An Ethnographic Study of Cyclo Drivers in Hanoi and Their Transitions

Narong Ardsmiti

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of The Australian National University

September 2007
Declaration

Except where it is otherwise acknowledged in the text,
This thesis is entirely my own work

Narong Ardsmiti

September, 2007
Acknowledgements

This research has been a long process, from its beginning in Hanoi to its conclusion in Canberra. I am deeply indebted to innumerable people for their assistance a long the way.

I would like to acknowledge the financial support from the Royal Thai Government that provided me with resources to pursue a postgraduate study at the Australian National University (ANU). I also thank ANU for a fieldwork funding as well as the Institute for Southeast Asian Studies in Hanoi, a research host, welcomed me to be a research visitor during the year 2003. Without supports from these organizations, this research would never been accomplished.

I own a special debt to Institute of Language and Culture for Rural Development, Mahidol University for allowing me to take absence for many years. I am also grateful to my colleagues who support, advise, and encourage me to continue study in Australia.

I wish to express my deepest thanks and gratitude to my thesis advisory panel especially Dr. Philip Taylor for his support, patience, critical comments, encouragement and inspiration at all stages of study. He not only provided me with insightful information but also spent his precious time and assisted me enormously in completing this writing. I appreciate his efforts in editing my work. He is such a great supervisor. Dr. David Marr and Dr. Li Tana spent a great deal of time in reading and criticizing drafts, while also contributing crucial points for this manuscript. I also learned many things from them that are always useful in my career. From the bottom of my heart, I thank to them.

A number of my friends and colleagues also contributed to this research by assisting me in focusing my argument. Villa Vilaithong, Tamthai Dilokvidhyarat, Panpanga Chulanont, Apiradee Jansaeng and her husband, Promporn Srikomol, Kanjana Danpatdee, and Kannikar
Sartraproong took time from their busy schedules to help me along and shared my stressful feelings in all stages of my research.

Thanks also due to my Thai friends at ANU, Warawude Rurkwararuk, Pongphisoot Busbarat, Sawat Paitoonsurikarn, Pawin Siriprapanukul, Thararat Chareonsothichai, Varaporn Chamsanit, Pompen Sodsrichai, Arunrat Tang, Supakit Charnvanichborikarn, Vasoontara Yieng, Chaaim Pachanee, and Wasan for making my life more enjoyable. I thank Pichet Saiphan, Kusra and Yuti Mukdawijitra for their help during my fieldwork in Hanoi. Also my Vietnamese friends Duong Bich Hanh, Nguyen Duy Thieu, Do Van Son, Trinh Dieu Thin, Khuc Van Loi, Ngo Van Tien, Dao Thanh Lap, Vu Gia Quy, Do Dinh Khanh, and chi Thanh and her family for supporting me in Vietnam.

I am indebted to my informants in Hanoi who are motorcycle taxi drivers, cyclo drivers, street vendors, shoe shiners, porters, construction site workers, and policemen. Without them, I could not finish my doctoral study. Thanks to all.

Finally, thanks to my family in Thailand particular Sorada Pranboonplook who, with their love and patience, have borne with my absence for so many years.

Canberra, Australia
September 2007

Narong Ardsmiti
Abstract

This thesis investigates how cyclo drivers in Hanoi have survived and adapted their way of making a living during Vietnam's recent period of social and economic transition. The main purpose of this study is to explore the social, economic and cultural circumstances of the cyclo drivers in Hanoi. The data was collected within the four inner districts of the city where the majority of cyclos are working. Most of the research uses ethnographic approaches and relies heavily on participant observation as well as in-depth interviews from a number of key informants supported by newspaper and documentary research.

The thesis opens by exploring the historical background of the cyclo in the context of Hanoi's urban transport sector. While pedicabs have been phased out of most other capital cities in Southeast Asia, cyclos remain in operation in Hanoi. However, investigation of the changing relationship between urban land use and urban transport shows that government regulations and new forms of public transport have recently put cyclos under a great deal of pressure.

The account then moves to examine ethnographically the experiences of the cyclo drivers. The first theme to be addressed is their situation as rural-urban migrants. The majority of cyclo drivers come from the countryside. Rural-urban economic disparities motivate them to seek work in Hanoi, yet they, like other migrant workers, are also motivated by cultural factors. When migrating to the city they make use of social networks, which provide assistance to newcomers in finding accommodation, jobs, information and finances.

The second theme to be addressed ethnographically concerns the cyclo driver's work and life in Hanoi. Two chapters deal with the associational strategies that help them to survive in the city. Peddling a cyclo is a low paid and insecure job. To succeed in obtaining a steady
income, the drivers form into formal and informal groups and develop patron-client relations with some of their regular customers. The drivers generally stay in cheap rental accommodation (*nha tro*) where they share a room and other facilities with others. To avoid conflicts between roommates, they create their own small groups with whom they share their problems and spend their leisure time. These close-friendships help relieve their tension drivers experience while working in the city.

