the fact that there are such similarities in the values of Vietnamese Londoners interviewed for this project, but such a discrepancy in their stated beliefs and religion. For a more in-depth look at this point, see Appendix XIV.

4.12 Conclusion

Through an engagement with the experiences of Vietnamese in London, I have concluded that the population of Vietnamese moved beyond the bounded nation and into a new construct of ‘Vietnameseness’ that is lived out through networks linking multiple Vietnamese communities in extremely diverse geographies encompassing dozens of politically organised nations. I also concluded that transnational identities are useful identities and ‘identities in specific contexts’. I presented some of the complexities associated with transnational identities and how these complexities play out in relationships within the Vietnamese communities in London and abroad. The working out of this relationship with the ‘nation’, in the forms of the homeland and host nations, can be examined through the prism of resources. Transnationally active Vietnamese utilise multiple resources to enable a plethora of transnational activities and roles that reach through various networks across national boundaries in a wide variety of cultural industries.

I defined resource-based transnationally active identities from a Vietnamese perspective as the possession and application of specific resources for the implementation of particular roles across national borders, and the development of transnational networks through which those roles are played out. I concluded that resources identified by Vietnamese interviewees include knowledge of languages, marketable skills, education, social networks, social status, finance and sponsorship, citizenship, shared history, and even perspective in the form of values which inform decisions and act as guidelines for activity. Based on these conclusions, I defined the transnationally active individual in the following way: The factor distinguishing transnational identities from those of other migrants is precisely this

utilisation of global, relational and other resources for the benefit of the individual and his or her globally networked communities. These transnational interactions through networks include more than simply returning 'home' to maintain familial ties, to keep up with, or to facilitate one's children's interaction with the 'mother tongue' or to visit friends, attend weddings or tend to the gravesites of one's ancestors. Vietnamese in London are transnationally linked in multiple ways with multiple communities. I now turn to an examination of the communities with which Vietnamese transnationally active Londoners relate.

Chapter 5: Vietnamese Communities in London: Fertile Ground for Transnational Networks

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the notion of community and its role in the emergence of transnational networks. At the outset, I define the term community, focusing on the plurality and complexities associated with London's Vietnamese communities. I then look back at the role of the British government's policy on dispersal in the formation of some of London's Vietnamese communities with particular reference to the failure of that policy. Following this discussion on the formation of communities, I turn to the role of media in maintaining and extending Vietnamese communities in London. And finally, I examine the causal relationship between community and the establishment of transnational networks, focusing on the role that communities play in giving rise to transnational networks through the strategic use of resources by established and transnationally active Vietnamese members of those communities.

5.2 The Notion of Community: An Activity-Based Definition

As we saw in the last chapter, just as it is problematic and simplistic to discuss an individual's 'identity' in singular terms, the same is true of communities. Drawing on the discourse around the complexities of community as outlined by Baumann (1996) and Babbili (2008), as well as on the notions of 'belonging' (Fortier, 2000) and 'connecting' (Probyn 1996), I purpose to utilise the term 'community' as representing a group of individuals who are, purposefully, engaged in activities together, connected by shared affinities such as language or dialect, geography, history, current region or region of origin, interests, economic or political objectives, religion, or values.

In this broad, activity-based definition, I resist the inclusion of the contested notions of 'culture' or 'race', as through this research process I have had significant interactions with individuals whose 'race', as observed from the outside, might put them into the 'Vietnamese' category, but whose inside perspective, lifestyle, activities, that is 'culture', have little to do with what outsiders may describe as 'Vietnamese' identity. These individuals, particularly of the younger generation of Vietnamese, born in England, consider themselves 'Londoners'. As one young Vietnamese stated with finality in her voice, 'my parents take me back to Vietnam to try and make me Vietnamese, but I'm from London, you

know?’ (Informal Interview, 27 March 2006). Another young man, in his twenties, working in his parent’s corner shop selling goods from Vietnam and other parts of Asia, said emphatically, ‘I don’t know anything about any of this stuff. It’s my Mum and Dad’s business. I gotta work here... until I find something else. I really don’t do much with the Vietnamese. My friend’s are all from here’ (Informal Interview, 12 September 2007). We discussed what ‘from here’ meant and he shrugged his shoulders, ‘from here, London’ (Ibid.) There was no mention of race, ethnicity or cultural background. This assimilation into British communities to the exclusion of the Vietnamese perspective and language is the fear of many Vietnamese in London. This fear is particularly prevalent amongst those of the older generation, who seek to preserve cultural unity and ‘Vietnameseness’ as loyalty to the community, if not to the ‘Vietnamese’ world-view and lifestyle.

These fears were brought out in two different conferences that I attended as a participant in 2004 and 2006 respectively. The topics centred on the ‘future of the Vietnamese community’ and ‘Vietnamese integration into Britain’. In the first, a Vietnamese community worker in Deptford stated, ‘young people adapt to the wider society youth culture, which increases the gap with older generations. This leads to a gradual elimination of their mother tongue languages and family traditions’ (Lac 2004: 4). Leaders of local Vietnamese communities have called for more involvement in Vietnamese community events and connections between generations. Included in this call was a young man who arrived in Britain as a young boy, receiving his PhD in 1999. As a leader in the Vietnamese Professionals Society, Peter Ton That gave a presentation on the integration of youth in Britain. He identified the problem of a lack of attendance on the part of young Vietnamese Londoners at local Vietnamese community events and outlined several measures for his peers that he suggested would help:

Contribute to changing and building up a better Vietnamese image/brand; set aside time for [Vietnamese] community events; encourage and take our children to [Vietnamese] community events; act as role models for younger generations; and offer guidance and mentoring programmes for the younger Vietnamese generations (Ton-That 2006:19).

This focus on the crucial role of intergenerational interaction and the need to prioritise involvement in Vietnamese community events gets at the heart of what builds up ‘community’ from a Vietnamese perspective. During the first stages of Vietnamese

immigration into Britain, the government's policy on the settlement of refugees centred on 'dispersal', directly counter to the 'building up of community' described by these Vietnamese Londoners. In the following section, I examine the dispersal programme vis-à-vis Vietnamese immigrants in Britain, looking at reasons for the continuation of the policy following the experience of previous migrations into Britain, reasons for the failure of the programme, and the reaction of members of Vietnamese communities to the programme, which resulted in that failure. Ironically, it was the 'failure in action' of dispersal, through intra-migration, that led to the establishment of strong and vibrant Vietnamese communities in London and other major cities in the United Kingdom.

5.3 Dispersal: A Failed Policy and Community Formation Through Intra-Migration

Jonathan Price states that, 'the Vietnamese programme marked the beginning of compulsory dispersal programmes, with refugees being sent to various locations around the UK' (Price: 2006: 8). The policy of compulsory dispersal was intended to facilitate the integration process for Vietnamese refugees, catalysing their transition into wider British society. The specific purposes of the policy centred around the fact that as long as there were manageable numbers of Vietnamese being settled in smaller towns and cities across the country, 'local government facilities could be used to assist the newcomers with language tuition and finding employment. Reliance on the voluntary services was at the heart of the resettlement process' (Knox and Kutchner, 1999: 313). This policy had been used with previous refugees arrivals, however, as Price (above) as well as Knox and Kutchner point out, 'the main distinction from earlier influxes during the Cold War was that, like the Ugandan Asians, the Vietnamese were to undergo government enforced dispersal into selected areas of settlement, spreading the 'financial and human cost of resettling the refugees', thereby avoiding any serious political backlash' (Ibid.). Robinson goes on to delineate the primary reasons for the policy:

Vietnamese were to be scattered across the whole of the UK in small groups of 4-10 families (Robinson, 1993b). This was designed to 'spread the burden' (Home Affairs Select Committee, 1985), make it easier to acquire accommodation (Jones, 1982), aid integration (Jones, 1982), prevent ghettoisation (Robinson, 1993b), and prevent the local support groups from being overwhelmed (JCRV, 1982) (Robinson, 2003: 10).

These particular reasons for dispersal, in reality, had more to do with the concerns of those responsible for resettlement, than with community building for those for whom the policy

was developed. Knox and Kushner describe the policy as ‘front end loading’ (Knox and Kushner, 1999: xviii), as the government attempted to accomplish the hard work of integration at the beginning of the resettlement process. In their critique of the policy, they state that the policy paid little attention to the ‘vast cultural gulf to be bridged’ and that skills for integration were ‘neither clearly delineated or adequately catered for’ (Ibid.). They go on to conclude, ‘Robinson suggests that dispersal policy was repeated because there were clear political and economic benefits’ (Knox and Kushner, 1999: 313). While attention must be paid to the feasibility of resettling refugees, there are numerous considerations that are critical for success. The literature shows that many of these considerations were not taken into account.

Of note, is that dispersal, intent on integrating Vietnamese into wider British society, was considered a failure both from a Vietnamese perspective and that of researchers tasked to evaluate the programme. Cllr Vu states, ‘because the dispersal policy of the Home Office totally failed, the people moved to London a lot... and some other communities also....

Also, we still have some Vietnamese communities in [other parts of] the UK, like in Manchester, we still have a strong Vietnamese community there, [also] in Birmingham, in Nottingham, in Bristol’ (Cllr Vu Interview, 24 October 2007). Others describe the failure, citing several reasons. According to Knox, ‘dispersal made it difficult to assess the overall needs of the refugees’ (Knox and Kushner, 1999: 319), and also, ‘loneliness and the inability to share experiences of the past and frustrations of the present are recurring problems for refugees separated from others of similar background’ (Knox and Kushner, 1999: 412). Price highlights several realities that led to the failure of dispersal:

The refugees were spread thinly across the UK, some grouped in clusters as few as four families; consequently they experienced great difficulty integrating into British society. It has been argued that the government expected ‘that the refugees would integrate quickly and become self-sustaining³²; many however felt isolated and as a result, there was significant secondary migration back to London. Unlike the Ugandan Asians, there was no established community to receive them, and they faced particular language difficulties and suffered high unemployment (Price: 2006: 8).

The British government made a number of assumptions vis a vis the policy of dispersal. The first was that Vietnamese refugees would be welcomed into local British cities and towns, and would ‘integrate quickly’ into the local milieu. The second was an underestimation of

the need for a community of other Vietnamese, and the third was an underestimation of the need for specific support such as language and skills training. Another interviewee stated, ‘when we arrived in the village, we didn’t even know where we were! We looked around us and there was nothing the same [familiar]. I worried about our children and already I felt lonely, before we even walked into the house (Informal Interview, 24 October 2007). This profound sense of loneliness was echoed by another refugee who arrived in the early days of migration to the UK:

We felt so far from everything. We lived in a camp in Hong Kong. All around [were] people who speak [sic] my language and eat [sic] my food. We were together. Then, when we came to UK, it was gone. Everything was different. We had, maybe five [Vietnamese] families in our town, but we didn’t know them. They [were] from somewhere else [in Vietnam]. Now we live in London and I have a business with many, many Vietnamese. It’s better now (Informal Interview with a business woman in Hackney, 26 October 2007).

According to these Vietnamese interviewees and others, the dispersal policy was indeed a failure. Vietnamese felt isolated and alone. They were without a support system and one was not forthcoming in the smaller, predominantly English and in some cases deprived communities, wherever housing was available. For new arrivals in Britain, the major desire was to somehow maintain a Vietnamese identity both in oneself and in one’s children, even in the midst of a new and very different society with values far removed from Vietnam, the nation of origin. The result was widespread secondary migration to London (cf. Map 3).

5.4 Community Maintenance

According to many attending a conference sponsored by the Vietnamese Mental Health Association titled ‘Youth and the Future of the Community’, this issue of cultural maintenance, or, I suggest, ‘community maintenance’ was a particularly difficult one, especially in relation to the second generation. Community maintenance takes into the consideration and highlights, not only the culture or world-view of Vietnamese members of communities, but also the loyalties and ways of connecting with other members inherent everyday interactions. These concerns, and others, led Vietnamese across Britain to consider intra-British migration to urban centres where concentrations of Vietnamese refugees were beginning to gather. It was, therefore, not long before Vietnamese in Britain were on the move again, this time from smaller communities into specific larger cities such as London,

Birmingham, Manchester and Nottingham where communities of Vietnamese were developing. Along with increases in the population of Vietnamese came the development of an infrastructure that offered resources, that is, the support structures and networking possibilities essential to a migrant community as diasporic or Viet Kieu identities were being developed, and as Vietnamese began to engage more heavily in transnational activities. For instance, according to one interviewee, 'a Vietnamese Catholic priest settled in Birmingham in the early years of Vietnamese in-migration. As time went on, a predominantly Catholic Vietnamese community began to develop in Birmingham, centred around this particular Vietnamese priest who had begun developing support ministries out of a local Catholic church in the city' (Informal Interview, 27 October 2007). An important note should be inserted at this point, As Knox and Kushner point out:

It should not be assumed that refugees have always been hostile to attempts to acculturate them. Frequently refugees have been keen to learn English and to adjust to their new surroundings. Nevertheless, other aspects of Anglicisation, and especially the pressure to forget the culture of the 'homeland', have been unhelpful in developing positive identities amongst the refugees (Knox and Kushner, 1999: 412).

The correlation between the maintenance of the culture of the homeland on the one hand, and the process of integration into the 'host' culture on the other is significant. In his recent book, Steven Vertovec describes this relationship in strong terms:

The incontestable fact is that with regard to either processes of transnationalism or integration, migrants adapt. Sustained and intensive patterns of transnational communication, affiliation and exchanges can profoundly affect manners of migrant adaptation – including practices associated with positive or limited integration. [many] migrants feel powerfully bound to homelands and communities elsewhere... At the same time, new immigrants clearly are getting on with developing a new life, livelihood, social ties and political interests in their places of settlement (Vertovec, 2009: 82).

Being surrounded by others who are involved in communities and who utilize the resources made available by belonging to those communities is a key to adaptation. Communities, then, are 'groupings' characterized by belonging and connecting from which transnational activities may originate resulting in cross-border networks. These interactions may allow some individuals to gain the confidence to begin or continue involvement in the integration process. Vertovec continues his argument, stating that, when immigrants feel thoroughly

engaged in a field of interactions whether in the UK or spanning a place of origin, this may well provide a sense of confidence to engage yet other people and spaces. If, on the contrary, exclusion from interaction – in the UK or place of origin – is felt, this may work to discourage inclinations to engage further’ (Vertovec, 2009: 82). A Jayaweera and Choudhury study, published in 2008 states, ‘interviewees who demonstrated the greatest number of types of transnational involvement... were the most likely to: be employed, have a perception of financial stability, have voted in the 2005 general election and meet people of a different ethnicity and religion in more spaces on average’ (Vertovec, 2009: 82). Vietnamese interviewees show that when other issues such as mental health struggles, linguistic deficiencies, or other isolating factors are present, the opposite is also true and confidence to engage others is eroded.

According to the UK mental health charity, ‘Mind’, the factors most prevalent in those Vietnamese who struggled to integrate centred on isolation, employment (too many hours or lack of employment), language barriers, discrimination and racism, and finally the lack of culturally appropriate services. In line with the findings above, it was advised that members of the Vietnamese communities should be ‘involved in the planning and implementation of services’ (Reid-Galloway, 2010) in order to address these issues and engage in culturally appropriate ways the Vietnamese communities in London. In participating in conferences and interviewing Vietnamese over seven years, I have observed that there is significant Vietnamese participation in these services. In addition, my findings show that many of those who are involved in local communities in leadership structures, planning groups, the implementation of policy and in provision of services are also involved in transnational activities through networks across the wider Viet Kieu population. For instance, student leaders in the UK are involved in transnational student organizations; young professional members of local networks of professional Vietnamese are also engaged in wider Viet Kieu professional organisations; and Vietnamese journalists and producers in London also interact and network with Vietnamese in multiple places across the globe through media practise. Several of these individuals and networks will be highlighted in the following chapter.

This being the case, it follows that there should be placed a great importance on the appropriation of resources for the establishment of support structures from within and outside Vietnamese communities, particularly those in London. According to Price, ‘over a

half of the UK Vietnamese community [I would say, ‘communities’] live in London, mainly in Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Greenwich, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark’ (Price: 2006: 8). The actual presence of Vietnamese in London is illustrated in Map 1. In London, a number of support centres have been established with funding from local and national government bodies as well as local Vietnamese in order to provide for the integration needs of the growing populations of Vietnamese. In other cases, budgets have been cut and services discontinued due to financial crises and changing priorities.

During the height of the dispersal programme, local British communities in smaller towns and villages struggled to address the needs of Vietnamese for learning English and developing an understanding of British life. They could not provide for the needs of Vietnamese refugees in the same ways that a larger immigrant community could do so. According to some reports, Vietnamese in non-urban areas struggled to find enough rice and to locate particular vegetables and spices essential to the Vietnamese diet. One interviewee thought it incredible that rice was sold in packets measured in grams while he was used to purchasing rice by the kilo! ‘The rice contents of these packets were barely enough to fill a rice bowl! We had to buy many packets to make enough rice for one meal! How were we going to survive?’ (Informal Interviewee, 29 March 2005). Many Vietnamese were asking the same question on many fronts including dietary needs, the need to maintain the Vietnamese language in the home amongst children born in Vietnam but being brought up in Britain, the desire of many to hold on to Vietnamese customs, beliefs and to practise and engage in holiday festivals. These types of activities require a community with extensive networks and from the early 1980s there were indeed community networks developing in London and a few other cities across Britain. Subsequently, it was into a London with established communities that the newer immigrants described below arrived. I turn now to the nature of the various Vietnamese communities in London.

5.5 Vietnamese Communities in London Described

How can these growing Vietnamese communities in London be described? According to members of these communities, Vietnamese in London are characterised, in their own words, in plural terms as will be seen later in this chapter. Earlier in this work I presented a detailed account of the early stages of Vietnamese migration into Britain. The intent of that description was to provide a window through which the origins of the complex history of Vietnamese communities in London could be seen. The migration of several million people

out of Vietnam and into over 70 countries around the world including the United Kingdom (Bich, 2006; Phan 2006: 21) has taken place over time and has involved interactions with multiple communities within Vietnamese homeland society. Two interviewees described this out-migration in terms similar to the experience and scale of the Jewish dispersal in Biblical times (Vu, Interview, 21 November 2007 and Nguyen). In the migration process, and in a very short amount of time, there developed a 'cultural transnationalisation' which is the process by which peoples 'position themselves according to a more complex set of cultural reference points' (Robins and Aksoy 2001: 678). The complex cultural and identity 'reference points' of the Vietnamese communities in London are readily apparent on examination not only in the Vietnamese communities' experience of interaction with the many other cultures in London, but also from within Vietnamese communities themselves. The reality is that there are several identifiable 'cultures-as-community' within the Vietnamese London context.

There is a general difficulty in clearly outlining Vietnamese communities in London. There are complexities associated with linguistics, regionalism, trust, timing of entry into the UK, local activity, and legal status in the UK. There are a number of issues around the overlapping of communities giving rise to the possibility of multiple loyalties and, therefore multiple identities as has been discussed in earlier chapters. In the next section, I provide an assessment of the larger 'communities of belonging' that have been identified by Vietnamese interviewees. I make note of those factors that have brought the community together and which identify each community as an affinity grouping, answering the question: 'Why are we a community?'

Amongst the wider Vietnamese population in London, there is a small community of southern Vietnamese who were a part of the Republic of Vietnam that was aligned with the West until April, 1975. After the 'fall of Saigon' in that year, and fleeing the communist government and the expected political and economic hardships to come, these refugees were 'placed in camps in Hong Kong and then brought to Britain during the period from 1979 through 1982' (Vu Interview, 21 November 2007). Many of the first generation in this community are associated with the Catholic Church in London as well as the Buddhist Temple. This group has been described as being a 'pro-democracy' group (Informal Interview, 24 March 2009), seeking a liberalization, easing of 'human rights violations, and democratic reform in Vietnam. Many have not returned to Vietnam since their departure

some 30 years ago. As Cllr interviewee put it, 'I've been in this country since 1979 and I have never been back because from the beginning, I was a refugee and I carry on to fight for freedom in Vietnam. So I've never been back to Vietnam' (Vu Interview, 24 October 2007). This economic and political focus on change is a significant factor in both identifying and holding together this Vietnamese community, and often, my conversations revolved either around the past or the future with reference to this desired change in the homeland.