The discussion then shifts to examine the attitudes of Hanoi people and government policies toward cyclo drivers and other migrant workers. These appear to be complex and depend upon the situation. Established urban residents view these migrants as a source of social problems in the city. However, they also consider these workers as diligent and willing to do jobs that are abandoned by city dwellers. State policies have also had contrary effects. New traffic decrees and urban beautification programs have affected many cyclos in Hanoi. Yet the promotion of the tourism industry has had a positive impact. Cyclos have found a new status in the city as transport for foreign tourists, representing the face of the city. This transition is due also to innovations made by cyclo drivers themselves. In consequence, the situation of cyclos in Hanoi differs from that of pedicabs in other countries in Southeast Asia.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Declaration</th>
<th>i</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Chapter 1
The Life and Times of Cyclo Drivers in Hanoi .......... 1

- Introduction................................................................. 1
- Significance of the study in relationship to literature .... 6
- Research methods............................................................... 15
- Overview of chapters....................................................... 19

## Chapter 2
Hanoi, Transportation and Cyclos........................... 25

- Introduction........................................................................... 25
- The development of Rickshaws in Southeast Asian region ........ 26
- Pedals in Vietnam.............................................................. 30
- Motorized vehicle period.................................................... 36
- Urban Morphology............................................................... 40
- Cyclos after 1990.............................................................. 52

## Chapter 3
Cyclo Drivers as Migrants: Their Motives and Methods.... 58

- Introduction........................................................................... 58
- Reasons for moving............................................................... 61
- Cultural expectations............................................................. 68
- Methods of migration............................................................. 73
- Connections with home........................................................... 80
Chapter 4
Vehicle is Life: Strategies for Survival ..................................86

Introduction...........................................................................86
“A lucky man” to be a foreigner’s personal driver...............88
Cyclos for tourists...............................................................93
To be or not to be a company member ................................94
Making a living on the streets.............................................105
Goods-carrying cyclos (xich lo cho hang)..........................114
The drivers and their employers.........................................119

Chapter 5
Living in Hanoi: A New Life in Town.................................122

Introduction.........................................................................122
“Nha tro” in their “Sofitel” ..................................................123
Life in nha tro..................................................................131
Dining in & Dining out.......................................................134
Family in town or what else?.............................................139
Leisure activities...............................................................145

Chapter 6
Cyclos in The Eyes of Hanoians..........................................151

Introduction.........................................................................151
“xom bui” the place where migrants live.........................152
Hanoians’ attitudes toward migrant workers....................157
People of Xom Bui speak back......................................165
Do urban people still need cyclos?...................................171
Cyclos though tourists’ eyes..............................................177

Chapter 7
Government Policies and Their Impacts..............................182

Introduction.........................................................................182
An overview of population redistribution: a result from the policies ........................................184
Vietnamese household registration system and coupon rationing system......................................188
Cyclos in competition...........................................................191
Urbanization and modernization.......................................195
Campaign for a “clean and green city”............................198
Traffic in Hanoi.................................................................200
A new law banning on cyclos...........................................204
Tourism policy and cultural heritage...............................207
Chapter 8
Conclusion: The Future of Cyclos in Hanoi.......................211

Appendix........................................................................222

Bibliography....................................................................226
List of Figures

Figure 2.1 The traditional walking city................................................41
Figure 2.2 The transit city...................................................................42
Figure 2.3 The automobile city...........................................................43
Figure 2.4 Hanoi in 1873.....................................................................44
Figure 2.5 Hang Quat Street in 1910...................................................46
Figure 2.6 Hang Dao Street the major north-south axis
through the Ancient Quarter in 1991............................................50
Figure 3.1 Cyclo drivers (some main informants) and
the author at their accommodation............................... 64
Figure 3.2 The daily carpenters waiting for a job
on the side of the road.................................................. 66
Figure 4.1 Cyclos in queue..............................................................112
Figure 4.2 A cyclo uses power from a motorcycle.............................116
Figure 4.3 A goods-carrying cyclo at Le Duan Street.........................118
Figure 5.1 nha tro tap the.................................................................127
Figure 5.2 A shower place...............................................................128
Figure 5.3 In a collective room (nha tro tap the)...............................130
Figure 5.4 A cooking area.................................................................135
Figure 6.1 A group of unskilled laborers waiting for jobs.....................155
Figure 6.2 A side-alley in xom bui....................................................156
Figure 6.3 A small truck taxi............................................................173
Figure 6.4 A goods-carrying cyclo bearing processed charcoal
bricks used for domestic and commercial cooking ...174
Figure 7.1 Small truck taxis...............................................................195
Figure 7.2 Traffic in Hanoi.................................................................202
Figure 7.3 Ward Policemen (Cong an Phuong) overseeing
organized vehicle parking on the footpath
at Lang Ha Street.............................................................202
Figure 7.4 Confiscated motorcycle depot...........................................203
Figure 7.5 The confiscated cyclos depot............................................205
Chapter 1

The Life and Times of Cyclo Drivers in Hanoi

Introduction

In the summer of 2001, I spent a few weeks vacationing in the old quarter area in the heart of Hanoi in Vietnam. It was my first time in Hanoi. Although Hanoi and my home city of Bangkok are not too far apart, historical difference in ideology and government administration had for a long time prevented people from traveling between the two countries. For decades, the concepts communism and democracy separated people in mainland Southeast Asia from each other. Since the occupation of Saigon by North Vietnam and the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia there had existed in Thailand a widespread feeling of unease and threat. Until the cold war ceased, co-operation between Thailand and Vietnam was limited. Gradually, fear and mistrust have been replaced by "partnerships in regional business" and Thailand and Vietnam have commenced rebuilding diplomatic relations. As a result of the new co-operative relationship, people from both countries are exempted from
obtaining a visa. They can travel back and forth, visit their relatives and
do business more easily.

That day, I remember, was another hot one. The humidity was
quite high with strong sunshine. The restaurant’s wall clock showed the
time as 2 pm. I looked out the window watching a few people walking in
the street. A song could be heard playing lightly on a radio.

...la la la la Xich lo! Cho toi thoi dan do. Cu lo troi nang.
Cu lo troi mua.
... mot chieu. Cung anh em dao choi pho dong nguoi. Con
lai ming ta. Uoc mo da doi...
(Cyclo! Stop and take me, please. Whether sun or
rain, they peddle the crowded streets. Only wish to make
the passengers happy).

On the street, a young man peddled a three-wheeled pedicab,
slowly passing by me. His eyes looked around on both sides of the street
searching for someone who might want to take a cyclo. He drove his
vehicle slowly and turned left at the end of the street. Not too long after,
he turned back into the street and I saw him again. He smiled at me, as
to invite me to be his customer. I also smiled at him. A few minutes later,
he passed me again without customers. I looked at his vehicle. It
reminded me of when I was young; going anywhere by samlor (literally,
three wheels) looking at the people on both sides of the street. But with
samlor in Thailand passengers needed to sit in the rear, and the driver
peddled from the front. Sometimes, the drivers blocked the scenery. On
the contrary, traveling by cyclo in Vietnam would be better, with no one to
block the passengers’ view.

While I was thinking about my memories of samlor in Thailand,
some questions came to my mind about that cyclo driver: “If he cannot
get any passengers today, what will he do; how much money can he earn
each day; does he come from the other provinces or he is a Hanoi
resident? Is he married yet? How about his family? Is his wife working? Does he have children? Where are they; do they stay with him in Hanoi or stay anywhere else? My mind was filled with questions.

These questions remained in my mind until I came to the Australian National University (ANU), Australia, where I resolved to do my PhD research on xich lo or cyclo drivers in Vietnam. I commenced reading about the transport sector in urban Southeast Asia and the many different kinds of pedicabs in the region such as samlors in Thailand, sidecars in Manila, The Philippines, becaks in Indonesia, trishas in Malaysia, trishaws in Singapore, and sai kaas in Rangoon, Burma. Much smaller than a standard bus, these passenger vehicles can travel along narrow roads. Offering a door-to-door service, they provide transportation between urban residential areas over a short distances at a low cost. The vehicles’ characteristics differ from one country to the next. In some countries, the passengers sit in a seat at the front and the driver peddles at the rear, such as the xich lo in Vietnam, becak in Indonesia, and trisha in Malaysia. In other countries, the passengers sit in a seat on the side of the vehicle, as with sai kaa in Burma, sidecar in The Philippines, and trishaw in Singapore.

As research papers report, the majority of the people who work as pedicab drivers in Asia are migrants. The stories about these marginal people who move from the countryside to make a life in the city interested me greatly. One pattern found in this region is that these migrate temporarily come from remote rural areas to work in low paid jobs in cities to earn a supplementary income for their families during non-agricultural seasons. These people have frequently gone back and forth between their hometown and the cities. While some move alone, in many cases, husbands and wives would move to the city leaving their children with the grandparents in their home village. Encountering many difficulties in a new urban environment, many rely on fellow migrants to help them settle and find work in the city.
Studies on pedicab drivers in Southeast Asia indicate that many countries forced this kind of vehicle out of their capital cities because their numbers and low speed were a source of traffic congestion. For instance, the Thai government banned *samlors* in 1960 and Indonesia began to eliminate *becak* from the main streets of Jakarta in 1970. The *trisha* in Malaysia also was confined to specific streets in 1969. Recently, the Burmese Government increased the penalty fee for *sai kaa* drivers who break the traffic laws (Textor 1961; Azuma 2001; Rimmer 1986 and 1978). Similarly in Vietnam, the Hanoi people’s committee promulgated Decree No 21/2001 banning cyclos pedaling in restricted areas during rush hours and many areas were prohibited to cyclo at all times during the day. This decree made a change to the fate of cyclos in Hanoi. The number of cyclos in Hanoi decreased. Many of them were confiscated and destroyed. Their drivers changed to other jobs. My hypothesis, based on reading the literature, is that the government has acted in this way because of cultural reasons such as wanting to modernize and beautify the city, or developmental reasons such as the desire to improve the traffic flow to develop the urban economy by limiting the working areas of this kind of vehicles. This would imply that the cyclo might disappear from Hanoi in the near future.