A second community includes the balance of this group of post-1975 refugees or 'boat people'. Of Chinese decent, these Vietnamese refugees 'were an integral part of Vietnamese society for generations, some for 400 or 500 years' (Vu Interview, 24 October 2007; Robinson 2003). Some analysts estimate that as many as '80 per cent of the 26,000 Vietnamese refugees who came to the UK because of the Vietnam War were ethnic Chinese' (Reid-Galloway 2010: 1). This is a population who, as mentioned in a previous chapter, experienced persecution due to their Chinese heritage. Some had businesses confiscated during and after the 1979 border clashes with China, others sought relief from the persecution and had few resources or education. These Vietnamese subsequently fled as part of the 'boat' out-migration from the former northern and southern parts of Vietnam. According to Cllr Vu, while other receiving nations such as the United States, Canada, Australia and France 'accepted Vietnamese refugees through a selection process' based on qualifications and skills possessed, 'Britain brought 25,000 refugees from the Hong Kong camps regardless of background, education or skills' (Vu Interview, 21 November 2007). This perspective is also put forward by the Home Affairs Select Committee in 1985, claiming 'that because Britain's selection criteria had been less stringent than those of the US or Australia, the Vietnamese who came to the UK were largely uneducated, illiterate even in their own language, possessing few transferable skills, and with little previous contact with western cultures' (Robinson, 2003: 9). A Vietnamese community worker in inner London agrees, stating that those 'Vietnamese with skills and education tended to be from the south, while northerners were typically less educated, more rural, less financially stable and had poor English language skills' (Informal Interview, 22 March 2006). Another interviewee described the community in the following terms:

Most of them [Northerners] came from rural areas, like in the border between Vietnam and China, so they lack lots of education. So [with a] lack of education... their family backgrounds, family structure [was] not so healthy. So when they came over here, they struggle because of the new culture. Their

parents could not adapt to the new culture, their language barriers, so somehow they are stuck. They could not integrate well into the British culture and now they have discovered the problems in their family. Their children [are] acting more like British citizens, British children. Their children speak more English at home, personalities [are] different (Peter Le Interview, 14 January 2008).

Peter goes on to say that ‘all they care, is to find any job, so they can get money. Or they just depend on the government to live by welfare systems, [and] hope for a better future upon their children’ (Ibid.). This somewhat dismal view was repeated a number of times in interviews and informal conversations. An important point to be made at this juncture involves research on ‘quota’ versus ‘non-quota’ refugees. According to Parricini,

A Home Office Study Duke (Duke and Marshall ,1997) noted that in addition to the handicaps of language, interruption to education etc, the Vietnamese arrived in the UK during a period of high unemployment and recession. They found a heavy reliance (45% of the sample) on informal contacts for finding employment and detected a trend towards self-employment overtime. They also found differences between quota and non-quota refugees (i.e not Vietnamese) with non quota refugees often coming from better educational backgrounds. Non-quota refugees also had greater contact with the wider community and with agencies and services and were more likely to join British associations and organizations (Parracini, 2004: 4).

The importance of networks cannot be underestimated. Vietnamese refugees who arrived in Britain outside of the quotas established in the 1980s, seem to have either already had established networks, or very quickly developed them upon arrival. According to my research, the influence of networks through community relationships was found in the northern Vietnamese who became involved in transnational activities through their businesses early in their integrative process. This seems to be in keeping with the findings of other researchers mentioned earlier related to the confidence levels and integration experience of migrants increasing with higher involvement in local and transnational networks (Vertovec, 2009; Jayaweera and Choudgury, 2008). Parracini notes that ‘restaurants, garment manufacturers and supermarkets/mini markets tend to be more established businesses run by first generation refugees who are now in their 40s and 50s or older. The exceptions are some of the more up-market restaurants which have been opened recently by younger, UK educated Vietnamese. Nailshops are a fairly recent arrival and are run by Vietnamese; generally the younger generation in their 20s and 30s’ (Parracini, 2004: 5). I conducted Interviews with transnationally active Vietnamese in restaurant businesses,

local shops and in the nail shop industry, and in each case, children were described as productive, educated, with some having started their own businesses. Interviewing several of these young people, now in their late twenties, I also found them to be involved in multiple networks, including transnational ones.

The focus of many in this group is on growing businesses and finance, with little political involvement. Having little to do with those seeking change in Vietnam, they have been described in the following way:

They were the ethnic Chinese and also they had many generations in Vietnam. They also visit Vietnam regularly. The point of view – because they had the experience of living under the Communist regime, they don't want to talk about politics, they don't want to [be] involved with any political activities (Vu Interview, 24 October 2007).

The members of the communities associated with this grouping, and there are several, are drawn together primarily by their business and work-related relationships, both legal and non-legal in nature. As has been mentioned in previous chapters, the primary industries in which this grouping is involved are catering, the nail shop business, grocery, travel, as well as cannabis production (Informal Interviewee 29 March 2009). These Vietnamese typically relate within specific boroughs in London and through trust networks (Hitchcock, 2006). For perspective on the relationship between these two communities, I asked interviewees about their relationships with other Vietnamese both in the UK and abroad. One interviewee stated that he related to other Vietnamese in London:

Sadly, with a sense of caution. From personal experience through meeting Vietnamese in London and [through my] parent's connections, I feel the majority of Vietnamese in London have a different mentality from those from South Vietnam. Part of the reason is that a large proportion of Vietnamese who settled in London are from North Vietnam affected by communism rule (Interview 17 March 2009).

This 'sense of caution' illustrates what Hitchcock found in his studies of Vietnamese in London. Quoting Ha and Nguyen, he asserts, 'Vietnamese... have networks that are centred on well-established community associations in London, such as An Viet in Hackney. These associations provide some of the services of the communal meeting hall know as the Dinh, which serves as a place to make decisions, judge lawsuits, and to hold festivals and to

worship the ancestors' (Hitchcock, 2006: 7-8). Early in this research process, I spoke with a member of the Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodian Centre in Hackney about the various activities of the centre. When I asked about specific programming and 'drop-ins' from either the Laotian or the Cambodian communities, he was hesitant, and then informed me that, 'they don't come here very often. We Vietnamese are very many and very strong, and I think they feel they are not welcome here' (Informal Interview, November 12 2004).

Another grouping of Vietnamese in London are those who have come to Britain without the experience of forced migration, that is, without the 'baggage' associated with the 'boat people' image. These are those, more recently arrived Vietnamese, who have been described by Hai Le, of the BBC Vietnamese as 'plane people' (Le, 2006: 26). In other words, he, as a member of this grouping, chose to leave, not because he felt threatened, fearing for his life, but because he sought formal education and experience beyond the borders of his homeland. Le flew to Poland, completing a degree and now works in London, 'choosing his spaces of identity' (Hall and Du Gay, 1996) and community rather than, in the experience of many refugees, having the bulk of choices made for him.

Two Vietnamese communities that characterise this grouping are 'overseas workers' and 'Vietnamese students'. A third grouping of individuals are the illegal or non-status immigrants described in the historical section of this work. These 'non-status' Vietnamese are not an actual 'community' as they do not fit most of the characteristics associated with communities as defined in this work. Nor are they a network in that they typically work in the shadows of the city and relate minimally to other Vietnamese with the exception of a few trusted friends or 'business' contacts. Within this grouping, however, are multiple, smaller networks. In many cases, individual Vietnamese illegal immigrants work for narcotics networks which may be transnational in nature, but the individual simply fulfils the role of 'watering the plants' or, in Vietnamese literally translated, 'raising grass' (Informal Interview 29 March 2008). More will be made of this transnational network in the following chapter.

5.6 Multiple Allegiances for Specific Purposes

The 'freedom of association' means that members of one community may make connections with Vietnamese from various other communities. Peter Le, a member of this community, tells a story about leaders of two distinct, and usually mutually exclusive communities and

how a connection was made:

I was approached by a PhD student, a leader of the Vietnamese student network, who was planning a big gathering with over a hundred students expected to come. He had trouble finding a venue so he asked me if I could help. I decided to make contact with the leader of the Vietnamese Professionals Society and so they were able to work something out together! (Informal Interview, 14 January 2008).

These two Vietnamese communities seem to be worlds apart; on the one hand, the Vietnamese students association with strong ties to the Vietnamese Embassy with its socialist perspective, and the other, the Vietnamese Professionals Society, made up of members committed to human rights and democratic freedom in Vietnam as well as the political and economic changes necessary, in their view, for these freedoms to take place. While in everyday life these communities would not ordinarily interact, for a specific purpose and at a particular moment, there is a connection, as Probyn describes it, a ‘politics of tangibility’ (Probyn 1995: xii) with handshakes across wide divides. These are the realities of the complexities associated with Vietnamese communities in London. Out of these communities, particular individuals cross community boundaries, connecting Vietnamese groupings in multiple national contexts. Each of these connections across boundaries indicates activity that is specific and purposeful, and is characterized by multiple allegiances and a sense of belonging to multiple communities. In the background, there is always the sense of ‘being Vietnamese’; of having ‘Vietnam there’ (Giang Nguyen Interview, 15 April 2006) that is a unifying force beyond the national structures and strictures of governments and embassies. These are the recognizable ‘transnational moments’ (Mishra, 2006: 132) indicative of the interplay between otherwise divided communities.

These Vietnamese communities do not all claim a ‘national’, Socialist Republic of Vietnam identity. They are more likely to describe themselves as ‘Vietnamese’, but belonging to particular, local or regional Vietnamese communities with particular perspectives, networks and even agendas. Nga Nguyen describes herself as ‘proud to be Hanoian’ from the capital of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (Nga Nguyen Interview, 15 May 2009). Other interviewees speak of being from ‘Saigon’, the capital of the former Republic of Vietnam. Still others describe themselves as part of the ‘Hai Phong’ group, a port city on the coast of northern Vietnam. ‘We always stick together against people from Hanoi’, one interviewee

stated (Informal Interview, January 2010). Apropos to the Vietnamese experience, Iris Kalka describes this multiplicity of belongings amongst South Asians in London in the following way, saying, ‘the people had a “stock” of overlapping ethnic allegiances at their disposal to reinforce various claims. They evidently entertained multiple ethnic identities, oscillating between those arising from regional loyalties, those connected with the Indian sub-continent, and those which emerged as a result of their disadvantageous position in British society’ (Kalka, 1991: 220).

From a Vietnamese Londoner’s perspective, these different allegiances afford, on the positive side, opportunities to connect and share community on multiple levels for mutual benefit as in the experience of the student association above. Shepherd and Rothenbuhler state that ‘we should see similarity (and uniqueness) as resulting from communication and community rather than viewing communication and community as products of commonality (and thus reactions against difference)’ (Shepherd and Rothenbuhler, 2001: 31). Again, positively, communication and community happen in the urban setting in the midst of difference and uniqueness.

Building community through communication was an impetus for the intra-migration of Vietnamese from the areas to which they were dispersed to several major cities in Britain, London in particular (cf. Map 3). Once Vietnamese in London reached a ‘critical mass’, it was possible to form ‘community’ as defined above. The combining of resources from Vietnamese individuals and families made possible the establishment of communities. Communication, then, is the glue that pulled members of the community together. Cllr Vu speaks of the early days of migration in London, stating, ‘we had Thamesmead radio. We cooperated with them [for] a year and then we did not have time to do so’ (Vu Interview, 24 October 2007). There was a Vietnamese language slot on the radio to promote communication and bring together the growing numbers of Vietnamese coming from abroad into south London. Communication took place in the form of radio, print media, festivals and key events on the community’s calendar, and the establishment of specific programmes at refugee and community centres.

On the negative side, however, forms of communication can bring about the reality of feeling the loss of one’s ‘national’ identity. One interviewee lamented with tears the loss of his nation and everything he loved as we listened to nostalgic Vietnamese music from pre-

1975 genres. In an almost ritualized way, he described his loneliness in Vietnamese as ‘buong lam’ a deep and painful loneliness that still haunted him 30 years on (Informal Interview, 20 September 2004). This claim to a previous ‘national connection’ is a significant one for some, but not for others. For those who are transnationally active, London space becomes transnational as ‘a space that is both place-centred in that it is embedded in a particular and strategic location [London]; and it is transterritorial because it connects sites that are not geographically proximate yet are intensely connected to each other’ (Saskia Sassen (2000: 151). The point to be made here is that ‘the ‘de-nationalizing’ of urban space, and the formation of new claims by transnational actors, raises the question “Whose city is it?”’ (ibid: 152). I would argue that the city is, in a real sense, ‘multi-nationalised’ rather than ‘de-nationalised’. It is for everyone. There are those who are ‘encapsulated’ within their ‘imagined’ national identity, but there are others who live in ‘constructive’ ways (J. Bennett, 1993), living out multiple identities in transnational ways.

Another example of a Vietnamese individual ‘living out’ various identities and ‘allegiances’ within Vietnamese communities concerns a Vietnam-born, long-term French citizen who migrated to London to work as a medial doctor. He left Vietnam for France as a student after the division of Vietnam in 1954, and has never been back. The realities of belonging to these multiple communities surfaced in a conversation at a 2006 conference highlighting thirty years of Vietnamese presence in the United Kingdom. ‘I am always a Vietnamese. I was brought up in Vietnam. But now, I am in France for many years. My children are in France. I came to London a few years ago, to be a GP for Vietnamese because I still speak Vietnamese’. (Informal Interview, 22 March 2006). Later, over lunch in a Vietnamese restaurant, he related his story of being recruited in France to come to Britain as a General Practitioner almost four years previous. When asked if he was planning to go back to the country of his birth, he stated emphatically that he would return at the end of this year, ‘when the current communist government withdrew’ (Informal interview, 2 April 2006). His Danish wife, sitting next to us smiled and said quietly, ‘He says that every year’ (Ibid.). Here is a man who considers himself Vietnamese, but has no desire for so-called ‘national’ identity with the now communist homeland, not in its current political state. He ‘belongs’ to several of the many Vietnamese Viet Kieu or diasporic communities with specific agendas and perspectives. He also belongs and maintains close connections to French and Danish communities on specific occasions and within particular parameters. These are the complexities and intricate At this point we move to develop further the concept of

community as it relates to these identities.

5.7 Communication and Media Use Across Vietnamese Communities

This Vietnamese General Practitioner, mentioned above, received most of his education in France, having been sent from Vietnam to that nation as a young man. He spent most of his career and raised a family in France, maintaining his Vietnamese connections through interaction with the predominantly southern Vietnamese community. On moving to London, he joined the London-based Vietnamese Professional Society, UK (VPS), an international organisation made up primarily (as its name suggests) of well-educated, young, up-and-coming professionals, largely with South Vietnamese roots. Through this community, this GP is able to connect, network and communicate with Vietnamese communities from London across the world through their own media website, blogs, Facebook, etc. These media options address and elicit response from multiple communities. Vietnamese involved in transnational activities in London shift from one communication or media type to another depending on their purpose, desire, need and linguistic ability. After an annual gathering of members of the VPS, a dialogue began related to the issue of Vietnamese women being offered as ‘companions’ and ‘wives’ to foreign men on a variety of internet sites. A heated interchange began involving members of the Vietnamese community as well as foreigners from all over the globe including from within Vietnam. VPS became a site of communication, facilitating this dialogue. Calls for action took place and widely disparate Vietnamese communities were connected through the virtual world of the web.

Vietnamese communities in London have grown over the past 30 years, incorporating both the Overseas Vietnamese (Viet Kieu) through immigration from various nations in which Vietnamese settled in the past, as well as Vietnamese from the homeland (Viet Kinh). As the population of Vietnamese migrants into London spaces has grown and become more segmented, communication and cultural production have also grown and become more complex. Georgiou and Silverstone, ‘address the diaspora as a locus of the transnational’, stating that ‘the dispersal of populations [is] the basis for an enquiry into the dispersal of communications’ (Thussu 2007: 33). There is a link between, on the one hand, the flows of people inward and outward in relation to the homeland, and on the other, developing flows of media and communication, which move in multiple directions contrary to the overwhelmingly Western media on offer for so long. Georgiou and Silverstone argue that:

The mediated communications generated around and by such groups provide a key route into the understanding of the contra-flows of global media. Just as migration itself disturbs the boundaries of the state and the culture of a nation, so too do the communications that migration generates. Statehood remains, but its boundaries are ignored and the dominance of the existing media players, themselves of course equally unconstrained by such boundaries, is challenged by the presence of alternative threads of global communication that observe different rules and move in different directions (Ibid).

The purposes of media have become more varied and audiences more discerning in their use of that media. In other words, the expansion of Vietnamese transnational media mirrors the steady increase and diversification of the Vietnamese population and its various communities in London and elsewhere. This expansion and growing complexity vis-à-vis London's Vietnamese communities continues as an organic and living development and, while planted in the soil of the nation, in various ways, both disregards and utilises the boundaries generated by that nation. Vietnamese are still among the expanding immigrant populations in the United Kingdom, and with growing numbers as well as a wide variation in places and experiences of origin (both homeland and Viet Kieu origins), comes increasing divergence in identities, loyalties and 'belongings' à la Fortier, (2000). These multiple 'belongings' incorporate intricate and complex 'surface connections' (Probyn, 1996) that both define and demonstrate the desire for relationship that seems to drive some Vietnamese to establish productive interactions with members of multiple communities.

Again, this diversity in relationship involves both those long-present, transnationally active Vietnamese individuals, who have developed some identity and lifestyle patterns that incorporate values from host cultures, but also involves those newer arrivals involved in transnational activities who have not yet integrated into British society. In his discussions of Iranian exilic experience in the United States, Naficy clearly points out that, 'on the one hand, this popular [everyday] culture is informed by politics, themes, language, and products of the homelands and, on the other hand, it borrows syncretically from the host society's technology, consumer ideology, marketing techniques, and forms and practices of narration and aesthetics' (Naficy 1993:58). The same principles apply to Vietnamese communities in London. While transnationally active Vietnamese are exposed to more opportunities for interaction with Viet Kieu and homeland culture and values, there is still, however, a strong influence on these individuals from a popular, local culture. Hannerz' argues that 'a popular culture, and a media technology, are now as much necessities in large

parts of the Third World as they are in the Occident, and the more realistic hope for continued cultural diversity in the world, with some linkage to local heritage, would rather seem to be for a diversity in motion, one of coexistence as well as creative interaction between the transnational and the indigenous' (Sreberny-Mohammadi 1997:15-16). The realities associated with this 'diversity in motion' with multiple linkages and belongings is further illustrated later in this chapter.

5.8 Re-Imagining Vietnam All Over Again

Re-imagining Vietnam in London is happening all the time, but which Vietnam are Vietnamese Londoners re-imagining? Homi Bhabha describes the phenomenon of imagining the nation saying that 'nations, like narratives, lose their origins in the myths of time and only fully realize their horizons in the mind's eye' (Bhabha, 1990: 1). This comment begs the question: 'In whose "mind's eye" is a particular community being viewed or perceived? On the one hand, communities are described by those who are members of that particular community, that is, by 'insiders' who are networked with one another; on the other hand, communities are described by those who are outside the community and whose descriptions usually portray communities in reference to their own or another community. Benedict Anderson addresses this point in reference to the nation, speaking of imagined political communities (Anderson, 2006: 6). I would like, here, to apply his definition to communities that may or may not consider themselves political in nature. Anderson states that members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion (Ibid.). If the notion of community means different things to different people, in the case of members of the wider Vietnamese population in London, it means both a remembering and a forgetting. A remembering in the sense that there is, 'in the mind's eye' a notion of being Vietnamese that seems to be common to all those who call themselves by that name. Hackney Councillor Khanh Thanh Vu wrote:

We are here to confirm our deep love as blood brothers. Together we will practise all of the virtues that have been passed down to us by our forbears, so that each of us can become a complete and true Vietnamese. We will be compassionate, dutiful and devoted, respectful and polite, thoughtful and loyal, so that we can live full and complete lives for the benefit of our own-selves, for our families, for our country and for all mankind (Vu, An Viet Foundation: Home Page).

This deep sense of connectedness is shared by most of those I interviewed with many individuals making reference to our common ancestry. Others speak of being Vietnamese after all in spite of any differences there may be. This perspective on a shared, distant history and experience seems to be a part of the ‘imagining’ about which Anderson is writing. He adds that the nation ‘is imagined as a *community*. Regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship’ (Anderson, 2006: 7, emphasis in original). London’s Vietnamese communities, while separated by very real divides do have sites of connectedness such as shops and, to some extent cultural celebrations.

5.9 Vietnamese Communities: Constituent Parts of a Fragmented Whole

There are distinct differences that divide and separate the wider community of Vietnamese into parts that have moved off in separate directions. Anderson quotes the French philosopher Renan in order, it seems, to regain a balance and provide some reality in the discussion. Renan wrote, ‘the essence or spirit of a nation lies in the fact that all the individuals have much in common and that everyone has forgotten many things’ (Ibid: 6, trans. Anouchka Sterling). Even through major differences in ideology, religious practise and belief, place of origin in Vietnam, and reasons for immigration into Britain, Vietnamese Londoners still have a sense that they are all Vietnamese. As Renan stated, many have ‘forgotten many things’ in order to preserve a sense of cultural connection and belonging. However, for many, it is Anderson’s ‘imagined nation’ and not necessarily the political entity called the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

An example of this perspective of Vietnamese Londoners on the disparate nature of the Vietnamese ‘national imaginary’ can be found in a statement made by a interviewee who stated that: ‘We [the Republic of South Vietnam] lost the war but we’ve won because of the success of the Vietnamese community around the world’ (Thanh interview, 14 April 2006). This statement begs the question: Who are the Vietnamese people, flung out across the world? And, what is this Vietnamese ‘community’ Vietnamese are describing? The answer is that it is a complex plurality of communities. Remembering the spirit of Renan’s comments, and the fact that most Vietnamese would, in the end, agree that there is a remembered ‘nation’ of people called Vietnamese scattered across the globe, we now turn to some of the realities of varied and at times, separated communities who have yet to ‘forget’ historical events that separate them.

5.10 Transnational Media: Bridging the Gaps

As has been noted in previous chapters, the multiple Vietnamese communities in London form audiences, or consumers of media, as types of specifically networked communities. With regard to the crossing of national borders, these audiences are transnational networks, not necessarily bounded by geography or space. These communities, whose individuals form the network, have in common the fact that they consume and interact with particular media. The media itself can provide the virtual pathway into which individuals move by accessing and interacting with that media. In today's interactive world, however, it is essential that the media industries not rely simply on consumers and audiences to join them, but must carry on significant and regular dialogue with consumers in order to stay abreast of expressed needs and desires. David Morley and Kevin Robins state:

We are seeing the restructuring of information and image spaces and the production of a new communications geography, characterised by global networks and an international space of information flows; by an increasing crisis of the national sphere; and by new forms of regional and local activity. Our senses of space and place are all being significantly reconfigured. (Morley and Robins, 1995: 1).

We are, at the same time seeing the 'elaboration of transnational systems of delivery' while also witnessing significant developments towards local production and local distribution networks' (Morley and Robins, 1995: 2). It is this rising media influence that transcends identity boundaries, both national and local that is of great interest to me. This influence both shapes and is shaped by those who access and influence media on offer.

While diasporic or migrant-focused media has been commonplace for generations, there is a growing move toward media that transcends the simplistic practice of offering specific language media targeted to specific communities in specific nation-states. In this new age of communication, near instantaneous news and information is available globally, and with a few clicks of a mouse a consumer is ushered into a wide spectrum of Vietnamese oriented programming. For instance, it is possible, in London to access Vietnam Television, via satellite, in Vietnamese or English. Several years ago, Vietnam inaugurated VTV4 specifically for the Overseas Vietnamese (Viet Kieu) population, with a number of English

language broadcasts on offer. On the internet, the media situation is even more complex with music and commentary on offer by Vietnamese in multiple languages and for multiple tastes. A brief check on You Tube offers an example of these complexities. From American-based, Vietnamese language hip-hop to traditional Vietnamese ballads, and from stylized Vietnamese pop to dramatic theatre based in the distant past, it seems that Vietnamese in London are spoilt for choice in their media selections. This type of media seems commonplace as one turns the dial or sweeps across the digital spectrum, tuning in to a veritable 'who's who' of Vietnamese personalities based anywhere in the world.

What is most interesting is the attempt to connect with these communities using media and delivery systems that appeal to a transnational audience. Shepherd and Rothenbuhler provide a succinct assessment of the role of the Internet in the development of community saying

This new orientation, therefore, operates from a different construal of what ought to be the relation between community and technology. It is one that argues community need not only be one that exists outside of mediation through some sort of network. It can also be created and maintained online. The value of the Internet is not in its ability to rebuild traditional community, but to accent it with alternative virtual forms of community that fill gaps in the lives of people longing for communities they do not have (Shepherd and Rothenbuhler 2001: 196).

These transnational aspects of delivery systems are perhaps more marked in diasporic communities that are divided by cultural differences, historical experiences of conflict and ideological differences. In other words, where disparate communities of the same language group may not associate physically if they were in proximity to one another, they apparently do listen to the same media, interacting with that media and, therefore, with one another vicariously through media. Franklin (2004) addresses this issue in relation to uses of the Internet through online communities and the ways that Pacific Island communities 'commute and commune through noncommercial, openly accessible Internet' (Franklin 2004: 1). This same phenomenon of 'commuting and communing' holds true amongst Vietnamese. Related to the realities of access to Vietnamese media one participant shared with me during an informal conversation about Vietnamese music that 'it doesn't matter where you're from in Vietnam, if you're going to get on the radio or get a contract with a recording studio, you have to sing in the Northern dialect. I didn't grow up in the Northern

part of the country, but when I sing I always have to sing in a Northern accent' (Informal Interview, 7 June, 2008). In an informal focus group of Vietnamese, another interviewee described this reality in terms similar to listening to the BBC. 'You always knew you would hear the same English accent. Our ears got used to it' (Informal Interview, 8 March 2005). Hearing specific accents brings with it certain attitudes and opinions, but also familiarity. In Vietnamese, there are also regional, dialectical differences that, for some, can reveal one's status in society. This is the nature of the 'to-and-fro' aspects of relationship between the various Vietnamese communities, particularly communities who may only relate to one another through specific media. The dance of the imagined 'nation' goes on with varying distances of separation and reunion as Vietnamese communities share spaces both real and virtual.

5.11 Conclusion:

In this chapter, I concluded that 'community' must be defined from the perspective of Vietnamese, transnationally active Londoners. Any definition of community must take into consideration both the perspectives of those living daily lives in the community as well as those observing that community from the outside (Baumann, 1996). In keeping with the findings outlined in earlier chapters and one of the primary themes of this research, I arrived at an 'activity-based' definition of community that is based on the daily lives of Vietnamese members of those communities rather than on language associated with 'race' or 'culture'. These contested terms rarely show up in dialogues with Vietnamese Londoners. I also concluded that the activities associated with being and doing community involve both 'connecting' and 'belonging' in a variety of ways (Fortier, 2000) as well as a focus on the 'imagined community' (Anderson, 2006: 6).

The formation of early Vietnamese communities made up the first part of this chapter. An in depth look at this process included a critique of the continuing focus on 'dispersal' as a primary method of refugee resettlement. In examining the results of 'dispersal', I concluded that this UK government policy failed in its attempts to more quickly integrate Vietnamese refugees into smaller communities across Britain. The result of this failure was a widespread intra-migration of Vietnamese into larger cities, particularly into London (seen in Map 3). Further, the suggestion was made that in future, consideration must be taken that significant, culturally similar support structures are located nearby. When these support structures are in place, and refugees are in a position of strength vis a vis their own communities of

belonging, there develops a confidence to engage other communities different to one's own (Jayaweera and Choudhury, 2008; Vertovec, 2009), and this enhances the integration process. At the present time, the government continues its policy of dispersal, but has added an established ethnic minority communities element to criteria for selecting locations for the dispersal of new groups (AAPD, 2003: 72).

In comparing the adjustments of those Vietnamese who were brought to Britain under the quota system as refugees or under the 'Family Reunion Scheme', and those arrivals who were part of the 'non-quota' system, it seems that those who were not part of the quota scheme have been more successful in integrating into wider British society. I have come to the conclusion that this finding may be due, either to the actual process through which quota refugees arrived and settled in Britain, or to other factors such as prior knowledge of and relationship with existing Vietnamese support networks, characteristics inherent in the refugees themselves, or simply the necessity of 'getting on with it' by taking matters forward on their own initiative.

Also in this chapter, I concluded that out of these multiple, and at times conflicting, Vietnamese communities, spheres of transnational activities are initiated and transnational networks are created. The notion of 'transnationalism' is located in the everyday activities of Vietnamese and in the networks through which those activities occur. The widely varied Vietnamese communities characteristic of a long-term, multi-stage immigration process have given rise to a variety of transnational activities identifiable through organised and far-reaching networks. The final chapter in this thesis addresses these transnational networks through the experience of interviewees who play key roles in the development and maintenance of those networks.

Chapter 6: Transnational Social Networks Linking Communities

6.1 Introduction

Networks are the means by which individual, transnationally active Vietnamese Londoners are linked with Vietnamese communities in the wider global community. Networks are generated out of the varied and, at times conflicted Vietnamese communities in London. Vietnamese transnational networks, based in London, include members of the wider overseas Vietnamese population or ‘Viet Kieu’, and in some cases, individuals from the Vietnamese homeland (See Map 2, Appendix II and Appendix X). In this chapter, I apply a descriptive framework of transnational activity (reach, role and pathways), to four different social networks that maintain transnational linkages. The participants in each of the transnationally active networks are quite different. The purposes of the networks outlined below encompass such goals as disseminating global and local information in the Vietnamese language, maintaining cultural identity and improving or bringing about change in the homeland through education abroad and investment into the global Vietnamese community.

In interviews, Vietnamese Londoners use a variety of perspectives to describe the multiple groupings or communities that make up the Vietnamese population in London. Each community of Vietnamese Londoners incorporates members of the wider population according to specific criteria. These ‘subsets’, as it were, have been described in an earlier chapter of this thesis using the terminologies of geography, religion, historical experience, profession, common interest, or affinity. Riccio proposes, ‘we might focus on the ongoing processes of networking or network formation by which [communities] are actively reproduced, maintained, transformed and extended’ (Vertovec 2001: 27-28). It is through an examination of the ‘processes’ by which Vietnamese communities are ‘transformed’ and ‘extended’ that these transnational networks are identified. The perspectives of interviewees that are actively based in London’s Vietnamese communities, and are involved in these networks provide the practical and ‘in situ’ views needed to understand the purpose and importance of these networks for those Vietnamese who are a part of them.

My intent is to focus on the actual transnational activities associated with individual members and their networks. While I use the term ‘transnational’ and ‘transnational network’ in this thesis, it is with the understanding that I utilise the terms in practical ways,

describing spheres of transnational activity facilitated by key, London-based Vietnamese. From this broad base, four Vietnamese networks with transnational activities will be examined in detail. I begin with a story to illustrate, at the outset, the complex and far-flung nature of Vietnamese transnational networks.

Fire broke out in a market situated in a crowded, densely populated neighbourhood in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. As the roaring fire spread, a telephone rang in London, England. The story was quickly related to a Vietnam-born producer for BBC who immediately rang an acquaintance living on the edge of the market in Ho Chi Minh City. Within minutes, digital photographs and on-site reports of the fire were being broadcast across the globe, accessible to all with the click of a mouse. Later that afternoon, the story was run on BBC Vietnamese radio and broadcast worldwide in tandem with the BBC Vietnamese web story, a true blending of old and new media in transnational social spaces (Giang Interview, 21 March 2006).

I sat with Giang Nguyen, Director of BBC Vietnamese, as he related the above story. We were discussing not only the near instantaneous delivery of news and information, but the interconnectedness of Vietnamese communities, now established in nations across the world. We discussed developments of the last 30 years, including significant accomplishments of members of the Vietnamese diaspora in many areas of life such as the sciences, business and art. I asked Giang Nguyen about the interconnected networks that have developed over the course of these 30 years of outflow and resettlement of Vietnamese people. He described a complex reality of multiple communities, incredibly diverse with regard to both the homeland and the host of nations in which Vietnamese now reside. But, he said, through the 'trusted BBC brand', these communities are linked by a flow of information 'back and forth' across these national boundaries (Interview: 31 March 2006).

So, how can a local fire, an event seemingly limited in scope and significance, impact individuals, worlds apart in geography, yet sharing a common historical background as Vietnamese and interest in what happens to others linked to that history? How can these types of instantaneous communication happen across such a varied spectrum of media in such a short amount of time? Only through community networks which, while dispersed in various regions across the globe, nevertheless find their connectedness in the transnationally active individuals who maintain them. These individuals live transnationally, and are

imbedded within the borders of nation-states, actively pursuing activities and meaning through local communities. At the same time, these transnationally aware Vietnamese seem to be compelled to transcend those borders through relationships on a global scale.

Transnational Vietnamese strive to create and maintain networks on multiple levels; with individuals and entities where they live, in other diasporic communities and, in many cases, in the homeland.

For Kevin Robins (1996), a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural society is comprised of ever-changing representations that are always developing in such a way that 'the past cannot be recovered' and the 'cohesion and coherence of culture', 'always imaginary, cannot be reconstituted' (1996: 63). Robins goes on to say that as societies move forward they can only do so 'through cultural receptiveness and reciprocity... we have to move from thinking in terms of cultural identity to consider the significance of cultural exchange' (Robins, 1996: 64). This focus on 'cultural exchange' is critical in that as Vietnamese Londoners have established themselves in London, and utilize the urban centre as a base in which and from which to carry out transnational activities, each individual must become a part of the London fabric. Each must engage in cultural exchange in order to become a productive member and a part of the multi-cultural milieu that is London.

As has been noted in previous chapters, the 'cultural exchange' in question should not be assumed to only take the form of ethnic group or dominant and minority group interactions. The notion of 'cultural exchange' as applied to Vietnamese Londoners includes differences of 'culture' even within the larger so-called 'Vietnamese community'. This 'community' is not monolithic, as was noted in the previous chapter, due to divides of generation, homeland origin and immigration history examined earlier in this work. In any case, the exchange of cultural perspectives called for by Robins takes place amongst Vietnamese in the London setting and stretches out across the globe along transnational trajectories. As Guarnizo, Haller and Portez observed, 'the transnational route is open mainly to immigrants who have established a secure foothold in the host society' (2001: 25). The cultural exchange between the multiple 'host' cultures of London in general and Vietnamese immigrants in particular opens up a wealth of personal and collective meanings and perspectives across national boundaries so that, as Nonini and Ong assert, transnationalism presents us with 'new subjectivities in the global arena' (Vertovec, 1999: 5). Complex identities and communities represent the subjectivities in question, and it is out of this context that transnational

networks are established. London is the hub for a vast array of networks spanning multiple industries and connecting its residents with spaces across the globe. London's Vietnamese, transnationally involved in a wide range of these industries, form part of this global matrix of activity.

6.2 Transnational Networks in Motion

Transnational networks are in constant motion, always changing, moving, not just backward and forward across national borders, but in ever-complex directions and along ever increasing pathways and trajectories. I describe the activities of specific Vietnamese members of transnational networks as similar to a blue sky, crisscrossed by jet streams, none of which follow exactly the same path. In like manner, Vietnamese Londoners participating in these transnational networks make their way, 'traveling' in James Clifford's terminology (Clifford, 1997), sometimes intentionally and at other times unconsciously, through history, sometimes transforming and at other times simply opening new pathways across the increasingly porous boundaries of nation-states.

An example of this notion of 'traveling' across borders took place in a gathering of Vietnamese and others in central London in 2006. Located in a conference hall at the London Metropolitan University, a varied group of individuals, primarily Vietnamese, met for a series of seminars on '30 Years of Vietnamese Integration' in the United Kingdom. From academics to social practitioners, media experts, students and City professionals, the common denominator was a shared interest in the Vietnamese experience in the UK. Looking up during a morning presentation, I suddenly sat in bewildered surprise, staring at myself, larger than life, on the wall-sized screen at the front of the room. I was captured in mid-sentence, hand raised in a familiar, questioning gesture. The facilitator of the London Metropolitan University presentation, Peter Tuan Thon That, was illustrating the make-up of the attendees at the Vietnamese Professionals Society's annual conference held earlier in the year. Peter stated that the members and attendees present at the conference included a variety of people interested in the aims of the Vietnamese Professionals Society, even one or two unlikely candidates. I had indeed attended the conference, both out of my own personal interest in the activities of various London-based, Vietnamese organisations, as well for the purposes of this research. I noticed at the time, that I was the only Caucasian at the conference with the exception of a gentleman who, I was told, was a Frenchman married to a Vietnamese participant. I did not see him after the introductory session. The interest in my

presence as an ‘outsider’ at the conference came toward the end when I stood to ask a question of one of the speakers (hence the PowerPoint photograph mentioned above). The language of this particular presentation had been English, so I asked my question in English. I sat down and waited for the answer. After a brief moment, the speaker began his answer by saying, in Vietnamese ‘since he is English, I will answer in English’ I quickly replied, ‘Cum Duc’, which is a Vietnamese colloquialism meaning in effect, ‘Whichever’. There was a great deal of laughter, and when the audience calmed themselves, the speaker answered the question in Vietnamese.

This illustration reveals some of the complexities associated with Vietnamese networks. These complexities may be language, as in this case above in which presentations involving participants in a multi-cultural, urban context or including multiple generations of Vietnamese must include English for those who do not speak their ‘mother-tongue’, or questions of geography (‘I come from Haiphong, not Hanoi!’), historical and migratory experience (‘I experienced the Fall of Saigon.’), etc. In this next section, I present four transnational networks, each of which addresses some of these wider issues either in an exclusive way, creating a network for a specific type of community, or in an inclusive way, seeking to transcend the boundaries of community. We begin with the latter and move to the former.

The four London-based Vietnamese transnational networks to be examined in this chapter are divided into two categories including transnational media networks and transnational social networks. The BBC World Service, Vietnamese Section is examined as a transnational media network, and then, as transnational social networks, the Vietnamese Professional Society, VietPro (Vietnamese Professionals in the UK), and finally the An Viet Foundation. Each of these networks has unique and distinct characteristics, specific and bounded membership, and a clear reason for existing. Each will be examined utilising a framework of transnational activity which examines three aspects of everyday activity, the reach of the network, that is the extent to which the network stretches across national boundaries; the role of the network in influencing individuals and society across those boundaries; and the pathways along which the activity of the network travels as it crosses national borders.

6.3 The BBC Vietnamese Audience as a Transnational Media Network

Transnational media networks are defined, for the purposes of this research, as those members of a group, facilitated by transnationally active individuals, who consistently gather either physically or virtually around a particular type of media that, by design, transcends the geography of multiple nation-states. In other words, the reach of the transnational media on offer stretches into multiple communities scattered far out across the globe. Some obvious examples include people in various nations who watch a particular television programme, listen to a radio drama or connect to an Internet website. Perhaps less obvious, and what is highlighted in this section, are those virtual media communities which are formed in a participative way as people, often from widely disparate backgrounds and even globally separated geographies gather in a type of community to participate in what can be termed a 'global conversation' (Giang Interview, 21 March 2006) through the BBC World Service' Vietnamese language website.

Addressing role of language as a resource in holding and drawing members of disparate communities together, and examining a language-based transnational Vietnamese network that transcends many community boundaries, was the purpose of interviews with staff at the BBC World Service. With only a handful of languages represented at the world service, I was intrigued that Vietnamese was one of those languages. It is not within the scope of this thesis to address BBC policy and how decisions are made as to why this is the case. However, I will point out the importance of everyday statistical analysis in these decisions, and the significance of the reach and role of BBC Vietnamese with regard to Vietnamese transnational networks.

Based in London, the staff of the BBC World Service Vietnamese section gather news and connect with far-flung Vietnamese global communities in a wide variety of ways. Through the website, and the issue-specific, on-line forums regularly on offer, there are opportunities for listeners and internet users to interact with, challenge and learn from other members of the world-wide Vietnamese community through message boards and on-line questionnaires. The reach of BBC Vietnamese has been described in various conversations I have had with Vietnamese producers as involving Vietnamese listeners in far-flung places who become resources as they are contacted by BBC Vietnamese producers in search of current stories and a local perspective. One transnationally active producer described the process:

We take interactivity as one of the main things we are doing here, so we expect listeners, radio listeners and on-line users to send us as much emails or letters as they can and we try to analyse [this input] to adjust our programming to their needs regardless of the place where they are living, either San Jose, Southern California or London or Paris or Ho Chi Minh City or Hanoi. So we try to build a trustworthy relationship with our listeners (Giang Interview, 21 March 2006).

These opportunities for local input centre particularly on the extremely wide global database of contacts maintained by the service. In addition to listeners and online users in Vietnam itself as illustrated in the story introducing this chapter, Vietnamese members of the BBC transnational audience network have been located in specific places for specific stories such as Houston, Texas in the USA (re-location of Vietnamese to Houston after hurricane Katrina), Riyadh, Saudi Arabia (for stories related to the Gulf War), the Vatican (on Catholic Church-related developments), Sydney, Australia (for the Olympics), Micronesia in the Pacific Ocean (on climate issues), Madrid (during the bombings), Athens, Greece (during the Olympics) and even a tea seller in Baghdad, Iraq (in the early stages of the Iraq War). Given the fact that the BBC Vietnamese Service is on a modest budget, it is interesting to note that according to Giang Nguyen, ‘we have to go with low cost solutions. Not five-star hotels. We stay with some Vietnamese families. So then we make friends’ (Giang Interview, 15 April 2006). According to Hai Le, a producer at BBC Vietnamese, ‘In Vietnam, I ride a motorbike all over Vietnam and meet people all along the way’ (Hai Le Interview, 28 March 2009). Le also describes attending international conferences and coming away ‘with a big stack of business cards’ (Ibid.). The audience then, is not simply an audience, but a resource with every ‘friend’ of the BBC becoming a potential reporter on the ground.

These ‘reporters’ are scattered across the world as stated above, however, in a significant development for the BBC, according to Colin Wilding, a Senior Data Analyst at the BBC, ‘the Vietnam index has now been separated from the East Asia category for reasons around the significant numbers of users accessing the site in the target area’, that is in Vietnam (Wilding Interview, 21 February 2008). This means that according to statistics quoted by Wilding, on average, ‘58% of page impressions on the BBC Vietnamese website originate in Vietnam. For the size of the Vietnamese service, this is far above the average for BBC language services’ (Ibid.). The importance of this lies in the fact that with the fundamental and philosophical differences between Britain and Vietnam, BBC Vietnamese has become a

significant influence in the Vietnamese arena. This influence is illustrated in that the reach of BBC Vietnamese' transnational media network stretches even into the official websites of the Vietnamese government. Speaking of a particular United States, post hurricane Katrina news story related to Vietnamese relocation in Houston that was accompanied by a photo gallery, Giang stated that:

[The news story] is very successful, so Vietnam Express, one of the [Vietnamese government's] biggest Internet news providers in Vietnam, simply copied the whole picture gallery about the Vietnamese in Houston. This means two things to me. First, the new media in Vietnam are more relaxed about reporting on the Vietnamese community in the USA. Before that, you know, ten years ago, it would be very difficult for them to do so. The second thing is that they trust the BBC, what we say and what we report. And they put our brand there, so they don't steal, but they copy. They give credit to us, so it's very good, though they don't pay us a penny! (Giang Interview, 15 April 2006).