Yet many cyclos still operate in Hanoi, as any visitor to its wealthy and bustling downtown area known as the old quarter (*Pho Co*) can readily attest. Most of these vehicles are shining and new, as one might not expect of a mode of transport whose days are numbered. The presence of these vehicles in the heart of the capital city seems paradoxical, given that one might expect a communist government to be as effective as any other in enforcing compliance with its laws and vision of orderly modernization. Considering the official restrictions that are placed on migration to the city, one might wonder also how the drivers themselves have managed to overcome such obstacles to establish themselves in the city. Furthermore, Vietnam has followed, for more than
twenty years, a program of rapid economic liberalization, a process that has seen the number of privately-owned vehicles in the city increase rapidly. One wonders how cyclos might have survived the increased completion for limited road space and decreasing demand for their services. Nowhere is the presence of cyclos more obvious than in the highly congested 36 streets area—a magnet for foreign tourists—and place where many locals have made a good income from tourism. How is it that cyclos have been apparently successful here, when one might expect that the pressure from a modernizing government and a upwardly mobile middle class to do away with a "backward" form of transport would be at its most intense?

The focus of this research is to investigate how cyclo drivers in Hanoi have survived and adapted to Vietnam’s recent socio-economic transition. The main purpose of this study is to describe the social, economic and cultural circumstances of the cyclo drivers. These include how the drivers earn their living, who the drivers are, what motivates them to come to the city to do this work, and what restrictions or obstacles they face in migrating to the city and living and working there. Focusing mainly on migrant people who move to Hanoi to work in its small transport sector, I aim to provide a better understanding of labor migration to urban areas of Vietnam. I investigate the views of Hanoi residents about the cyclo drivers, asking who the cyclo users are, do city people still need cyclos or not, and what is their attitude to those who migrate from rural areas to work as drivers? I also examine government policies relating to public transport, migration, and the economic development of urban areas. One aim of this study is to see how cyclo drivers have responded to the regulations that surround the work they do. An underlying objective is to explore to what extent the resourcefulness of the cyclo drivers themselves has played a part not only in perpetuating this way of making a living, but also creatively modifying it to changing conditions.
Significance of the study in relationship to the literature

Population mobility is a common phenomenon in Southeast Asia. People might move from one place to another, alone or together with others, for a short visit or a longer period of time. They may move within the same region or cross to other provinces, even move from the rural to urban areas. In many Southeast Asian countries, rural-urban migration is greatly increasing in importance especially in urbanizing economies as rural-urban wage differentials grow. A lack of job opportunities at home, unequal regional development, urbanization and manufacturing are also significant factors forcing people to migrate. Even in poor countries such the Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Cambodia, rural-urban labor migration has increased in recent years due to urbanization and industrialization. Priya (2005: 25) citing from Acharya (2003) reported that many Cambodian and Lao women and young girls from the countryside moved to work in the urban areas as domestic helpers, garment workers, bar girls, and sex workers. In Cambodia, it was estimated that around 3 percent of the labor force was employed in garment manufacturing units. A similar process is occurring in Laos, where the number of female migrant workers in factories has increased in major cities such as Vientiane, Suvannakhet, Pakse, and Louang Prabang. In Indonesia, a longitudinal study of 37 villages in Java carried out over the period 1967-1991 (Collier et al. 1993) concluded that most of landless rural families in Java have at least one person working outside of the villages in a factory or service job. In Thailand, the Labor Force Survey conducted by the National Statistics Office reported that in 1995, a year before the economic crisis hit, roughly 15.6 percent of people over the age of 13, or 7 million people, were migrant workers. But the figures for 1997 were much lower, with roughly 327,000 workers moving from agriculture to
manufacturing; 532,000 to construction; 215,000 to commerce and 130,000 to service sector (Saowaluk 2000).

In Vietnam, the number of people migrating nowadays has obviously increased and become more complex. In the past, people were forced to move either by wars or by government policies (Hardy 2003; Abrami and Henaff 2004; Thrift and Forbes 1986; Dang Nguyen Anh 2005; Hoang Xuan Thanh et al. 2005). Since the Doi Moi period, especially the implementation of the household contract system in agriculture, rural laborers were no longer tied to their land. The countryside was open to market exchanges. People were no longer dependent on government subsidies and rationing for survival. As the economy began to open, new job opportunities outside the state sector have made it increasingly possible for people to move and search for work. However, employment is mostly available in the large cities. The laborers have to leave the rural areas in order to get the better jobs and better wages in the cities.