In the case of the BBC Vietnamese' interactions with the Vietnamese government, change can be measured by the everyday practises of Vietnamese journalists, producers, editors and a participating audience. The 'cooperation' between official Vietnamese media outlets and the BBC is, in a sense a barometer of the progress in the 'Doi Moi' (reconstruction) reforms discussed earlier.

The above story related to the Vietnamese government's use of BBC material in their own programming, illustrates the wide role of the BBC transnational media network as it produces media that is widely consumed beyond its own sites. The BBC brand is greatly enhanced by this tacit recognition by the Vietnamese government. In former times, as Giang mentioned, there was little relationship between the two other than the somewhat antagonistic, Cold War era mistrust that had settled like a fog over the information world, placing just out of reach any news item or story deemed dangerous or not beneficial to Vietnamese society. Now, we have an example of an official organ of the Vietnamese government actually pushing forward the role of the BBC as an active participant in the BBC transnational media community! This incident surprised some members of London's Vietnamese communities. One interviewee described the situation in the following terms, 'When I want to know what's really going on in Vietnam, I listen to BBC Vietnamese or go on the website. Now, it's amazing that the [Vietnamese] government is using BBC stories

and giving them credit!’ (Informal Interview, 10 May 2006). As a recognised brand, BBC Vietnamese plays a global role for Vietnamese worldwide.

However, the perspective on the role of the BBC’s brand is not all positive. The reality is that there remains a vestige of the Cold War ‘fog’ within the wider Vietnamese population. In an interview with Ha Anh, a London-based Vietnamese supermodel, I found that there is another side to the BBC Vietnamese impact on the larger community. I asked the question, ‘Do you listen to BBC Vietnamese radio or access the BBC Vietnamese website?’ Ha Anh replied, ‘I don’t really want to get into politics that much, and the BBC tends to be seen as more of a political service. It seems like the BBC have often reported on political issues that are a bit against the Vietnamese government. So, I really don’t listen to the BBC radio or go to the Internet’ (Interview, Ha Anh Vu 17 September 2008). It seems that there are Vietnamese Londoners with connections back to the homeland that are wary of the BBC which, as Ha Anh put it, is ‘political’ or ‘against the Vietnamese government’. I found this perspective somewhat common amongst the ‘work permit holders’ who have recently come to London, particularly from the northern part of Vietnam. As Peter Le stated, many of them are ‘not interested in politics’ (Peter Le Interview, 14 January 2008), and have no desire to become involved in anti-Vietnamese government activities. In Ha Anh’s case, her desire to remain outside of the political arena is to prevent any negative impact as she must travel extensively in and out of Vietnam. Others are involved in import and export businesses for which good relations with the government are extremely important.

Ha Anh’s point is an important one, as the BBC Vietnamese does, as does every news network, make choices about what stories and content goes on air or ‘to press’. These choices are made according to a set of values and parameters set forth by the directors. According to Giang Nguyen, the BBC is well aware of the perspective taken by Ha Anh, and is also sensitive to it. Giang stated:

We try to do it, [report on Vietnam news items which might be interpreted as ‘against’ the government] sort of, in a measured way. We don’t want to sort of stick to some topics on and on, all the time. We try to close down some forums after two to three weeks. We don’t want to be seen as very persistent in any direction. (Giang Nguyen Interview, 15 April 2006).

This comment illustrates the stated role of BBC Vietnamese. Taking opportunities to address various issues from different perspectives is part of the everyday activity of the Service. However, care must be taken in making decisions about how far to push a story. Giang continues,

And, I think the government in Vietnam appreciates this [‘measured’ approach to news media production]. And we try to be very balanced, with interviews, say, with an anti-government voice and then somebody from the government side. So we try to be fair. I think by doing so we have increased our influence (Ibid.).

While speaking of the efforts of the BBC in their attempts to maintain a ‘balanced’ view while at the same time reporting even difficult aspects of the news can indeed be ideological and requires political sensitivity. Giang hastens to add that the growing trust on the part of Vietnam-based members of the community is not only down to the BBC. ‘Of course, you know, I’m not saying it’s all our effort. Vietnam is opening up of course – the economy and then trade, media and some part of its politics too. So now, it’s almost sort of commonplace for the government’s new media, on-line services... they reprint or republish quite a lot of BBC Vietnamese.com stories’ (Ibid.). The BBC network then, is made up of a variety of consumers and influencers, and while the overall role of the BBC is to produce and distribute global and local news to and from a Vietnamese audience, another important role of the BBC in the network is as a producer of media that is further distributed through other networks in Vietnam and amongst the Viet Kieu (overseas Vietnamese).

Transnational media networks utilise specific pathways to connect people across the globe. I was interested in the pathways used by the BBC as specific media was developed and broadcast. I asked Giang: ‘How do you determine the balance between the international news on the one hand, and then you have the international perspective on local events amongst the Vietnamese in Vietnam, but also in the diaspora? Is [programming] related to what you find interesting in terms of a staff or is it the audience?’ Giang answered:

We want to do more. In 2004 we had an on-line survey with BBC marketing to do some research on what on-line audience... (We are not allowed, still, to conduct a radio survey nationally in Vietnam, but we can do an on-line survey here [from London] with questionnaires on air and people simply click on the answers. It’s easy to do.) So, we did that and the result says that the people want BBC to report more on Vietnam! You see? They trust us in reporting on

any world event, but they want more from Vietnam (Giang Nguyen Interview, 15 April 2006).

‘On-line surveys’ in which BBC producers have been challenged to ‘report more on Vietnam’ for instance, provide a pathway for two-way communication between BBC Vietnamese staff and the audience. A look at BBC Vietnamese website lead articles in August 2010, four years after my interview with Giang, suggests that, indeed, there is ‘more from Vietnam’ available, in Vietnamese, to the Vietnamese language audience. There are the usual international news and information articles common to multinational news networks such as a bus hijacking and killing in Manila, flooding in Pakistan, and a multimillion British pound transfer deal for Mascherano to play for Barcelona. However, I found that the majority of articles pertain to issues directly related to Vietnam. For instance, on the BBC Vietnamese home page, of five audio-visual articles available on 28 August, three are directly related to Vietnam while two are global news stories (BBC Vietnamese, 28 August 2010).

As was described in the opening of this chapter, there are a variety of methods of establishing and maintaining the pathways used by BBC transnational media network. According to members of the BBC the process is highly relational. From riding motorcycles through the provinces of Vietnam and travelling on-site to a breaking news story, attendance at various functions at the Vietnamese Embassy, multinational corporations or educational institutions, to simple phone calls to members of the network, each activity provides an opportunity to add to and interact with members of the BBC media network. In answer to a question about the establishment of the relationships in the network, Giang gave the following explanation:

It’s quite a challenge [gathering news from inside Vietnam] since we are here in London! So first, we try to expand contacts within the country – phone numbers, emails – very easy these days! Then, anytime we interview somebody, we keep a record of the interviews, what date in the NPS (database) system here in the BBC, and the phone number or any email contact for future use. And then we ask them, ‘Do you know, say, that singer, that artist or painter? We have heard they have some exhibition. Do you know them?’ And they know each other! It’s networking. And even state officials; now they are quite open to BBC interviews. Sometimes we ring them up and say ‘This is the topic, do you know it?’ And they say ‘Oh, I don’t know, but maybe my colleague will know. I’ll give you his mobile number’ or phone or whatever they can. And then we build up a huge list of contacts – some 1000

entry items. So then, we can easily get interviews (Giang Nguyen Interview, 15 April 2006).

In these comments, Giang describes the fact that the BBC Vietnamese staff are constantly involved in an active and intentional building of the network. Hai Le related that he was approached for advice on an issue involving Vietnamese immigrants in the UK. 'I was involved in that because one, I'm a BBC journalist, and secondly, I want to understand more one part of the Vietnamese people' (Hai Le Interview 28 March 2009). In the interaction, Hai was able to connect with Vietnamese as a journalist, but also, in a relational way, gain a better understanding of issues in Vietnamese communities in Britain. Each member of the network, interacting with BBC producers and journalists is a potential 'reporter' of news and activity in their locality, giving global audiences access to local perspectives. The global reach is across a widely scattered network through various types of media and relationships. The role of the BBC in the network is one of gathering, prioritising, and disseminating information on global and local issues and activities that relate to Vietnamese both in the homeland and abroad. And the pathways along which the BBC Vietnamese network interacts are the lines of communication through which that information is shared. Utilising the same framework, I turn to three transnational social networks, the An Viet Foundation, the Vietnamese Professionals Society, and VietPro. I begin with the An Viet Foundation.

6.4 The An Viet Foundation

An understanding of the An Viet Foundation and its emphasis on the community and cultural identity of Vietnamese in general as opposed to that of a Vietnamese national or nation-state focus is crucial if one is to properly interpret the purpose of the Foundation. With the communist ideology of the current Vietnamese government firmly established in the north from 1954 and the whole of the country since 1975 (though more recently with modifications and a growing openness to market economics and to the West), the founders of the An Viet Foundation are keen to distance themselves from post-colonial political rhetoric, and focus on the cultural history and cohesion of the Vietnamese as a people, not as a 'political' nation. As Hackney Councilor Vu stated in an interview, 'In London, almost [all] Vietnamese refugees are from North Vietnam. Because they had the experience of living under the communist regime, they don't want to talk about politics, they don't want to [be] involved with any political activities' (Vu Interview, 21 November 2007). Throughout the network, Vietnamese culture is highly valued and multiple opportunities exist to pursue

a deeper understanding of the Vietnamese as a people from an An Viet perspective. This perspective is heavily influenced by the transnationally active founder of the network, Councillor Thanh Khanh Vu.

The An Viet Foundation has an extensive reach into every continent in which Vietnamese have resettled since 1975. Describing the extent of the reach of An Viet, Cllr Vu states that in addition to the larger chapters in the UK, USA and Australia ‘in France, Holland or Germany, Norway as well, we have small An Viet groups. They meet to discuss the philosophies, the way of life, but [without] their own centres like the community groups in this country... [their meetings are] not so often, like the centre opens daily in this country’ (Cllr Vu Interview, 24 October 2007). Cllr Vu adds:

We’ve got very good relationship with some groups in France and especially in America, but not in Vietnam. [We meet] every year [and] have what is called the Cultural Conference. Last year we had the conference in Australia. We had around 1000 people to attend. Also nearly every year we change the venue – in France, in Australia, California, in Washington... simply where there are a lot of Vietnamese (Ibid.).

Key individuals who travel as keynote speakers to the various conferences sponsored by An Viet enhance the reach of the network. During the conference in London, in addition to those from the UK, I met speakers from the USA, France and Germany. I also noted that a large number of Vietnamese students from across Europe were a part of the gathering as well.

The role of the Foundation involves all aspects of community development including cultural maintenance, employment and relations with other members of the communities in which Vietnamese live. The most far-reaching objective of the An Viet Foundation is its more recent focus on the development of the Institute of Vietnam and Southeast Asia Studies. According to Cllr Vu, the purpose of the Institute is ‘to promote a better understanding of the history and perspective of Confucianism and also to provide opportunities for the study of Vietnamese culture’ (Cllr Vu Informal Interview, 21 November 2007).

The An Viet Foundation has three major pathways along which transnational activity travels. The first is through the transnational and relational activity of Councillor Khanh

Thanh Vu. Sitting in the library in the An Viet Centre, I was aware of the steady stream of Vietnamese seeking advice or interviews with Cllr Vu. 'Because of his experience and influence [in the Borough of Hackney and in specific Vietnamese circles], many Vietnamese visiting London from abroad seek time with him' stated one of a number of workers at the Centre (Informal Interview, 21 November 2007). This enhances his transnational influence and activity, which is important for the network.

The second pathway is through the annual Cultural Conference as mentioned above. Each year the opportunity is given for Vietnamese to network and build relationships with other Vietnamese from around the world. The three-day conference is held in various cities where there is a significant and networked Vietnamese population ready to host (Cllr Vu Interview 24 October 2007). The third pathway for the An Viet Foundation is the website and monthly magazine hosted and published by the Foundation. Significantly, the website is in English as well as Vietnamese, giving insight into the desire on the part of the network to connect with various generations of Vietnamese including the younger, British-Vietnamese generation, many of whom are not fluent in Vietnamese. The English language aspect of the website is also used for the promotion of the Institute of Vietnam and Southeast Asian Studies. 'Be patient with us', stated Cllr Vu one afternoon. 'Our English is not always correct' (Informal Interview, 21 November 2007), referring to the posting on the website of a number of articles related to Vietnamese culture and life which have been translated from Vietnamese into English. This statement highlights the desire on the part of the Foundation to extend its reach, as well as expand its role along global pathways utilising languages, venues and key transnationally active individuals in the process of preserving and promoting Vietnamese culture and life. I continue, at this point, with two further transnational social networks. With similar networks but quite different methodologies and purposes, are the transnational social networks called the Vietnamese Professionals Society (VPS) and VietPro.

6.5 Vietnamese Professionals Society (VPS) as a Transnational Social Network

Both of these networks are made up primarily of Vietnamese who are settled in the UK in careers related to business, finance and insurance, education, technology and medicine. While many members in the Vietnamese Professionals Society originate from the era of the 'boat people' as either immigrants or children of those immigrants (1.5 generation), those professionals involved in VietPro are more recent work permit and student arrivals with strong ties with the current Vietnamese communist government.

The Vietnamese Professionals Society (VPS) is a world-wide organisation with a reach that includes branches in the major cities of North America, Europe and Australia. While the reach of the organisation does not normally include any type of long term presence in Vietnam, there are definite activities taking place that have the potential to extend the reach of the VPS into the homeland. There is a clear political agenda and desire for social change back in the Vietnamese homeland. In a conversation with a leader of the network, several activities of the network were described:

We engage in a number of different activities. The most involved is our annual conference. Then we have fund raising activities for charitable work in Vietnam, the publication of articles and the offering of workshops on issues related to Vietnamese, and then to maintain our Vietnamese culture. We are trying to enhance communication and promote cooperation amongst Vietnamese businesses, academics, non-profit organisations and students (Informal Interview, 2 September 2004).

As a network, VPS engagement in the activities listed above involves a wide variety of individuals who support the political aims of the Society. Perhaps in addition to being a network, the VPS could be representative of what Robin Cohen has called ‘transnational social movements’ (Cohen, 1998) in that it has this very clear political agenda and functions as a ‘movement’ for influence in the homeland. One of the stated purposes of the VPS is to ‘facilitate change and bring about a liberalising of the Communist regime in Vietnam’ (Informal Interview, 27 September 2006). According to a former president of the Society, the role of the VPS is to harness the cumulative power of the capital and resources associated with the Viet Kieu, and apply it to the facilitation of change back in the homeland of Vietnam. ‘We want to see more political, social and economic openness on the part of the Vietnamese government in Vietnam toward our own people and toward the participation of overseas Vietnamese in the development of the nation’ (Informal Interview, 27 September 2006). Attending the annual conference of the Vietnamese Professionals Society, I sat quietly, listening to the conversations around me. Discussions characterised by hope and change carried on throughout the lunch break. Young Vietnamese professionals described their activities, each with a longing for a wider role in the global Vietnamese community, particularly in relation to the political transitions toward openness currently occurring in their homeland.

One participant in the conference who sat next to me was willing to chat about the current state of affairs in the relationship of the Vietnamese government and the Viet Kieu (overseas Vietnamese). ‘New initiatives have been launched for getting quality Viet Kieu professors from the United States and the UK back to Vietnam to strengthen university and institute departments in a variety of fields’ (Informal Interview, 3 July 2004). The validity of this statement was corroborated later through the publication of an article in the on-line journal of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA). The article calls for further strengthening of ties to overseas academic institutions of higher learning, stating: ‘Deputy Prime Minister Pham Gia Khiem asked the Association for Liaison with Overseas Vietnamese to work harder to rally overseas Vietnamese (Viet Kieu) intellectuals to take part in developing [the] homeland’ (MoFA, 2007). The article continues:

The Government has considered the Association for Liaison with Overseas Vietnamese as its extended hand to help with the implementation of policies for Vietnamese communities overseas... [and] he expressed hopes that the association will continue to perform its task as a "bridge for Vietnamese hearts" inside and outside the country (Ibid.).

In response to this call for assistance in ‘developing the homeland’ (MoFA, 2007), the Association elected an executive board and made a decision ‘to invite some overseas Vietnamese, who had been returning home on short trips for many years, to a consultative council for the executive board’ (Ibid.). These new perspectives provide opportunities for individuals like those VPS members who are already engaging in transnational activity, to increase involvement across the political divides and national boundaries that once served as barriers to Vietnamese Londoners with a refugee background.

In the current period, it seems as if a wider role now exists for the appropriation of intellectual and economic resources in such a way as to allow physical participation in form of educational exchanges and employment. This is a far cry from the post-1975 rift experienced by the ‘boat people’ of Vietnam. From an era in which hearts were torn from one another by political and ideological differences, Vietnamese are entering a new era in which there are attempts to construct a ‘bridge for Vietnamese hearts’ across those same divides. In fact, according to an interview given by Nguyen Thanh Son, Acting Chairman [sic] of the Committee on Overseas Vietnamese under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, government policy has apparently changed for those who fled on the high seas. ‘For those

who left Viet Nam as boat people, we will not take the context of leaving into consideration. As long as they can prove they are Vietnamese and have legal residency in the country where they are living, we will grant the visa exemption. This is one of the ways by which the Government wants to show overseas Vietnamese communities goodwill' (MoFA, 2007).

A number of issues have arisen related to this new development in the journey of Vietnamese through the policies of 'Doi Moi' or 'renovation'. Samuel James, a fluent Vietnamese speaker and lifetime participant in Vietnamese affairs both in the homeland and with communities in such places as the United States, Australia, Hong Kong, states that there are a number of issues that will need to be addressed along the way. According to his own interviews, James states that at present 'there really appears to be little interest in connecting with overseas Vietnamese except for either recruitment of skilled workers or 'tourism' which will bring money to Vietnam. The only concern the [Vietnamese government] seems to have right now is the recruitment of people who can contribute to science, technology, and industry' (Email Interview from Ho Chi Minh City, 24 July 2006). James went on to say that current laws and policies are being reviewed and further changes seem to be coming that would relax some of the controls of the past.

In one of his interviews in Ho Chi Minh City, James found that 'the idea is to target the over 300,000 Vietnamese experts and intellectuals who have gotten their expertise and intellectual capabilities overseas and are living overseas' (Ibid). This policy seeks to capitalise on the expertise gained by members of Vietnamese overseas communities through many of the finest educational institutions and the most powerful corporations and businesses in countries like Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia, Germany, France, etc. James concludes that the Vietnamese government are 'trying to develop a strategic plan to identify these persons, locate them, communicate in an acceptable way, and challenge them to come back to Vietnam to lend their expertise for the "Homeland Front"' (Email Interview from Ho Chi Minh City, 24 July 2006). Communicating with the overseas Vietnamese in an 'acceptable way' is a key phrase indicating how far the government of Vietnam has come in opening pathways for transnational activity to Vietnamese individuals and communities formerly vilified in political rhetoric as has been mentioned earlier in this work.

Economic development is only one of the pathways members of the VPS utilise for participation in the process of change within the Vietnamese government. Another pathway is that of peaceful protest in Vietnam. According to the VPS website, several Vietnamese pro democracy activists were arrested during a peaceful demonstration in Vietnam. One of the participants in the group's activities in Vietnam was a member of a VPS chapter. In the aftermath, the VPS stated firmly on their website that, 'the Vietnamese Professionals Society strongly opposes the repressive actions by the Vietnamese government and urges the immediate safe release of all six pro-democracy activists. The Vietnamese Professional Society calls upon its members around the world, along with all Vietnamese citizens, to advocate for this cause and to support Dr Nguyen Quoc Quan [a VPS founding member and past general secretary] and all other victims persecuted by the Vietnamese communist government' (VPS, 2007). While no members of VPS-UK were involved on-site in this particular incident, the use of the Internet illustrates the transnational pathways along which Vietnamese Londoners' influence stretches as opportunities are sought to affect change in the homeland. Just prior to my visit to Hanoi in 2007, I was pulled aside by a Vietnamese leader in VPS who sternly informed me, 'you have a rare opportunity to speak out, to make the views of Londoners known and influence Vietnamese officials regarding these issues' (Informal Interview, 21 January 2007). Members of VPS sought multiple ways to influence the current regime.

Other pathways include travel from London back to the homeland on exploratory trips in efforts to discover ways of engaging the government and population of Vietnam, although many VPS members resist engaging in travel back to Vietnam due to political views contrary to the current government. VPS member, Peter Le took advantage of new policies and openness to the return of Viet Kieu, discussed earlier, when he took his family back to Vietnam for a 25-day trip in 2008. Peter's goal was to 'explore ways in which he might become more involved in activities in the homeland' (Informal Interview 17 Feb. 2008). As a result of his trip, Peter's desire is to 'return to Vietnam to train leaders in the near future' (Ibid.). As a member of this transnational network, Peter and others are acting on opportunities to reach beyond their local perspective and have a direct impact on the perspectives, events, and activities of Vietnamese worldwide.

In light of these major shifts in policy, it seems that some members of the Vietnamese Professionals Society may be well placed, to contribute in ways that are in keeping with

their community ethos and objectives. On the other hand, a separate organisation, VietPro is already poised to take advantage of opportunities to extend their influence as an already recognised and Vietnamese government-sanctioned broker of jobs and opportunities both in Vietnam and in the UK. The reach, role and pathway framework of transnational activity is also helpful at this point in examining ways in which VietPro perceive that they can proceed in this new environment.

6.6 VietPro as a Transnational Social Network

With a much shorter history than the VPS, VietPro was organised in 2010, ‘through the merge[r] of two Vietnamese Facebook groups with a combined membership of around 250. The group was launched in the presence of representatives from the Vietnamese Embassy and high-profile business leaders on 23 January 2010 in London’ (VietPro, 2010: ‘About Us’). With its specifically targeted reach, VietPro maintains a position as a broker in the human resources field, recognised by both the United Kingdom and Vietnamese governments. A look at the website reveals that the reach of the VietPro network not only encompasses business professionals, but also includes students (VietPro 2010: ‘About Us’). In a conversation with a member of VietPro, I discovered that the VietPro network:

Assists in helping UK-based Vietnamese skilled professionals find jobs both in the UK and in Vietnam, so we connect with both sides through our on-line forums. In the beginning discussions were taking place on Facebook, but we had too many people and decided to create an official network with a very active website’ (Informal Interview, 19 August 2010).

VietPro maintains a similar role to the VPS. However, the stated agenda is not about liberalising the communist regime, but is about utilising the more open business climate in Vietnam for the expansion of the network into new areas. The stated aim or mission of the network is ‘to act as a hub for Vietnamese working professionals to connect, share and create career and business opportunities in the UK and Vietnam’ (VietPro, 2010: ‘Home Page’).

The pathways along which VietPro carries out its agenda are quite straightforward. Through its partners including the British Council, HSBC bank, Savills Vietnam, and Longdan Specialty Foods, VietPro is capable of organising connecting events to link trained job seekers with potential employers both in Britain and in Vietnam. Along these lines, one

member stated, ‘we just completed our first ever presentation where a big multinational firm came to London from Ho Chi Minh and met with Vietnamese applicants and interested persons’ (Informal Interview, 19 August 2010). A pathway for VietPro that is being used extensively is a forum page on the VietPro website that encourages the sharing of information and ideas on a number of different subjects including careers in the UK, Vietnam and other countries, professional development, a student focus group, entrepreneurship, housing and accommodation and a page to promote communication with the Vietnamese Student organisation, SVUK (VietPro, 2010: ‘Forum’). These transnational activities with significant reach, roles and connecting pathways are indicative of the complex identities lived out by some Vietnamese Londoners.

6.7 Conclusion

In this final chapter, I examined several different ways that Vietnamese Londoners organise themselves into networks in order to accomplish shared purposes that are transnational in nature. The membership, origins and even purposes of the Vietnamese transnational networks examined in this chapter are quite different, however, what is of value is that fact that in each case the members of each network joined together with an agenda that was transnational in its nature and transformative in its purpose.

As a result of this research, I have been able to conclude that Vietnamese transnational networks are drawn from multiple and complex Vietnamese communities in London. In some cases these networks bring Vietnamese Londoners together physically, but in other cases there are virtual networks such as that of the BBC World Service, Vietnamese Section. In this chapter we have taken as a basis Hannerz’ insistence that the notion of the ‘network’ serves well as we examine the ways that people come together in ‘heterogeneous sets of often long-distance relationships which organize culture in the world’ (Vertovec, 2001: 27-28). In exploring ways that Vietnamese Londoners organise themselves into networks, I have concluded that networks are developed with unique and distinct characteristics, specific and bounded membership and a clear reason for existing.

Throughout the course of this research, I sought to understand ways in which Vietnamese Londoners were transnationally active through relationships and networks. In this chapter, I applied a framework (reach, role, and pathway) for examining transnational networks, which rose out of discussions and explorations with Vietnamese Londoners. Also, the transnational

networks examined in this chapter are by no means exhaustive of those active within Vietnamese communities in London. The networks selected for this study were chosen because of their transnational connections and in most cases because of the transnational activities of Vietnamese interviewees. Finally, by applying the criteria of a framework of transnational activity, I concluded that these networks were characteristic of the type of transnational networks Vietnamese described in interviews and conversations and therefore, this framework was a useful tool in evaluating the nature of transnational networks with regard to transnational activity.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to dialogue with Vietnamese Londoners in order to explore the transnational activities and networks in which they are involved. The initial question driving the research was ‘What does it mean to be a Vietnamese Londoner?’ The intent was to engage in a debate around the state of Vietnamese communities in London, with regard to transnational perspectives. Vietnamese in London were, at the beginning of this project, being described as ‘poverty-stricken’, ‘unemployed’ and ‘despairing’. From this starting point, and utilising analyses of interviews, participant observation, and participation in Vietnamese-organised conferences in London, I addressed two further questions: ‘What does it mean to be a transnationally active Vietnamese Londoner?’, and then ‘How are Vietnamese Londoners engaged in community-based transnational networks?’

Transnational Identities Emerge out of Vietnamese Communities

The first conclusion that can be drawn from the research is that there is a significant population of Vietnamese in London that is divided into a variety of communities (cf. Map 1) based on multiple and complex factors. Out of these communities have emerged support structures such as community centres as well as businesses in a variety of fields that service not only Vietnamese in London but Londoners in general (cf. Appendixes III and IV). Vietnamese communities in London are not in themselves ‘transnational communities’ in a monolithic sense. These communities are characterised by the transnational activities of individual Vietnamese Londoners who, as members of Vietnamese communities, have established identities and networks across national borders for the purpose of linking various communities as a part of their livelihoods. These are the transnationally active Vietnamese Londoners who are the subject of this thesis (cf. Appendixes III and V). It has been shown that each individual has a frame of reference that involves transnational ‘reach’, ‘role’ and ‘pathways’. It is possible to examine these elements in efforts to ‘locate’ transnational activity within communities, utilising research methods involving a ‘grounded theory’ approach. By allowing answers to the research questions and the conclusions based on those answers to rise out of the interview material and observations of Vietnamese Londoners, I was able to carry out this research with appropriate attention given to the ethical issues surrounding representation and voice.

Transnational Identities as Resourced Identities

Based on the findings of this research, I can conclude that transnational identities are specific trajectories of the migrant experience, differentiated from Vietnamese migrant identities in that while many migrants maintain familial and friendship ties with the homeland and often with Vietnamese communities across national borders, Vietnamese transnational identities involve maintaining far-reaching networks in order to practise specific, everyday activities including various types of work in various industries as outlined in this thesis (cf. Appendix III). Transnational identities are identifiable by the activities in which individuals are involved, and these transnational identities can be described and are characterised by at least three distinct markers, which form a framework for transnational activities. These markers are the ‘reach’, ‘role’ and ‘pathways’ of transnational activity. One of the hallmarks of transnational identities is the utilisation of multiple types of resources including the application of the nation and citizenship as resources and the city as a base. Transnationally active Vietnamese Londoners also apply resources such as linguistic ability, to intentionally develop identifiable transnational networks that cross national boundaries. It is important to note that a key conclusion of this research is that while it may have been true in the past that Vietnamese Londoners with a northern Vietnamese background were more likely to be involved in transnational activities and networks back in the homeland of Vietnam or in the former Soviet Bloc, while those who were brought up in the south of Vietnam were likely to be involved in networks in nations associated with American influence due to the collective memory of the ‘take-over’ of the southern part of Vietnam by the north, this is no longer the case. I can conclude from this research that many ‘Northerners’ and ‘Southerners’, based in London, are now involved in transnational networks without regard for previous allegiances and political limitations.

A Challenge to the Duality of the Nation-State Paradigm

Another conclusion drawn from this project affirms the fact that Vietnamese Londoners who are linked to transnational activities and networks are challenging old structures and assumptions inherent in the ‘nation-state’ paradigm. Loyalty and support on the part of Vietnamese Londoners is divided, but not exclusively so. Most of the transnationally active Vietnamese interviewed are either British citizens or have ‘indefinite leave to remain’ in Britain. Many consider themselves British politically, but at the same time these individuals are active in and loyal to networks that stretch across national borders into multiple Vietnamese communities in multiple nation-states. A traditional and ‘dualistic’ (either in or

out) understanding of ‘nationalism’, that is, a singular loyalty to an imagined community represented by an actual place, is not in evidence among those interviewed. Instead, there is a range of possibilities. In one instance there are ‘British-Vietnamese’, who have nothing to do with the Vietnamese Communist-led homeland, but who are well networked with the Viet Kieu (Overseas Vietnamese) in multiple nations (cf. Cllr Vu, Dr. Thanh). In another instance, there are those who maintain networks that include all Vietnamese communities, on both sides of the northern-southern Vietnamese ideological divide, as well as across Vietnamese community boundaries in London, and outside of Britain, connecting multiple Vietnamese communities on several continents (cf. Ha Anh, Giang, Hai, Peter Le). Appadurai describes this phenomenon in the following way: ‘These “new patriotisms” are not just the extensions of nationalist and counternationalist debates by other means ... they also involve... new forms of linkage between diasporic nationalisms, delocalized political communications and revitalized political commitments at both ends of the diasporic process’ (Appadurai, 1995: 220). As the Vietnamese community grows, the diasporic links also strengthen and multiply, and London becomes a stronger base from which to engage in networks. A part of the strength of that base has to do with the visibility of the community.

A recent development in attempts to increase the visibility of the Vietnamese in London involves the current proposal to purchase a site in the Olympic Village after the 2012 Olympics in London. The An Viet Foundation is part of a plan to build a ‘Vietnam Village’ with a Buddhist Temple, housing, a park and business properties. Billed as the ‘Vietnam Village in London’, it is designed to be a ‘centre for Vietnamese and also an opportunity for others [outside the Vietnamese communities] to learn about Vietnamese’ (Informal Interview, 10 June 2010). The intent is that the visibility of London’s Vietnamese communities will be stretched beyond the assumptions of restaurants, nail shops and corner stores as well as crime, cannabis and gangs. This study shows that the networks are in place and there are key individuals in strong positions to press the Vietnamese agenda forward not only across national borders in physical places, but also through multi-sited networks that connect people who may never meet one another ‘in person’.

Nation and Citizenship as Resources

Transnationally active Vietnamese take advantage of multiple types of resources in order to expand and develop transnational networks. According to Bozniak:

It is also quite possible, however, that the association between citizenship and nation-state will be hard to sever, and that citizenship will remain inextricably linked in the public consciousness with the nation-state and its institutions... In such circumstances, theorists and activists interested in the denationalization of social and political life might choose to pursue a different rhetorical strategy. That is, rather than arguing that citizenship increasingly extends beyond the nation-state, they might wish to contend that recent denationalizing developments are taking us beyond citizenship altogether (Bozniak, 2000: 509).

This research has shown that far from being 'beyond citizenship' in practise and theory, transnationally active Vietnamese Londoners are utilizing citizenship and its privileges as resources for that transnational activity. For the Vietnamese interviewed during the course of this project, the nation is not a passing phenomenon, but a useful base of operations. Rather than living in the final days of the nation in an emerging 'post-national' world, Vietnamese have discovered, and are actively applying the benefits and possibilities associated with citizenship in a nation with powerful and widespread influence, the root of which is the economic and political status Britain maintains in the world. From membership in the G8 and United Nations Security Council to the strength and desirability of the British pound; from the status of London as a financial, fashion and media capital, to the cyber and actual travel linkages available to its citizens and inhabitants, the resources of the nation are a rich mine of possibilities. This study is a beginning point, showing that Vietnamese utilise the powerful realities of living in and doing business from London in a trans-nationally linked world.

Values-Based Identities

I have also concluded that there are certain identifiable values that provide a basis for the specific behaviours and activities in which Vietnamese transnationals are involved. While many studies of transnational religion focus on the cross-border institutional networks and individual relationships involved in practising and maintaining religious identity, I concluded in this study that, while there are certainly instances in which Vietnamese Londoners practise and maintain religious identities in keeping with their place of origin, most interviewees are either not actively involved, or less actively involved in the religious institutions from which they came. In addition, there are examples of Vietnamese interviewees who are actively exploring other faiths than those of their forbears. In other words, the same complexities that characterise notions of identity amongst Vietnamese also characterise some Vietnamese Londoner's religious belief and practise. Just as it is not

possible to articulate Vietnamese identity by describing a monolithic Vietnamese ‘culture’ due to multiple community belongings and experiences, it is also not possible to outline a singular Vietnamese religious belief.

Belief and practise amongst Vietnamese, transnationally active Londoners, is a moving target involving multiple religions, communist ideology, and Confucian values all lived out in the course of daily life. Globally networked Viet Kieu in London, are open to a wide variety of possibilities regarding religion and belief. However, with regard to everyday practise, there is, across the spectrum, a general commitment to a set of values outlined in writings attributed to Confucius that call for mutual respect between individuals, a special regard for the elderly, and a commitment to assist others. As one interviewee put it, ‘we are not a people of individuals, we know that we live in relationships... we are always aware of how our actions will affect others, but especially our family name. That means we must always treat others with respect (Informal Interview, 26 September 2005). Whether Vietnamese describe themselves as without god, Buddhist, Catholic, Protestant, or Communist, there is a set of values that seem to be foundational to the everyday practise of those beliefs or none. Further research and observation is needed in order to more fully understand the actual everyday practise of these various religions and ideologies within the plurality of London’s Vietnamese communities.

Vietnamese Londoners and Their Transnational Resources

Perhaps one of the most important conclusions that can be drawn from this research is a realisation of the importance of the ‘roles’ and ‘reach’ of transnationally active Vietnamese individuals with regard to transnational initiatives and the objectives of international entities relating to Vietnamese communities around the world. Some Vietnamese Londoners, having lived through multiple migrations and having gained perspective on various ‘ways of living’ through experiences in various national contexts, are an invaluable resource to non-government organisations and government bodies alike. It is my contention that many of those I interviewed for this project have networks and resources as well as experience and opportunity to be influential in a wide variety of international arenas, some perhaps beyond Vietnamese contexts. The skills and resources necessary for transnational activity have been honed to a fine art for many of those I interviewed, and make them attractive candidates for a variety of roles on the international stage. This point was made recently when I received and email from interviewee, Ha Anh. On a trip to Vietnam, she excitedly wrote, ‘Stephen, I

thought you would be pleased to know that I've been selected as the UNICEF representative for Vietnam!' Indeed, this is the type of 'role' and 'reach' available to transnationally active Vietnamese who maintain far-reaching networks and influence others through the roles in which they are engaged.

A Vietnamese portrait of this transnational perspective can be found in a Pacific News article by Andrew Lam who describes the Vietnamese experience thus: 'From tragic beginnings, the Vietnamese diaspora now finds itself spread across five continents, at the centre of the Information Age, true global villagers' (Lam, 2000: 1). In his presentation, he discusses the fact that the Vietnamese have naturally gravitated toward the engineering and computer fields. He goes on to say:

If the Vietnamese diaspora began a quarter of a century ago from tragic beginnings, it has turned into a post-modern fairy tale. Vietnamese abroad have, within a quarter of a century, made the transition from a people bound to the land, who tended our ancestral graves and believed in the integrity of borders, to a highly mobile, global tribe as bound to the computer chip as we are to preserving our culture (Ibid: 2).

This concluding picture of a global Vietnamese 'tribe' reflects the perspective of Vietnamese who engage in transnational activities, linking members of the tribe in a variety of ways across multiple national divides. This is what it means to be a transnationally active Vietnamese Londoner. And this is how Vietnamese Londoners are engaged in community-based transnational networks.

For Future Research

Opportunities for further research can be found in two areas. First, there is a need to continue to follow the transnational activities of those interviewed for this project. As I have argued, transnational identities are not reified in any way, they are part of everyday life, and everyday life can change. Already, as I write this, two of the interviewees are no longer involved in transnational activities. What happens when interviewees move in and out of transnationally-focused lives? And how does this affect their roles in the various communities to which they belong? These are perhaps starting points for follow-on research.

The second opportunity for further research relates to the growing relationship between the United Kingdom and Vietnam in the areas of sport, the growing film industry, music, and

fashion. For sport, see Appendix XV ‘An Emerging Transnational Network’ between London’s Arsenal Football Club and the Vietnamese top flight, Hoang Anh Gia Lai Football Club. In other areas, agreements have been signed between British and Vietnamese entities for increased cooperation in a variety of areas including training, internships, the opening up of markets and cultural exchanges. Further research in these areas is particularly needed as the Vietnamese population of London moves into the 2nd and 3rd generations. A key question will involve the continued maintenance of transnational networks on the part of these subsequent generations. Will these networks always be primarily maintained by 1st and 1.5 generation new immigrants, or will there be a need to conceptualise transnational processes on a newer basis? This study is, in actuality, only the beginning.

Appendix I: The Vietnamese Diaspora.

This section will provide some understanding of the scope of the diasporic Vietnamese community and the extent of the out-migration of Vietnamese from the homeland.

Following several decades of conflict and economic hardship, as well as population growth among the diaspora, the global Vietnamese population is distributed among 80 nations and makes up some 2.5 million Vietnamese according to Sonia Ryang. (Ryang 2001)

- 1.300.000 in the United States .
- 250.000 in France.
- 300.000 in Russia and Eastern countries.
- 120.000 in Canada.
- 100.000 in Germany.
- 30.000 in the United Kingdom.
- 110.000 in Australia.
- 100.000 in Thailand

It must be noted that in many cases, France and the United Kingdom included, these statistics only list those born outside the country of residence and so do not reflect those born in diasporic communities over the past 30 years since immigration. Due to this discrepancy, as well as the growth in the influx of non-legal immigrants, it is more likely that the population of Vietnamese in the United Kingdom is actually in the range of 70,000 to 100,000 people.

Appendix II: Cities with which Vietnamese Londoners are Transnationally Networked

(Note: See Map 1 for a visual perspective on the reach of Vietnamese Londoners).

Amsterdam	Prague
Arlington, Virginia	San Jose, California
Berlin	Shanghai
Birmingham, England	Singapore
Brussels	Stockholm
Canberra	Philadelphia
Copenhagen	Taipei
Frankfurt	Tokyo
Haiphong	Westminster, California
Hamburg	
Hanoi	
Ho Chi Minh	
Hong Kong	
Houston	
Leipzig	
Little Saigon, California	
Los Angeles	
Melbourne	
Moscow	
New Orleans	
New York	
Paris	

Appendix III: Interviewees, Roles and Reach. (Note: Some names have been changed at the interviewees' request.)

NAMES	ROLE	REACH
'Chinh'	Restaurant Owner/ Manager	Europe, Asia
Dao Hanh	Sales, Nail Supply Shop	Europe, USA
Giang	Media, Radio	Worldwide
Ha Anh	Fashion Model, Musician	Worldwide
Hai	Media, Radio	Worldwide
'Mr. Ho'	Restaurant Owner	Europe
'Hoa'	Retail, Music and Video	Europe, Asia, USA
'Huong'	Travel Agent	Europe, Asia
Mary	Shop Owner (Gracery)	Europe, Asia
'Nam'	Travel Agent/ Student	Europe, Asia
Nga	Publisher	Europe, Asia
'Ngia'	Retail and Sales Trainer	Europe
Peter Le	Social Worker, Pastoral Care	Europe, USA, Canada, Asia
Dr. Thanh	Medicine	Europe, USA
Toan	Higher Education	Europe, USA
Councillor Vu	Politics	Europe, USA, Australia

Appendix IV: Demographic Tables Showing Vietnamese Businesses by Type and Location (on succeeding pages).

Table 1: Vietnamese Businesses by Location and Type, (Parravicini, 2004).