The 1999 census indicated that the population of the urban areas increased markedly, with 23.5 percent of the whole population living in urban areas. It increased from around 19.4 percent from 1989, particularly in the two largest cities of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. In both cities, the urban population increased about 1.5 times since 1989. They accounted for nearly one-third of Vietnam’s total population in 1999 (GSO 2001: vii). The census covering the period 1994-1999 showed that Ho Chi Minh City absorbed a large number of migrants, about 410,533 persons, with a net migration rate of 8.15 percent, the highest in the country. Similarly, Hanoi also gained 114,617 migrants or about 4.29 percent (GSO 2001: vii; Tran Cao Son 2000: 51). Even though the government strictly controlled the flow of people through its migration policies and the household registration system (for details see Chapter 7), many workers migrated illegally, explicitly avoiding the laws. According to Harnois’s study, in 1997 the Chuong Duong quarter of
Hanoi had 3,180 families with 12,653 people. Of that number, 3,693 people, or 29 percent, were considered illegal migrants (Harnois 2000: 108).

As the urban population has grown, urban land use has expanded in all directions. DiGregorio, Rambo, and Yanagisawa (2003:189-190) studied Hanoi land use and found that in 1960, Hanoi had a land area of 58 square kilometers. By 1998, its land use had grown to 91 square kilometers and is expected to increase to 121 square kilometers by the year 2010. The city’s expansion can also be seen from the increase in its administrative divisions. Initially, Hanoi had four inner districts and four suburban districts. In 1997, the inner city was expanded with three more districts added, Cau Giay, Thanh Xuan and Tay Ho. Recently, the city has established two new districts in the inner city named Hoang Mai (part of Thanh Tri districts) and Long Bien (part of Gia Lam district). Likewise, the population of the urban areas has grown. A researcher for the Asian Development Bank estimated that if urban growth maintains its recent rate and the annual GDP growth continues at 9-10 percent each year, the urban population could be expected to double over the next 15 years (ADB 1997: 1).

A large proportion of the migrants who move to work in the urban areas tends to work in the manufacturing and construction sectors. However, a high number of them are found in the service sector, which includes retail traders, hospitality services, transport workers and household businesses. Female migrants prefer to work in factories or operate their own business as a petty trader. Ha Thi Phuong Tien and Ha Quang Ngoc (2001: 66-75) surveyed the female laborers in the urban areas of three large cities of Vietnam—Hanoi, Da Nang, and Ho Chi Minh City—and noted that starting business as a street vendor requires only a little capital and knowledge. For example, if they want to sell fresh fruits

---

1 At present, the Hanoi capital city has nine inner districts: Hoan Kiem, Hai Ba Trung, Ba Dinh, Dong Da, Cau Giay, Thanh Xuan, Tay Ho, Hoang Mai, and Long Bien; and five suburban districts: Dang Anh, Gia Lam, Thanh Tri, Soc Son, and Tu Liem.
or vegetables, they need just 40,000-50,000 VND (US $ 2.50-3.25) to start these businesses. For some commodities, such as newspapers, lottery tickets, sandals, and others, traders do not need capital at first. The workers can get the products beforehand and later on return those that they have not sold. Hence, the busy activity on the streets of Hanoi and other large cities is overwhelmed with migrant hawkers. As Peter Higgs (2003) argued, the increase in footpath businesses seems to have been an accidental outcome of the *Doi Moi* policy, which encouraged non state-owned enterprises (SOEs). Both Hanoi residents and migrants occupy the sidewalks of the crowded areas for their business. These include both legal and underground activities such as the sale of drugs and prostitution, which are also practiced on the footpaths in Hanoi. While many female migrants work as street vendors, male migrants tend to work in the service and construction industry as porters, transport workers and construction workers. A small proportion of them work in freelance jobs offered by state-run enterprises (Nguyen Van Chinh 1997: 45; Hoang Xuan Thanh et al. 2005: 21; Dang Nguyen Anh 2005: 154). This is similar to migrants in other countries in Southeast Asia where men usually work in construction sites, the transport sector, manufacturing, trading, retail activities and the service sector (Nurma 1990; Rimmer 1987; Forbes 1996b; Riwanto Tirtosudarmo 1985).

The income difference between people in rural and urban areas is another significant factor forcing people to migrate. A World Bank report (1999) showed that the average income per capita in rural areas of the Red River Delta is 71,000 VND (US $5.05) per month while in Hanoi it is 330,000 VND (US $23.75), nearly five times higher. The wide income gap between rural and urban areas acts as a magnet to pull the large number of surplus laborers out of their villages searching for a better remuneration in the cities. Research papers confirm that this gap is increasing each year, for example, a study conducted by Hoang Van Kinh et al (2001: 95-120) reported that in 1992-1993, urban earned income per
hour was 33 percent higher than rural earned income per hour. By 1997-1998, this differential had increased to 72 percent. Philip Taylor (2004a: 3) citing from Nguyen Manh Hung (2003) also indicated that in 2002, the richest ten percent of people, who live mostly in urban areas, earned on average 12.5 times more than the poorest ten percent of people, who are mostly found in the countryside. The richest five percent of families earned on average 20 times more than the poorest five percent.