Borough	Restaurant	Nail Shop	Super-market	Others	Total	Percentage
CENTRAL						
Islington	6	2	0	1	9	3.2%
Kens & Chelsea	3	2	0	0	5	1.8%
Lambeth	2	6	0	1	9	3.2%
Camden	2	7	0	1	10	3.5%
Southwark	12	12	3	7	34	11.9%
Westminster	16	4	0	2	22	7.7%
Wandsworth	3	8	0	4	15	5.3%
Sub-TOTAL	44	41	3	16	104	36.5%
SOUTH						
Bromley	1	1	0	0	2	0.7%
Merton	0	2	0	1	3	1.1%
Croydon	0	4	0	1	5	1.8%
Sub-TOTAL	1	7	0	2	10	3.5%
WEST						
Brent	1	3	0	0	4	1.4%
Hammersmith/ Fulham	3	3	0	1	7	2.5%
Ealing	1	3	0	0	4	1.4%
Sub-TOTAL	5	9	0	1	15	5.3%
EAST						
Corp of London	2	1	0	0	3	1.1%
Lewisham	8	5	2	7	22	7.7%
Greenwich	3	2	1	4	10	3.5%
Hackney	22	18	10	23	73	25.6%
Newham	0	1	0	1	2	0.7%
Redbridge	0	1	0	0	1	0.4%
Tower Hamlets	1	3	0	1	5	1.8%
Sub-TOTAL	36	31	13	36	116	40.7%
NORTH						
Enfield	0	8	0	3	11	3.9%
Haringey	4	3	0	2	9	3.2%
Barnet	4	2	0	4	10	3.5%
WalthamForest	2	7	1	0	10	3.5%
Sub-TOTAL	10	20	1	9	40	14.0%
TOTAL	96	108	17	64	285	100.0%

Table 2: Other Vietnamese Businesses and Locations in London (Parravicini, 2004).

Sectors	Code	CENTRAL	SOUTH	WEST	EAST	NORTH	TOTAL
Professional services	1	2	0	0	0	0	2
Leisure & Entertainment	2	0	0	0	2	0	2
Creative Industries	3	3	2	0	2	1	8
Construction	6	0	0	0	2	0	2
Manufacturing	8	0	0	0	7	0	7
Retail	9	4	0	1	8	1	14
Wholesale	10	0	0	0	1	0	1
Engineering	11	0	0	0	2	2	4
Health	14	1	0	0	7	3	11
Other	16						0
Cleaning (Drycleaners)	16.1	2					2
Warehouse/ Packaging	16.3						0
Garage	16.4	5			2	2	9
Wedding Services	16.5				1		1
Total Other		7	0	0	3	2	12
GRAND TOTAL		17	2	1	34	9	63

Appendix V: Description of Primary Interviewees (both formal and informal).

1. 'Chinh' owns and operates a Vietnamese restaurant in north London. He came to London from Hanoi in northern Vietnam a few years ago with his partner who was working on a graduate degree in a London university. I first met Chinh when I stuck my head in the door during closing hours and enquired in Vietnamese about the restaurant. Several workers were preparing table settings and let me in the door where I waited while one of them pulled Chinh from the back. I greeted him in Vietnamese, which resulted in a rather lengthy conversation ending with my promise to return for a meal. I have done so with family and friends on a number of occasions, meeting Chinh's wife and baby in the process. When I made my second trip to Vietnam in September of 2008, I offered to take gifts or messages to his family in Hanoi. He took me up on the offer and I had the privilege of meeting Chinh's sister and one of her students in the Old Quarter of Hanoi. Subsequently, Chinh has also assisted with this research by responding to questions via email.

2. Dao Hanh works in the USA Nail Shop in Hackney, London. Dao is an enthusiastic participant who was a great encourager from the moment we discussed the project. Dao arrived in Britain several years ago as a business student. She then was able to find a job working in the offices of an international nail shop supply company based in London. She brings a business perspective as well as that of a recent arrival on the London scene. Her work puts her in contact with Vietnamese communities in the United States and across Western and Central Europe.

3. Giang Nguyen is the Director of the British Broadcasting Corporation's Vietnamese section of the World Service. Giang is a prime example of Susan Ossman's "serial migrant" designation. He was raised in an ethnic minority area of northern Vietnam, but when he moved to Hanoi to take up higher education, he was selected to travel to Poland for further studies. After a number of years in Poland, Giang Nguyen moved to Paris and finally was recruited to come to the BBC in London. I met Giang when he was delivering a paper on BBC Vietnamese at a conference celebrating 30 years of Vietnamese immigration into the United Kingdom. After his presentation, we chatted and subsequently met for an interview, then another. In 2008, Giang kindly agreed to speak to my class of second-year BA students at Goldsmiths on transnational culture and media. It is his perspective on culture and the media that is invaluable to this research. Also, because of his multi-cited background and

the effects life in various places and learning various languages has had, Giang has a unique understanding of identity and how it is affected by the comings and goings of a transnational lifestyle. We have had a number of discussions around the notions of identity and belonging and how, even our children have something to reveal at young or older ages on these points. Giang has also put me in contact with several other Vietnamese who have added their own perspective to this project in either formal or informal ways. We continue to meet periodically at a local restaurant or the BBC “pub” to compare notes and process what we are experiencing.

4. Ha Anh Vu is a fashion model and musician. In her mid-twenties, Ha Anh came from Hanoi in northern Vietnam to the United Kingdom to study music. While a student, she entered a contest and was selected as the ‘Face of Asia’, 2004. Following this honour, Ha Anh began to receive contract offers from around the world. Working with an agency, the London-based model now works full-time and it is not uncommon for her to jet off to New York on Thursday and then to Shanghai the following week. I first heard about Ha Anh through one of my Vietnamese friends as we were talking about Vietnamese who had settled into British society and become productive members on various levels. I began inquiring at different places and with various Vietnamese Londoners about Ha Anh but was unable to make contact until, after over a year of various attempts, I came across the contact information of her modelling agency and decided, rather than send another email, I would ring them up and see what would happen. I was delighted to find an administrative assistant on the other end of the line who promised to pass my email and basics of the project on to Ha Anh. The next day I received an email from Ha Anh informing me of her interest in the project and providing a mobile number for a telephone interview. We talked by phone and have continued to communicate through email.

Ha Anh is a relatively new member of the Vietnamese communities in London, and has given great insight into life in the city as one who bases in London but travels constantly, still maintaining close connections back to Vietnam while at the same time, maintaining contact with a dizzying number of Vietnamese from communities all around the globe. This reality continues to strike me as I read her blogs and also follow the developments of her career in the Vietnamese press, both in Vietnam and in the diaspora. The culmination of this activity has been Ha Anh’s appointment in 2010 as the UNICEF representative for Vietnam. Ha Anh has been an invaluable resource with regard to maintaining an identity as a Vietnamese while at the same time interacting with the wider British society.

5. Hai Le is a producer on the team of the Vietnamese Service of the BBC World Service based at Bush House. I was introduced to Hai Le by Giang Nguyen at the same 30 Years of Vietnamese Integration into Britain. At the reception after the conference we had a fascinating chat about integration and the transnational lifestyle. I was able to query further Hai Le's perspective on the difference between the Vietnamese who migrated out as 'boat people' and those who have subsequently left as students, workers, artists, etc. as what Hai Le calls "plane people" or those who flew from Vietnam to various destinations, not necessarily as coerced individuals, but as individuals seeking something beyond their experience at 'home'. This notion has taken its place at the basis of my arguments and attempts to define the transnational identity through lifestyle.

6. 'Ho' is an elderly Vietnamese gentleman who arrived in London with the first wave of Vietnamese in the early 1980s. Assisting with the management of a Vietnamese restaurant in the West End of London, Ho came to our conversation with military experience in the South Vietnamese military. Ho's perspective as a very lonely displaced refugee provided me early on in my research process with a valuable perspective on the realities of 'cultural maintenance' and the desire to hold on to the memory of a life that once existed. Our conversation was carried out in Vietnamese, which seemed to be the key that turned the lock, opening the door to Ho's willingness to share openly. The fact that I possess a Saigonese accent and my vocabulary represents a dialect of the 1970s era in the Republic of South Vietnam seemed important, and our interaction was commented on by Ho's niece, who remarked that because of this sharing, I now had "a friend for life" as she put it.

7. 'Hoa' is a northern Vietnamese woman in her late 20s who manages a Vietnamese DVD music shop in Hackney. Our interview was carried out in Vietnamese, as she is not able to communicate deeply in English, even after 5 years in London at the time of our interview. She deeply regrets this situation, saying that she has no English friends as a result. She was quite knowledgeable about the Vietnamese community and maintains connections back in Vietnam, which facilitates her business in London.

8. 'Huong' is the daughter of Mary and her partner. In her mid to late 20s, Huong was raised in London and started a travel agency business a few years ago. She is in the process of building the business up, trading primarily in trips by Viet Kieu or Overseas Vietnamese

back to Vietnam. Huong has a growing network of Vietnamese providers both in the UK and in Vietnam. On my last trip to Hanoi, capital of Vietnam, Huong was very helpful in assisting me with both contacts and information. Huong does not see herself as remaining exclusively within the Vietnamese community. Through her university studies, she has a friendship network made up of multiple nationalities. While certainly her work is carried out amongst and primarily within the Vietnamese community, her social activities are with a multi-cultural and varied groups of friends.

9. Mary is a Vietnamese woman in her 50s who owns and manages, with her partner, one of the largest Vietnamese shops in London and perhaps in the United Kingdom. Based in Hackney for over 20 years, Mary travels abroad several times a year to Vietnam, Japan and other places maintaining her networks. She procures food items, kitchenware, magazines, cleaning supplies and even ritual items used in the worship or veneration of the ancestors. Her network is extensive and she is quite well known in the community as a result.

10. 'Nam' works in the travel and leisure business. He came to London from the southern part of Vietnam as a student, and works part-time. Because is a fairly recent arrival straight from Vietnam, he brings a fresh perspective on London and on Vietnamese living in London. We carried out a series of informal interviews in his office at the Travel agency and then have carried on by email.

11. Nga Nguyen works in the publishing field. When I first made contact by phone, Nga worked as the editor of a very chic and visually attractive glossy London and Paris-based magazine. I found the magazine for sale in Mary's shop after Councillor Vu alerted me to its existence in an interview early in my research process. I initially interviewed Nga Nguyen by phone from her office in central London. We subsequently met in a coffee shop for a more formal interview. Our interviews covered several aspects of the Vietnamese communities in London and I was able to gain a great deal of perspective on the differences that exist within those communities. Since our first contact, Nga shifted to an on-line format for the magazine, and has a more far-reaching readership as a result. In future, Nga plans to pursue opportunities in publishing, translating Vietnamese literature for an English audience.

12. 'Ngia' is a young Vietnamese woman in her late 20s or early 30s who travels between London and Germany, having extended family in both cities. Works in sales by day and is attempting to break into the music industry as a vocalist. Ngia was raised in Germany having come to Europe from southern Vietnam at a very young age. I interviewed her in order to get a different perspective on the Vietnamese London experience, that is, from the perspective of a 'commuter' with the London and the Vietnamese communities living in the city.

13. Peter Le is a community worker and pastor in multiple Vietnamese communities in London. Having survived the early out-migration of Vietnamese from central and southern Vietnam as a teenage 'boat person' in the late 1970s, Peter has a unique background as another of the "serial migrants" as Ossman (2007) terms it" or one with a "flexible citizenship" according to Ong (1999). Peter immigrated to Canada from the refugee camps of Southeast Asia, later moving to the United States where he married, completed graduate degrees and began a family. In 2005, Peter, his wife and two sons arrived in London to begin ministry amongst the Vietnamese. I interviewed Peter in the East End of London. Peter's contribution has been valuable, particularly in the areas of history and the perspectives of the many different representations of Vietnamese culture and lifestyle in London. Early in my process of deciding to pursue this line of research, Peter introduced me to several key individuals within the various Vietnamese communities. These early relationships became the 'jumping off point' for many of the interviews that followed. Peter is now based, once again, in the United States as he prepares for a wider role amongst Vietnamese communities in Western, Central and Eastern Europe.

14. Dr. Thanh (Nguyen Thanh Khuong) came to London under fascinating circumstances. At the age of 15, in the late 1950s, early 1960s, Dr. Thanh was sent from the relatively newly formed Republic of South Vietnam to France to continue his studies. This was not uncommon given the colonial history and relationship between Vietnam and France, particularly the southern portion of the divided nation. Dr. Thanh eventually qualified as a Medical Doctor, working in Montpellier until he was recruited, about eight years ago, by the National Health Service in Britain. Dr. Thanh subsequently moved to London with his wife to practise specifically with the Vietnamese community. Dr. Thanh has become active in various Vietnamese organisations in London which gives him important insight into the needs of his patients. I first met Dr. Thanh at a Vietnamese community meeting in Hackney.

We began chatting and over the next few months my wife and I met with Dr. Thanh and his wife several times at restaurants and once, very graciously in their home in south London during which Dr. Thanh prepared a lovely Vietnamese meal for us. It was during these meals that our interviews, both formal and informal were conducted.

15. Toan Vu works at South Bank University in London. My first contact with Toan was several years ago when I attended a conference related to the celebration of thirty years of immigration of Vietnamese into the UK. Tuan delivered a paper prepared by his father, Hackney Cllr Khanh Thanh Vu, who was present, but not able to deliver the lecture. We spoke briefly after the lecture, but did not meet again until I attended the Vietnamese New Year celebrations at the An Viet Foundation in Hackney in January of 2009. At that time, I mentioned my research and Toan expressed an interest and willingness to participate. Gratefully, Tuan brings the perspective of the second generation Vietnamese to the research.


16. Hackney Councillor, Khanh Thanh Vu is, in many ways, a Hackney icon, particularly for anyone associated with the Vietnamese community. I have likened Cllr Vu to all that is positive about a Vietnamese Mandarin – a scholar, political leader and a role model for society. Cllr Vu embodies the Confucian values that hold the Vietnamese communities together. Ceasing to pay attention to these values creates a community in peril and at odds with itself according to Cllr Vu. The value of my multiple interviews and conversations with Cllr Vu cannot be measured. His perspective on a wide range of topics associated with this project has set me on course more than once. His understanding of the Vietnamese culture, particularly its origins and the value of studying those origins in order to understand who the Vietnamese are as a people today has been of great influence as a basis for my research and my own journey into this population from which I had been removed for so many years. Cllr Vu allowed me access to the library at the An Viet Foundation, a multi-national charity Cllr Vu set up in the late 1980s for the purpose of serving the Vietnamese people who needed assistance adjusting to Britain as well as in maintaining a Vietnamese focus as a community. I first became aware of Cllr Vu at the annual conference of the Vietnamese Professionals Society. We did not speak with one another at that point, but my friend Peter Hong Le pointed Cllr Vu out to me describing his role in the Vietnamese society and his importance to the communities. I then saw him again at a conference celebrating 30 years of Vietnamese integration into Britain. We spoke briefly and began to work toward meeting for an interview at his office in Hackney at the An Viet Foundation. In 2004, that interview took

place and since that time, we have met on a number of occasions for further interviews and chats on various subjects, culminating in my having the honour of attending the annual Vietnamese New Years banquet at the Foundation earlier this year (2009).

Note: I add a description below, of a non-Vietnamese interviewee with whom I carried out a formal interview in order to gain perspective on the attitudes of the government and people of London at the time of the arrival of Vietnamese 'boat people' into the UK.

17. Ted Clarence, is a councillor emeritus and former Mayor of Thamesmeade. He was mayor of Thamesmeade during the height of the influx and adjustment of Vietnamese into London. I had the honour of meeting Cllr Clarence at his great-granddaughter's christening. During the reception afterward, I was casually chatting with Cllr Clarence and his wife when we discovered our mutual respect for and activity with Vietnamese Londoners. Cllr Clarence graciously gave me his calling card and I subsequently rang him, setting up an interview. We sat in Cllr Clarence's front room in south London, drinking cups of tea and talking at length about a wide range of subjects including the Margaret Thatcher government's decision to open Britain's doors to the Vietnamese boat people, primarily from Hong Kong. We discussed the adjustment process of the Vietnamese with particular focus on children and youth and the traditional Vietnamese values of hard work, respect for authority and high value on education. Cllr Clarence was a valuable resource in my getting perspective on Vietnamese cultural values as observed by and through the eyes of British nationals. His own perspective has come about due to his close association with local schools attended by Vietnamese children, and the various charities and government initiatives set up for the benefit of the Vietnamese communities in the Thamesmeade area. Cllr Clarence corroborated with what I had learned through informal interviews and discussions with other British nationals who were living and working in London in the late 1970s and 1980s. The subjects of Vietnamese cultural adjustment to the British context, role in the local society and the family struggles due to generational differences, a la Naficy, were all part of these discussions.

Appendix VI: Advertisement for Assistance to Vietnamese Entrepreneurs in Hackney.



**Community Centre for Refugees from
Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia**

151 Whiston Road, London E2 8BN.
Tel: 0207 739 3650 Fax: 0207 739 7084

Ngày 21 tháng 2 năm 2004

Kính thưa Quý Anh Chị,

V/v thư mời tham dự Hội Thảo

Trân trọng kính mời Quý Anh Chị tham dự Hội Thảo về Chương Trình Yểm Trợ Kinh Doanh cho Cộng Đồng Việt Nam được tổ chức phối hợp với Hoxton Bibliotech tại Trung Tâm Việt Miền Lào vào ngày:


Thứ Ba, 9 tháng 3 năm 2004
từ 12:00 giờ trưa đến 4:00 giờ chiều

Yểm trợ Kinh Doanh cho Cộng Đồng Việt Nam là hậu thân của cuộc khảo sát do Đại Học Metropolitan thực hiện cách đây không lâu nhằm tìm hiểu tình hình kinh doanh của người Việt tại London. Kết quả cho thấy phần đông đã hành động theo cảm tính như nhiều người đã phát biểu, 'người ta làm được thì tui làm được'. Do đó công việc làm ăn của họ thiếu chắn đứng vững chắc, dễ đưa đến thua lỗ, nản lòng và cuối cùng bỏ cuộc. Vì vậy cuộc hội thảo này rất quan trọng không những giúp ích cho những người có ý định kinh doanh mà còn trang bị cho những thành viên khác trong cộng đồng Việt Hoa sự hiểu biết cần thiết để giúp đỡ cho những đồng hương khác. Tham dự buổi Hội Thảo này, Quý Anh Chị sẽ tiếp thu những điều bổ ích sau:

1. tìm hiểu những chương trình của chính phủ và chính quyền địa phương có thể giúp doanh nhân Việt Nam như thế nào;
2. học hỏi cách thức viết kế hoạch kinh doanh, vay tiền, tìm chỗ và tổ chức nào giúp quý anh chị làm việc này;
3. đặc biệt đối với những người muốn kinh doanh tại Hackney, làm cách nào để hưởng khoản trợ cấp từ £3,500 đến £5,000;
4. ngoài ra, những anh chị em tuổi từ 18-30 có cơ hội tìm hiểu Prince Trust giúp gì khi quý anh chị hành nghề tự do.

Trân trọng kính chào và mong gặp Quý Anh Chị.

Chủ Tịch



Lê K. Hường

Charity Registration Number: 281530

Please note point '3' in the advertisement above, translated: 'Participants... will receive the following useful things: ...3. Particularly to dialogue with those people who want to do commercial business in Hackney, [and] how to be entitled to an allowance from £3,500 to £5,000' (my translation).

Appendix VII: Interview Questions

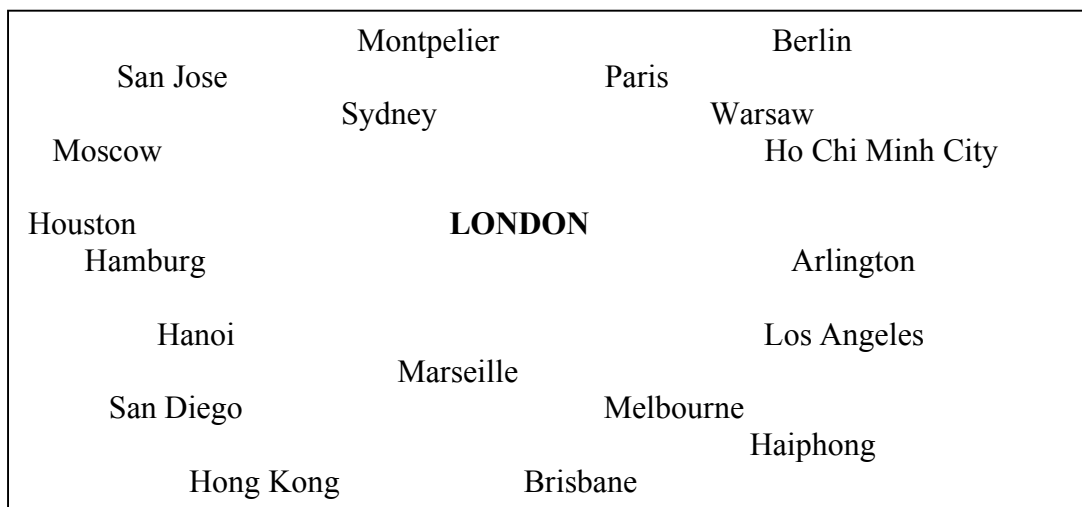
Research Questions (2010)

Stephen James, MPhil Candidate, Goldsmiths College, University of London
(Tutors: Sara Ahmed, PhD and Marianne Franklin, PhD)

Thank you for answering these questions. You are important to this research!

First, we would like to hear your thoughts in the following categories:

1. Background Story (when did you arrive, what do you do in London, etc.)?
2. How would you describe the Vietnamese community or communities to which you belong?
3. How would you describe your identity as you are now (Vietnamese, British, Cosmopolitan, etc)? What do these words mean to you?
4. If you have a faith/belief, how do you maintain your faith/belief across the nations in which you live and work?
5. Please connect London with the most important Vietnamese communities in the cities below? (Draw a line from London to other cities.) What other cities would you add to this list?



Which of the Vietnamese communities in the box are most important to you?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Now, would you share your thoughts on the following specific questions?

6. How would you describe yourself, your identity, your culture? What words would you use?

7. How do you maintain your Vietnamese identity in London?

8. How have you changed since coming to London, and how do you maintain networks with Vietnamese in London and abroad?

9. What languages do you speak and with whom/in what communities do you speak them (family, business, education, pleasure, arts...)?

10. In what ways do you relate (family, business, education, pleasure, arts...) to other Vietnamese **in London** (languages you use and when you use them, social networking, skills and experience that helps you to network, etc.)?

11. In what ways do you relate (family, business, education, pleasure, arts...) to other Vietnamese **outside of London** (languages you use and when you use them, social networking, skills and experience that helps you to network, etc.)?

12. If you relate to Vietnamese outside of London and the UK, with which cities do you relate most? (For example: Birmingham, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh, Haiphong, Paris, Berlin, San Jose, Houston, Arlington, Hamburg, Canberra, Melbourne, or other cities with Vietnamese populations)

13. What Vietnamese radio, TV, magazines or Newspapers do you use?

14. Were you taught the teachings of Confucius* when you were young? Yes / No
Where (Vietnam, UK, etc.)?

15. If you were taught Confucian values* were you taught at school or at home?

16. Can you identify which Confucian values* are a part of your life, and how you practise them now?

*[Some Confucian Values: Respect for Elders, Importance of Education, Importance of hospitality, etc.)

17. What belief or religion do you practise?

18. Are you part of a praying or worshipping community/temple/church?

Where?

How often do you attend or visit worshipping sites?

19. Do you practise Ancestor veneration or worship?

20. How do you practice Ancestor veneration in London?

Many thanks for your gracious assistance in this project! If you would like to receive updates on the progress of this research, please let me know by email.

**With Gratitude,
Stephen James
An der Kander 6, nr. 11
79400 Kandern
GERMANY**

**07984 616 824 (UK Mobile)
49 174 682 7742 (German Mobile)**

Appendix VIII: Guidelines for Informed Consent.

1. A fair explanation of the procedures to be followed and their purposes.
2. A description of the attendant discomforts and risks reasonably to be expected.
3. A description of the benefits reasonably to be expected.
4. A disclosure of appropriate alternative procedures that might be advantageous to the participants.
5. An offer to answer any inquiries concerning the procedures.
6. An instruction that the person is free to withdraw consent and to discontinue participation in the project at any time without prejudice to the participant. (Cohen and Manion 1994: 351)

Appendix IX: Informed Consent Form.

Informed Consent Form for Project Participants
Stephen S. James, MPhil Candidate
Tutors: Sara Ahmed, Marianne Franklin
Goldsmiths College, University of London

Project Title: ‘Vietnamese Londoners: Transnational Identities Through Community Networks’

Name of researcher: Stephen James

Agreement:

I agree to take part in the above Goldsmiths College, University of London research project. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the Explanatory Statement, which I may keep for my records. I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to:

- * be interviewed by the researcher
- * allow the interview to be audio-taped/videotaped if necessary
- * complete questionnaires asking me about my background and relationships
- * make myself available for a further interview should that be required

Data Protection:

This information will be held and processed for the following purpose(s):

- * for possible inclusion in a PhD research thesis
- * for possible inclusion in audio/video and/or article publications
- * as a basis for future research projects

Consent:

I consent to the use of sections of the audiotapes, videotapes, questionnaires and/or notes in publications.

I agree to Goldsmiths College, University of London recording and processing this information about me. I understand that this information will be used only for the purposes set out in this statement and my consent is conditional on the University complying with its duties and obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998.

Withdrawal from study:

I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

Name of Subject

Signature

Date

Name of researcher

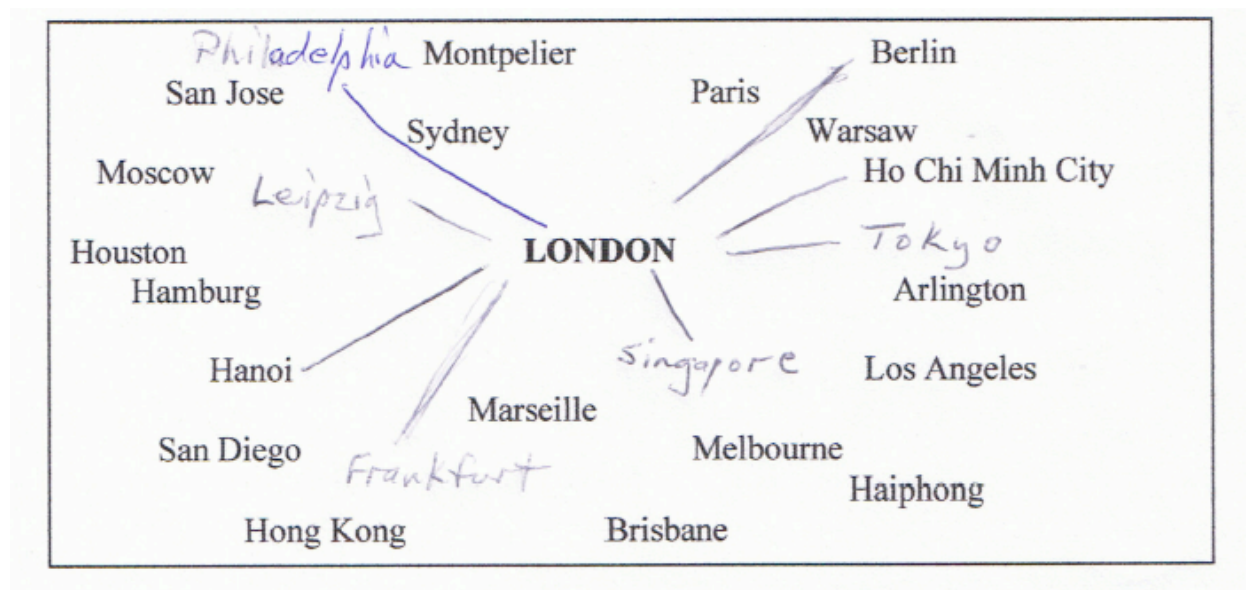
Signature

Date

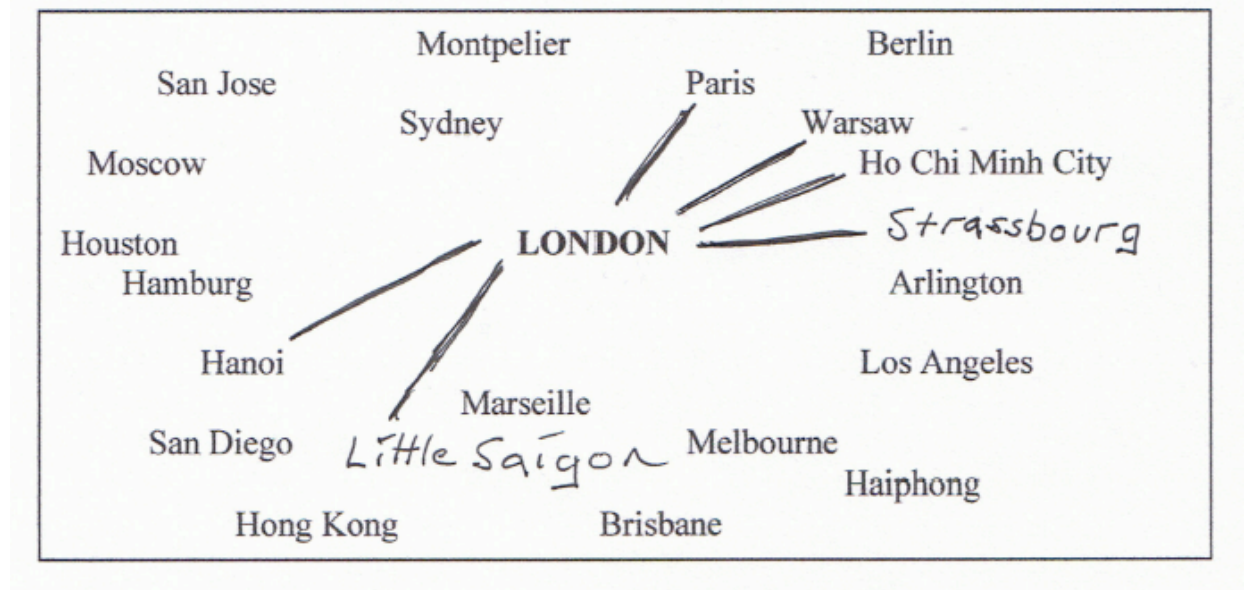
One copy for the subject; one copy for the researcher.

Appendix X: Vietnamese Global Connection Maps.

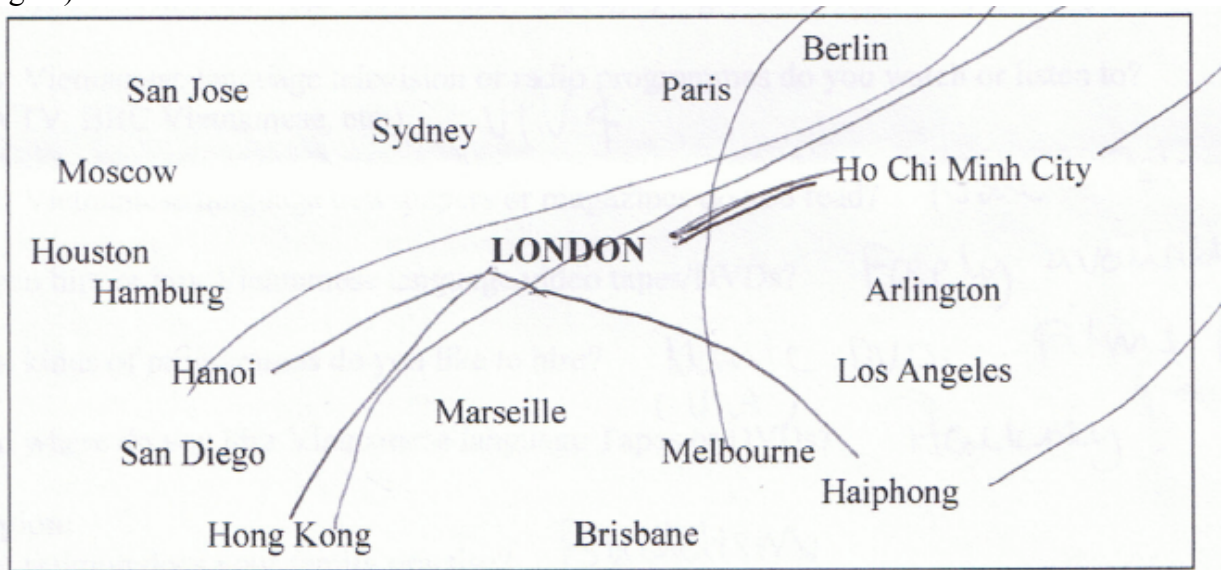
Global Connections Map 1: Dao Hanh (Female, Age late-twenties, Sales/Distribution)



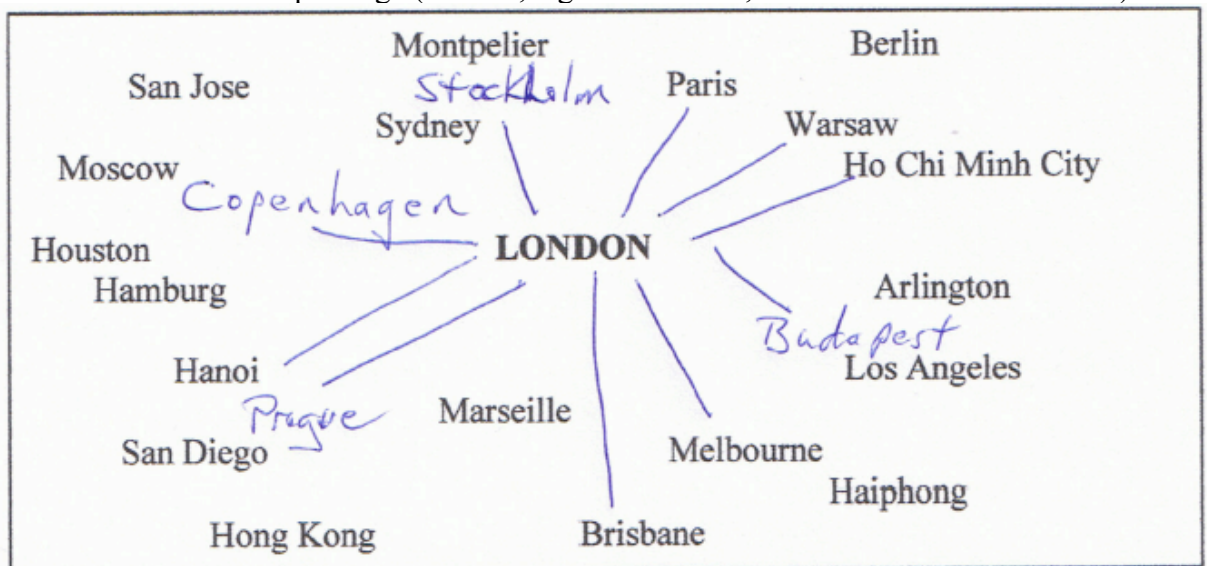
Global Connections Map 2: Hai (Male, Age late-thirties, Media)



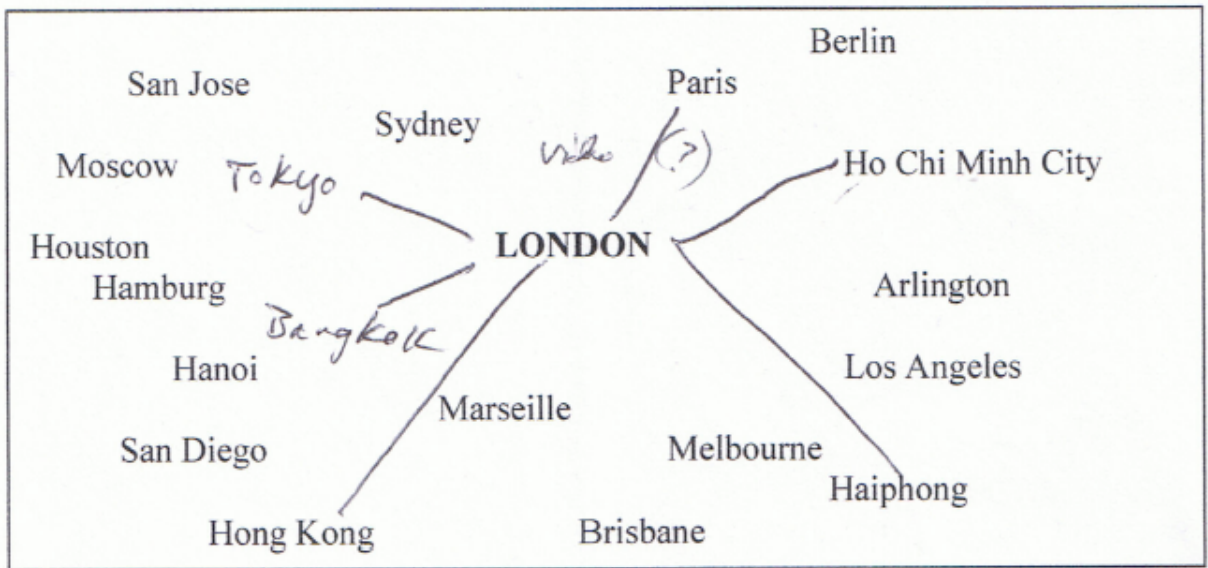
Global Connections Map 3: Huong (Female, Age late-twenties, Entrepreneur and Travel Agent)



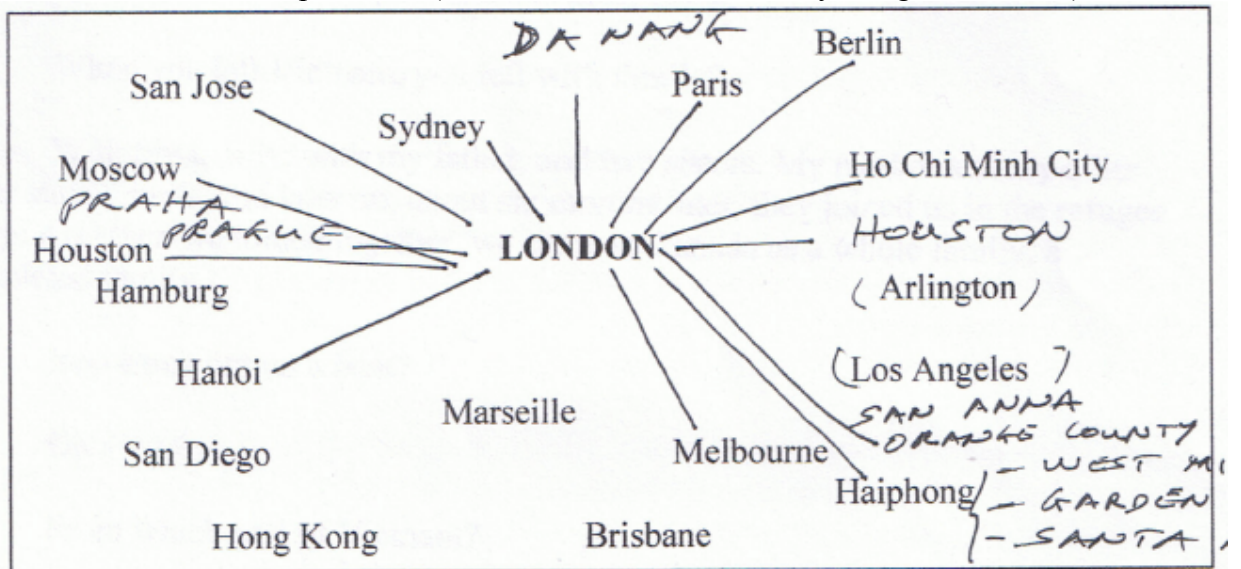
Global Connections Map 4: Nga (Female, Age mid-thirties, Media Publisher/Consultant)



Global Connections Map 5: Mary (Female, mid-fifties, Shop Owner)



Global Connections Map 6: Peter (Male, mid-forties, Community/Religious Worker)



Appendix XI:

Stories of Migration

Beginning in 1975, many Vietnamese experienced a ‘forced migration’, eventually arriving in London through intermediary spaces, primarily through the refugee camps of Hong Kong, but also from Thailand, the Philippines and Singapore. In this first instance, many of those closely associated with the South Vietnamese and American governments fled for fear of death or long internments in re-education camps in the countryside and jungles of Vietnam. An older Vietnamese man described his journey after several years in a re-education camp in the jungle.

I was finally released from the [re-education] camp. I was sick and weak, but when I got home, my family was so poor I could hardly recognise them. I decided then that I had to leave [Vietnam] and try to find a way for my family to survive anywhere else. I borrowed gold and paid for a place on a small boat. We almost didn’t make it. Sometimes the old motor didn’t work and also there were storms and pirates. Finally, we got to Hong Kong and, after several days waiting in the harbour near the dock, they took us in. I was there for five years and then I was selected to come to here [United Kingdom]. After several years, I was able to get my family here by airplane [in the Family Reunion Programme set up to re-unite separated families] (Informal Interview 20 November 2004).

This upheaval is not a new phenomenon for the peoples of Vietnam. The Vietnamese have experienced multiple upheavals through extended periods of suffering. It is commonly said in Vietnamese circles that in more than 2000 years of recorded history, the Vietnamese have only experienced 200 years of peace. The geography inhabited by the Vietnamese people has been the scene of countless invasions and counter invasions, including battles with the Chinese, the Khmer, the French, Japanese, Americans, again the Khmer and finally, the Chinese again in the 1980s. The resulting global impact of the latest conflicts has been a heart-breaking, yet noteworthy global migration story. The reason for the second forced out-migration in the late 1970s and early 1980s, was due to pressure placed on Chinese-background Vietnamese during the Sino-Vietnamese border War. These families were ‘pressured until they left’, according to one interviewee in Deptford (Informal Interview 21 November 2004). Another interviewee told his story, describing the desire of his family to leave Vietnam and escape the pressure placed on Chinese Vietnamese:

Actually my family was one of them [Chinese-background Vietnamese], because my grandfather was a Chinese. So, in 1979, the whole family, my grandparents, my uncle’s family, my auntie’s family and my family, also

registered as Chinese. Without that Chinese connection, you cannot [sic] go (Le Interview, 14 January 2008).

The process of developing transnational identities for some Vietnamese in London began, initially, with the ‘forced migration experience’ described above. Subsequently, there was a more intentional migratory pattern through officially organised family reunion opportunities in the mid-1980s. Then began the issuance by the British government, of work permits and student visas according to Vietnamese community workers (Vuong 2006). Nga, an interviewee, told her story of migration:

I came to London from Sweden in October 2000 with my husband, because he received a scholarship for PhD in Maths at Goldsmiths College. After a few months, I got a job at Winchmore School. Then, I got an offer to study [for an] MSc in Computer System and Networking at London Southbank University. After I graduated, I set up Tri Thuc Viet magazine in June 2006 (Nga Interview, 15 May 2009).