The recent establishment of industrial parks throughout the country, aimed to boost the economic growth rate, has created a large demand for workers. These also draw many teenagers both males and females to leave the countryside and work in factories which are mainly based on the outskirts of the big cities. For instance, among over 67 industrial zones (IZs) in the country, fourteen are located in Ho Chi Minh City, five are found in Hanoi, Hai Phong has three IZs, Ha Tay—a province neighboring Hanoi—has two IZs, and so on.1 People who live around these manufacturing zones also changed their occupations from working in agricultural sector to doing small businesses such as renting rooms, open grocery shops, and other businesses serving the factory workers. Nghiem Lien Huong (2004) argued that many female factory workers might work up to 12 hours a day, six or seven days a week. Sometimes, they must work overnight to produce the products in time. These workers are willing to work long hard hours in order to escape working in the rice fields and to improve their lives.

Although economic circumstances play a major role in forcing many migrants out of their villages, cultural factors also cause many of them to leave home as well. Mills (1999) who did research on rural-urban migration in Thailand argued that the dream of leading a more exciting modern life leads many young women and men from rural areas to seek work in Bangkok. Living and working in the capital city brings the

---

migrants into contact with the adventure and modernity of urban life. Their new clothes and other signs of urban sophistication represent not only their owner's material wealth but also an increasingly important form of cultural capital. Commodified images and ideals shape the aspirations and desires of young women and men who enter urban employment in Vietnam. Nghiem Lien Huong (2004) argued for instance that female factory workers in Hanoi abandon rice farming because it darkens their skin. Fair skin is an important indicator of urban or upper-middle-class female status. Many also leave for the city in search of a more romantic, glamorous life, a dream that is rarely realized. As many cases of cyclo drivers presented in this study show, some Vietnamese cultural factors influence their movements (see discussion in Chapter 3). I also agree with many research reports which find that the majority of unskilled laborers have moved to work in the cities because of the attraction of higher income and improved job opportunities. However, existing research has told us little about why the migrants need the money. This research aims to clarify some hidden issues behind the movement of workers to the city and describes migrants' life in large cities by selecting the cyclo drivers of Hanoi as a case study.

As Dang Nguyen Anh (2005); Hoang Xuan Thanh et al (2005); Taylor (2004b); Li Tana (1996); Tacoli (1998) have shown, remittances from migrants play a significant role in the economy of Vietnam's rural areas. They help repay debts, and cover the costs of children's schooling and illness of relatives left behind. Cash remittances can reduce the need for farmers to sell their paddy rice for cash, and ensure greater rural food security. Rural-urban migrants, including the cyclo drivers who come to work in Hanoi, save and remit part of their earnings to rural families. Many workers told me that if they worked in the rice fields they could get rice for eating, but they did not have enough money to buy other things. The remittances from migrants in the city, I argue, appear to be an important source of their families' household subsistence incomes. It
enables people not only to purchase new commodities and to enhance the comfort of family members upcountry, but also to support their aging parents who cannot work to support themselves. Furthermore, part of that money is also invested for their children's education. Many married migrants are particularly concerned about their children's education. They do not want their children to face difficulties like their parents when they grow up. They hope that their children will finish school at a high level and will get good high-paying jobs.

The investment in their children's education requires a lot of money over a long time. The workers need to ensure that they can support their children's education as long as the children are in school. Working in the large cities like Hanoi where there is an abundance of work opportunities, it is easier for them to change to other jobs. Because of their obligations to send money home, these workers tend to stay and work in the city longer. They may switch to other jobs whenever the opportunities occur. And because of their sense of duty towards their family, they will work in the city until they fulfill their obligations or feel themselves too old to work in the city. That is seen as the time for these migrants to quit their jobs and return home.

Life in the large cities is not easy for the migrants. They have to endure discrimination. The city dwellers' attitudes towards the migrants seem unwelcoming towards these urban newcomers. Ha Thi Phong Tien and Ha Quang Ngoc (2001: 173) found that Hanoi employers view some female laborers as unfaithful persons and they often keep on cheating and taking advantage of their employers. Many cases are reported of housemaids (osins) try to steal their employer's possessions. My own investigations suggest that many city residents view these migrants as troublemakers who create many serious social problems in the city (see Chapter 6). Likewise, studies conducted in other countries also mentioned that migrants are thought to contribute to inconveniences or are involved with crime because of their spatial mobility, rural
 backgrounds, and nonresident status in the city (Barrett and Li 1999; Li Zhang 2001; Stand 1989). However, the laborers have no choice; by working in the city they could earn much more money than working in the countryside. They need to persist against these people’s views. Due to the discrimination, I argue, the migrants are forced to form informal groups through their networks both in their accommodation and working places. These networks support their members during their stay and work in the city as well as assist the newcomers by providing needed information about working in the city. Many migrants, when they move and work in cities, do not follow formal procedures relating to residence or their work. For instance, many cyclo drivers have neither driving licenses nor vehicle registration licenses, and no temporary residential registration permits or other identification cards. Whenever they face difficulties in any circumstances, they rely on their peer group for assistance.