Nga manages multiple roles including the editing of what is now, a Europe-wide, on-line Vietnamese magazine, as well as consulting for Vietnamese multinational businesses in London. Another interviewee described coming to London: ‘I was recruited by the BBC to work at the Vietnamese section. I was working for a radio station in Paris’ (Giang Informal Interview, 28 March 2009). These later arrivals, while also migrants, had a very different entry experience than those who arrived from refugee camps, and it is out of this varied migratory experience that the Vietnamese population in London has grown.

Appendix XII: A Brief History of Immigration into London

The reasons for the attraction of Roman 'Londinium' to so many peoples from such a variety of places was due to its location at the edge of the Roman Empire as well as its infrastructure and purposely developed industries. By 60CE, Londinium was a hub of activity 'based primarily on the Thames-side port which, with its accompanying road system, was found to be indispensable' (Merrifield 1983: 90) as a distribution centre for goods and services. The purpose of Roman investment in the city is described by Merrifield in economic and in development terms. 'The Roman mission was to bring the benefits of Mediterranean civilisation as quickly as possible to the barbarous British, and there were easy profits to be made in doing so' (Ibid.). However, after nearly 400 years of Roman activity, by 410CE, the Roman military presence had been removed and Londinium was left without a powerful guardian. Soon afterwards, all regular contact between Britain and the Roman Empire was severed. Henceforth, the Anglo-Saxon longships brought not just raiders but mercenaries and colonists' (Davies 1997: 231). Some 200 years later, the London scene had become more complex with a variety of peoples entering the stage from northern Europe. Ackroyd states that the population of London was well into a process of intermixing and describes the situation in terms of a London 'tribe':

It was no longer possible to distinguish Britons from Saxons and, after the northern invasions of the ninth century, the Danes entered the city's racial mixture. By the tenth century the city was populated by Cymric Brythons and Belgae, by the remnants of the Gaulish legions, by East Saxons and Mercians, by Danes, Norwegians and Swedes, by Franks and Jutes and Angles, all mingled and mingling together to form a distinct tribe of 'Londoners' (Davies 1997: 701-702).

The legacy of intermingling continued apace, in many ways influenced by the seeming setbacks of fire, disease and other causes of death. Again, Ackroyd explains that, 'for many centuries it needed a permanent influx of foreign settlers in order to compensate for its high death-rate' (Ibid.: 702). All of these peoples, an occasional immigrant uprising or xenophobic response notwithstanding, seemed to be received with a tolerance and recognition of contribution not dissimilar to today's London society. Intolerance was, of course, present at times with cruel results such as the pogroms and eventual expulsion of the Jews in 1290. In fact, in 1255, there was a written attack on an increase in the population of southern Europeans in London that seems a precursor and is 'an anticipation of late twentieth-century complaints that London was being 'swamped' by people from Africa, the Caribbean, or Asia. ... there is an incorrect notion of some original native race which is

being displaced by foreigners' (Ibid.). Ackroyd states emphatically: 'those who attacked immigrants were in effect attacking the business ethic which required the constant influx of new trade and new labour. The attack did not succeed; it never has succeeded' (Davies: 1997: 702-703). Overall, a pattern of growth by influx has been a long-standing policy and there should be no surprise at the later willingness to receive peoples from much farther distances across the globe.

The record goes on to recount the arrival of many other peoples into the city such as Frenchmen, Spaniards, Jews, Greeks and Italians, even Icelanders. In the 1500s, 'religious refugees' including the Huguenots arrived, and by the Nineteenth Century a new type of settler, the 'political refugee' (such as Marx and Engels) began to make an appearance, in addition to populations of Turks, Russians, Poles, Moors, Malays, Lascars, Tatars, Chinese, and again, Jews (Davies 1997: 701-705). By the middle of the twentieth century, London had seen its population swell and recede, particularly after two world wars. It was in 1948 that Jamaican and other West Indian migrants arrived to fill needed labour vacancies, marking a major change in immigration patterns, characterised by movement from wider Commonwealth sources. A decade later saw Commonwealth migrants arriving from India, Pakistan and East Africa as well as from Cyprus (Triandafyllidou and Gropas, 2007). The result of this major growth in London's population of West Indian, South Asian and Mediterranean peoples was a strengthening of relational ties to the populations of recently independent nations throughout the Commonwealth. Transnational links and mechanisms were established and bolstered. Patterns of travel, communication and further immigration of family members became normalised. This 'opening up' of Britain, and particularly London, to wider immigration sources continued and expanded into the next era of immigration.

Appendix XIII: The Establishment of Vietnamese Identities: A Brief History

Quoted elsewhere, I return to the statement on identification with the nation made by Ha Anh, ‘When I was in Vietnam, I didn’t realise how important my country is. When you go abroad, you realise what you had’ (Interview, Ha Anh 17 September 2008). By travelling outside the boundaries of the familiar, and experiencing that sense of loss and distance, one’s perspective changes. These experiences provide a balance to ethnocentrism in that as Goffman states, ‘It is thus *against something* that the self can emerge (Goffman, 1997: 90, emphasis in original). arguing against loyalty to and complete immersion in ‘total institutions’ in which the self is lost in the sense of the ‘wider social units’ of the world states:

Without something to belong to, we have no stable self, and yet total commitment and attachment to any social unit implies a kind of selflessness. Our sense of being a person can come from being drawn into a wider social unit; our sense of selfhood can arise through the little ways in which we resist the pull. Our status is backed by the solid buildings of the world, while our sense of personal identity often resides in the cracks (Ibid.).

Goffman is speaking to the problem of losing one’s identity in the collective or ‘wider social unit’ as he put it. This is certainly a danger in a one-party political system such as the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. The danger can be seen in the educational system and in the treatment of the history of nationhood. So, while on the one hand the warning of losing the self is well taken, on the other side is the admonition that the self is found only in opposition to something ‘other’. That is the purpose of this section on the historical development of Vietnamese identities. It is to examine the historical developments through various perspectives including that of the current government of Vietnam, which has its own hegemonic purposes and interpretations. I begin with a brief presentation on the time-distance journey Vietnamese have come in order to shed light on the complexities and realities of Vietnamese identities in the present. The first paradox involves that of the relative youth of the nation of Vietnam as an autonomous and unified state while at the same time having a history that stretches back for multiple millennia. As Salomon and Kêt state, ‘Vietnam and “Vietnamese-ness” are also old ideas and realities’ (Salomon and Kêt, 2009: 144). It is well known that the majority of Vietnamese today were born after 1975 when the nation was unified, north and south, so conceptions of the struggles of the past for independence are not in the recent memory of most Vietnamese. At the same time, ‘according to official and popular conceptions, Vietnam and its inhabitants have a quasi-

eternal history. The history of external influences on this “unaltered 4000-year-old Vietnamese civilisation” is systematically downplayed. The definition of the Vietnamese identity mainly relies on primordial/eternal ethnic characteristics and is defined in opposition to neighbouring China’ (Salomon and Kêt, 2009: 144). The current Vietnamese regime has, as its focus, the establishment of Vietnamese identity or ‘self-hood’ and, as Goffman asserted, does so utilising the millenia-old conflict with China. Salomon and Kêt again, ‘The main objective is to stress the independence of “Vietnamese-ness” vis-à-vis the Chinese civilisation: underlining the idea that Vietnamese culture did exist before any contacts with its dangerous northern neighbour’ (Ibid.).

A second paradox I bring out at this point is that the anti-communist organisations in London have the same perspective on this issue as the Vietnamese Communist Party. According to the An Viet Foundation website, and through interviews with Councillor Vu of Hackney, the same argument, that Vietnamese identity is described and distinguished over and against Chinese identities, is put forward on three counts. First, Confucianism is asserted to have originated as a Vietnamese philosophical foundation before it was ‘corrupted’ by the Chinese. Second, An Viet reports that DNA analyses conclude that of ‘seven races in South East Asia, the Viet race are the oldest while the Han Chinese are the youngest’; and finally, studies are quoted saying that the domestication and cultivation of the water rice plant took place on the Malay Peninsula around 9,000 BC [sic] and so ‘it was our [Vietnamese] ancestors who taught the Han Chinese to plant rice, not the other way around’ (An Viet Foundation, 2007) as the technology was transferred from the south northward. Over the succeeding centuries the interplay between Vietnam and China continued and ‘although Vietnamese society was strongly influenced by China, the Vietnamese people have always perceived themselves as a culturally distinct ethnic group. They simply refused to be assimilated into the Chinese empire’ (Bousquet, 1991: 25). This view is echoed by Duiker and Spielvogel in the following analysis:

For nearly a thousand years, the Vietnamese were exposed to the art, architecture, literature, philosophy, and written language of China as the Chinese attempted to integrate the area culturally as well as politically and administratively into their empire. Despite the Chinese efforts to assimilate Vietnam, the Vietnamese sense of ethnic and cultural identity proved inextinguishable, and in the tenth century, the Vietnamese took advantage of the collapse of the Tang dynasty in China to overthrow Chinese rule (Duiker and Spielvogel, 2009: 255).

Subsequent dynasties attempted to subjugate the Vietnamese, but by '1428, the Vietnamese had evicted the Chinese again, but the experience had contributed to the strong sense of Vietnamese identity' (Ibid.). As Dahm states below, interactions with China and neighbours to the south solidified the Vietnamese identity. Dahm writes of the development of Vietnamese identity on the 'cultural boundary':

Although the Vietnamese absorbed traits of Chinese culture... mainly the upper classes of society were affected. The life of ordinary people has more in common with other parts of Southeast and South Asia. The Vietnamese, known at that time as Dai Viet, lived on a cultural boundary. Persistent interaction between Vietnamese and their neighbors to the south and west who fell outside the sphere of Chinese civilization continually nourished a sense of Vietnamese identity and eventually the separateness from China (Dahm, 1995: 5).

Moving closer to the present time, the notion of identity begins to shift from an historical people's identity to a sense of 'Vietnamese-ness', distinct, but always social and part of a whole. The influence of the current Vietnamese government's position is to shift the discussion to a sense of national identity:

The resulting history curriculum... aims to transmit a Vietnamese national identity consisting of three cultural substrata... [And] if we go back to the three official components... we can see that two of them are clearly overlaid in the textbooks: the 'purity' of native Vietnamese culture and the socialist dimension. Diversity, cultural dialogue and hybridisation are systematically neglected, if not negated (Salomon and Kêt, 2009: 142-3, 149).

The first two strands are characteristic of the 'evolutionary' trajectories of socialist thought and practise, highlighting the current stages of history in which the Vietnamese identify themselves. Tying identity to the nation is crucial for the socialists in Vietnam and, as such, even in the Vietnamese language, the rhetoric speaks volumes as Salomon and Kêt point out: 'All Vietnamese are described as *dong bao* (from the same foetus)... the strong tradition of veneration for ancestors that Chinese and Vietnamese share is a key element in this biological/familial metaphor of nationhood' (2009: 143). This strong picture of national identity is developed in the Vietnamese perspective to a high degree, and it is out of this ferment that many of the Vietnamese in London have come. More recent arrivals from Vietnam as work permit holders or as students will have been brought up under these perspectives with their steady and forceful influence. Boat people have come with a reaction against such 'nation-building' as one informal interviewee said, 'We don't listen anymore. We know who we are as Vietnamese and it doesn't really matter what the socialists say. We

are just waiting until their time is past and then we can go home' (Informal Interview 7 April 2006). On the other hand, those Vietnamese in London with a Chinese background have felt the sting of rejection. They are keenly aware that:

The official history clearly demonstrates that someone is Vietnamese because he or she is born Vietnamese – the idea that anyone could become Vietnamese would seem outlandish. De facto, Vietnam is not a country of immigration. Moreover, reflecting deeply-ingrained Vietnamese conceptions of nationhood is the belief that it is impossible to lose one's 'Vietnamese-ness', and, legally speaking, one's Vietnamese citizenship (Salomon and Kêt, 2009: 144).

In a discussion with Hai, an interviewee with whom I spent a number of hours over the course of the past four years, this point hit home. I draw on the same encounter presented in Chapter 1, that of the 'foreigner' who spoke excellent Vietnamese who is described by a small girl as a 'white Vietnamese'. Hai's response was: 'She adopted him as a Vietnamese, but it's funny, he's still a foreigner' (Interview Hai 28 March 2009).

This statement brings out the final point in this examination of the historical implications of the complexities of Vietnamese identities. That is, for many Vietnamese, identity is a pragmatic question, not so much one of philosophy. Hai's response was normal given his years in the Vietnamese educational system. That is, one can only be Vietnamese if she or he starts out that way. You must be born Vietnamese. 'The hot question is not "What does being Vietnamese mean?", but "which policies can best further Vietnam's interests." These criticisms are, once again, made in the name of a homogenising and totalising nationalism' (Salomon and Kêt, 2009: 149). This statement brings to light an important aspect of the background of perceived Vietnamese identities and the strong influences on those identities, what can be described is a pragmatic approach to identity. One interviewee, a young professional, born in Vietnam, and brought up in London for most of his life, stated that I'm 'proud of being Vietnamese, and [I'm] wishing to see Vietnam develop as a successful economy' (Interview Toan 17 March 2009). This desire to see success and to interpret experience through these lenses is a crucial point. It is a choice, made by a young man whose father fled the regime now in power, and who is now, as an active member of the next generation, involved transnationally in efforts to maintain networks for the purpose of strengthening Vietnamese communities across the globe from his London home.

Appendix XIV: Values-Based Identities

The Vietnamese Londoners, who were interviewed, were open to discussions of values and were found likely to entertain a variety of options with an open mind. I encountered a wide variety of attitudes toward religion, and concluded that there are two aspects of Vietnamese belief and practise in London amongst Vietnamese interviewees. First, different Vietnamese individuals spoke of an adherence to religions, Communism and atheism. Interviewees stated that they were either Buddhist, Catholic, Communist, or Christian-Protestant. For instance, Cllr Vu stated that he has a Catholic background, ‘but my point is, like Confucius said, that if you go to the ceremony every week it makes me bored. [I attend] only the big events like Christmas or Easter – that’s all’ (Vu Interview, 24 October 2007). Another interviewee described herself as practising Buddhism, but when asked about being part of the temple or praying the answer was ‘No’ (Dao Interview, 23 April 2009). When asked about practicing a religion, another interviewee answered: ‘None except the Communist doctrines. I’ve visit[ed the] Buddhist temple, as well as learnt (music) at Catholic Church and currently study both the Bible and Koran. (Hai Interview, 13 April 2009). When asked about being a Vietnamese and a Christian, an interviewee stated that ‘for my personal belief, I’m one hundred percent Vietnamese. I am a one hundred percent Vietnamese believer of Jesus (Le Interview, 14 January 2008). And finally, in answer to the question about practising religion an interviewee stated: ‘My family are not religious – not Buddhist or Confucian. As younger children, we were taught to respect and help the elderly, not look down on disabled people.... We live by these guidelines, not by a religion. We do these things rather than go to a temple’ (Ha Anh Interview, 17 September 2008). As can be seen in these answers, there did not seem to be a ‘Vietnamese religion’ that characterised all the respondents. These answers reveal a wide spectrum indicating that it is possible to be an adherent of any religion or none.

The second line of questioning related to the values and teachings of Confucius. Interviewees’ responses pointed to a common understanding and description of a loose set of values that closely resemble the teachings attributed to Confucius. These values seemed to be present even if the interviewee had not been formally taught the teachings of this scholar. It seemed that perhaps these values are a part of Vietnamese ‘culture’ as passed on from generation to generation, regardless of the faith communities to which the individual

might claim allegiance. Some of the responses of Vietnamese interviewees related to values were:

So all the family [will get] together to pay respect to their ancestors or parents, and especially during the New Year. New Years Eve is a good time for the parents to say some words for the children to remember the ancestors. Also the wedding as well, they also are talking about the way their parents or grandparents have educated them to become a real man and ask them to continue to make the good way of life and also to make the family to be proud of themselves (Vu Interview, 24 October 2007).

Another respondent stated that for her values included: ‘Respect for elders, honest, responsible for family, take a good care of parents etc...’ (Dao Interview, 23 April 2009). One respondent mentioned the value of proverbs: ‘Obedience, Self-education, Hospitality... I can't name them all because I did not have a systematic learning, but there are a number of proverbs around to remind me of what I should do’ (Hai Interview, 29 March 2009). A publisher indicated that she ‘would distribute knowledge which is useful information for everyone. I believe that will effect to their point of view, and then they can change by getting a good things and forget a bad things’ (Nga Interview, 15 May 2009). And finally a young professional spoke for her generation saying that, ‘We are a generation that is more of a modern generation. There are more scientific developments... we don't really believe these things [religion], but we still have values that we live by. It's more about remembering my ancestors so that I will be a good person. I've been influenced by Vietnam or Southeast Asia... by specific values like family ties, respect for elders. It divides me from others, (Ha Anh Interview, 17 September 2008). Striking in these responses is the fact that there are such similarities in the values of Vietnamese Londoners interviewed for this project, but such a discrepancy in their stated beliefs and religion.

Appendix XV: An Emerging Vietnamese Transnational Network.

Arsenal Football Club and Vietnamese Premier League, Hoang Anh Gia Lai Football Club

Examples of transnational relational networking include a number of different industries but one surprising and recent transnational networking relationship involves football. I was unable to interview the Vietnamese side of Arsenal's development programme at the time of this research, but I present the findings below as a call for further research into the transnationalisation of Vietnamese football with a particular emphasis on those individuals who are transnationally involved rather than on the organisational policy or wider league and team relations which are often the focus. A perspective on Vietnamese life in London at the beginning of a new millennium includes a forward-looking partnership between two seemingly far distant entities. Several years ago, in late 2007, I noticed a surprising advertisement at an English Premier League football ground. Attending a match at Arsenal's new Emirates Stadium, I stared at a phrase emblazoned on the advertisement board surrounding the playing field at pitch level. There, in Vietnamese, were the words, 'Hoang Anh Gia Lai' circling the field along with other, capital-generating phrases of various kinds offering various products and services. I was unfamiliar with the meaning of the phrase. Upon further inquiry, I found that Arsenal had established a partnership with the Vietnam-based football club, 'Hoang Anh Gia Lai' (Mooney: 23 October 2009).

Reach

These types of intricate networks characterise the explosion of transnational relationships on multiple levels inherent in a globally connected city such as London. In this instance, we have an internationally-recognised, London-based football club stretching their reach and influence out of the rich resources of the club, establishing a partnership with a Vietnam-based club, sponsoring a Vietnamese-American, Vietnam-based star player to come to London on a month-long, and perhaps longer, training opportunity. It is through these types of, often obscure, networks that Vietnamese establish from London, as migrants engage in transnational activities.

Role

This positive development with regard to the visibility of the Vietnamese presence within the wider north London community through language is one small example of the distance covered by Vietnamese in the past quarter century. Granted, while many people observing the advertisement at Emirates Stadium will not be aware that it is, in fact, Vietnamese, the point remains that in many sectors of London society, Vietnamese have taken a place and have become influential in a variety of ways, in this case, actual and potential player exchanges. According to Arsenal's Steve Morrow:

In places like... Vietnam, the game is growing very, very fast. I think it's certainly one of the strongest developing regions in the world. I'm extremely impressed by the young talent that we have in our partnerships there, and I don't think it's going to be too long into the future where we will start to see more talent coming out of that region (Ibid.).

A former Arsenal player himself, Morrow is responsible for Arsenal's partnerships worldwide (Mooney: Ibid.), and travels extensively, seeking to expand the Arsenal development network. In order to facilitate this research, I renewed my membership as an Arsenal Football Club 'Gooner', even though I had moved to Germany in the interim. Visiting London and attending a match at Emirates Stadium, I met with a high level member of the Arsenal, who stated,

Arsenal have a long-standing policy of not only seeking talented players who could benefit the club, but also of establishing partnerships to develop players in other parts of the world. This benefits them in terms of finance and exposure for their team and players, but it also benefits the Arsenal in that it gives us exposure on the world market and increases the pool of talent that the club can draw from in future (Informal Interview, 12 February 2008).

These agreements between the Arsenal and various clubs and other entities around the globe open up pathways for individuals to join and benefit from the network. An example of the travel along these pathways between the mountains of Vietnam and north London took place in 2009.

Pathways and Networks

As a part of the partnership between the north London club and Hoang Anh Gia Lai, Vietnamese-American Lee Nguyen, a star player for the Vietnamese club, traveled to Arsenal in order to train for a month in the autumn of 2009. According to a report in the Southeast Asian internet-based *Goal.com*, 'the former PSV Eindhoven [Netherlands]

midfielder plays for Vietnam league team Hoang Ahn Gia Lai (HAGL), a club that has a partnership deal with the Premier League giants [Arsenal]' (Goal.com: 17 September 2009). The article goes on to say that this arrangement 'is a part of the cooperation agreement to build a Soccer Academy in Vietnam and advertise HAGL's name at the Emirates Stadium' (Ibid.). Identifying and analysing these networks and the individuals who establish and utilise them would be a valuable contribution.

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