Pedicabs in many countries in Southeast Asia have undergone difficulties since motor-powered vehicles have occupied the streets (Barter 1999; Azuma 2001; Rimmer 1987; Dick 2000; Textor 1961). The governments in these countries view this kind of transport as a source of traffic congestion and accidents due to their slow speed and dangerous driving habits. Thus, many regulations seeking to eliminate them have been issued. As mentioned above, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore banned the trishaw vehicles during the period 1960-1970 whereas the Burmese government has increased a penalty fee for the trishaw drivers who break the traffic laws. It seems to me that in each case, the government has played a key role in forcing these vehicles out of the capital cities.

Some scholars who studied the small transport sector in these countries have argued that the governments’ motivation behind these prohibitions is concern about national prestige and image. Leaders viewed this occupation as humiliating work, which presented an image of
under-development (William Lim 1975: 130; Azuma 2001: 3). It conflicted with their vision of a “modern city”. Likewise, regarding the cyclo’s situation in Hanoi, the Vietnamese government also claimed that cyclos obstructed the smooth traffic flow in the city, leading in 2001 to the promulgation of decree No. 21/2001 banning cyclos in many areas of inner-city Hanoi. The implementation of that decree had impacts on cyclos in Hanoi (details in Chapter 2 and 7). I argue that this decree pushed the cyclos towards serving a new function of representing Hanoi as a “modern city” even though the aim of that decree tends to limit the working times of cyclo drivers. The implementation of that decree, on the one hand, has forced a large number of cyclos to die out. On the other hand, it has pushed cyclos into becoming vehicles for tourists.

Furthermore, the increase in various new forms of public transport has created greater competition and accelerated the cyclo’s move into its new function in the city. Other forms of transport have forced the cyclos out of the local public transport system by offering cheaper fares and faster services. Simultaneously, the promotion of the tourism industry in Vietnam through the government’s policy has also had impacts on the cyclos. While the number of overseas visitors has significantly increased, the higher demands for vehicles for sightseeing has also increased. This has provided an opportunity for cyclos to switch from serving the local people of Hanoi to overseas tourists. Cyclo drivers themselves have exercised ingenuity in responding to this new opportunity by modifying their vehicles and forming new associational forms that not only meet government regulations but also capture a share of the tourist market. I also argue that because of these changes, the situation of cyclo in Hanoi differs from other countries in Southeast Asia. Had they not responded in this way, cyclos might have disappeared from Vietnam’s capital city as has happened to pedicabs elsewhere in Southeast Asia.
Research methods

The fieldwork was divided into two stages: the first stage was a preliminary period of research in Hanoi for a month during the summer of 2002. The second stage was a whole year of field research that was conducted in 2003. During the first phase, the main task was trying to get a Vietnamese organization to be my host research sponsor for the next year’s fieldwork. All foreign researchers need a Vietnamese organization to be a research host as is required by law. To do so, I requested the Institute for Southeast Asian Studies (ISAS) in Hanoi, which has an agreement to exchange research staff between the ISAS and Mahidol University, Thailand to which I am affiliated. The Institute agreed and welcomed me to be a research visitor and also provided me a Vietnamese language teacher for an intensive course during the first period of my fieldwork. Over the remaining weeks of my preliminary visit, I explored Hanoi city, mapping groups of cyclos in many working areas and had short talks with them and Hanoi residents in order to get some fundamental data to develop my research proposal and questions to guide my research in the following year.

The second phase of fieldwork began in January 2003. During the first three months I rented a room from a Vietnamese landlord close to To Lich River in Cau Giay district on the border that prohibited cyclos peddling into the city during daytimes. My room was on the third floor of the owner’s new style house, which looked like a box, narrow and long in length and four stories high. In that area, the houses are mostly two stories high; only this house and some other new buildings have many stories. One common feature of Vietnamese houses in Hanoi is their tiny outdoor space. However, one house in that area has quite a large garden and the style of the house is different from the others. Bac Liu (literally,
Uncle Liu—my landlord—told me, "That is the foreigner’s house," (nha cua nguoi tay). At that house, I had a chance to meet one man who worked as a cyclo driver taking the foreign family’s children to school. His name was Lap. I called him Anh Lap (Anh means elder brother) because he is slightly older than me and it is a polite form of address. Our relationship developed very fast due to his kindness. He was not only my key informant but sometimes also my Vietnamese teacher. Whenever I could not understand some words, he would use more easy words and tried to explain their meaning, at times even drawing pictures. Anh Lap introduced me to other men who also worked as cyclo drivers taking children to school. Their main job was to take children between school and their homes. After finishing this job in the morning and afternoon, they were free to get other customers. Anh Lap himself needed to work in the garden after finishing his jobs with the children.

At the Cau Giay Bridge crossing To Lieh River, a border exists limiting cyclos peddling into the inner city. I was curious about why the cyclos peddled only on the other side of the river and did not cross the bridge into the city. Anh Lap told me, "It is a banned area for cyclos. The police will arrest any drivers who peddle during the prohibited times. Since the implementation of the decree banning cyclos, many cyclos have been confiscated. I needed to ask permission to peddle my cyclo in this area." He opened his wallet and showed me an old piece of paper written in Vietnamese language and signed by an authorized person. He said, "It is very hard to get this permission from the policemen. I asked my boss to write a letter requesting permission to peddle a cyclo in the prohibited area." He explained more, "only two groups of cyclos can request this permission: cyclos taking children to school and cyclos for tourists that are affiliated with the hotels or the tourist cyclo companies. And they need to pay fees every year." That is the reason why many cyclos that carry goods did not cross this bridge.
In April 2003, I moved to stay closer to the city center where the majority of cyclo drivers were working. I rented a room at Tho Nhuom Street, less than one kilometer from Hoan Kiem Lake. At this place, it was more convenient for me to hang out with the drivers until late at night. And it was very close to their accommodation as well. I could walk and socialize with many research subjects such as the cyclo drivers, street vendors, motorcycle taxi drivers (xe om drivers), merchants in the many markets around there who still use cyclos for carrying their goods, and many Hanoi residents as well as some government officers. I also classified the cyclo drivers into four categories: the first is cyclos with regular jobs taking children to school. The second group is the cyclos working with the tourist cyclo companies and the cyclos that affiliate with the hotels. The third group is private cyclo drivers. And the last one is goods-carrying cyclos. The second and third categories comprise a large number of the drivers in Hanoi and most of them worked in the old quarter area and Hoan Kiem Lake (for more details see Chapter 4). These were the main research subjects in my study.

Participant observation and interviews (including formal and non-formal interviews) were the main methods of data collection. It was very important to make friends with the research subjects before requesting permissions for an interview. To do that, I always hung out with them and participated in their social activities, such as eating what they ate, visiting their places of accommodation in the city and their villages (if permitted), associating with their friends and the members of their networks who worked in various kinds of jobs, spending free time with them, negotiating with the ward policemen after their cyclos were confiscated, and so on. At the vehicle parking places (in the case of the drivers in the tourist cyclo companies), I associated with many of the drivers, observing them when they waited for their customers as well as asking them for permission to do formal interviews and group discussions on numerous topics such as the nature of work, incomes, problems with their work and living in the
city. I also requested interviews with the company manager and chiefs of each cyclo team.

Collecting life histories from my key informants was another method of data collection. A number of cyclo drivers were selected for the oral history method, including single and married drivers of various ages from the four categories previously mentioned. The research subjects also included many xe om drivers who used to peddle cyclos. These people could provide valuable information about the reasons why they moved and how they adapted themselves to the new conditions in the city. Oral histories were also sought from among many Hanoi residents who could tell me about cyclos in different time frames. Their stories could help me to piece together the jigsaw puzzles of how cyclo drivers in the past earned their living, who they were and who the cyclo users were, as well as whether Hanoi people’s attitudes towards the drivers in the past was different from today.

Doing documentary research in the library was another approach to get information that supplemented the fieldwork data. Various documents written by Vietnamese and foreign scholars in libraries in Vietnam, Thailand and Australia were explored. Numerous newspaper articles about rural-urban migration and about cyclo drivers and other topics related to urbanization and economic development during last 10 years were also studied. These included online newspapers on various websites. This information described the population movement trends in Vietnam as well as helping me to understand the government’s policies towards the migrants and the drivers.
Overview of chapters

This opening chapter discusses the background and significance of the study, the research methodology and the main arguments presented in this dissertation. Chapter 2 follows with a discussion of the development of pedicabs in Southeast Asia in general and cyclos in Vietnam in particular. The chapter presents a brief history of rickshaws in Southeast Asia and the development of pedicabs in Vietnam. The main theme of discussion is to investigate the relationship between city patterns and urban transportation. Many cities in the world developed from a walking city to a transit city and then to an automobile city. Urban transport also developed following these changes from human-powered or animal-powered vehicles to motor-powered vehicles. In cities that became automobile cities, many human-powered vehicles were eliminated such as samlors in Thailand, becaks in Indonesia, trishaws in Singapore and Malaysia. Likewise, in Hanoi, the capital city of Vietnam, the government also seeks to force the cyclos out of the city. In this chapter, I argue that Hanoi like other countries in Southeast Asia developed from a walking city to a transit city during the French period and is now moving further to become an automobile city. However, the development of Hanoi has been slower than other countries because of the wars. While other countries banned pedicabs in the capital city, cyclos in Hanoi still exist. Chapter 2 aims to provide the reader with a background of the history of cyclos in relation to the urban history of Hanoi, before investigating the drivers' lives in the following chapters.

Chapter 3 focuses on the meaningful intentions of the cyclo drivers as migrants. This chapter will investigate the reasons which lie behind their movement. Are they only economic reasons? Or do the migrants expect to find anything more in moving to the cities? The discussion deals with the motivations of both single and married workers, examining
the differences and similarities between these two categories of migrants. Male and female migrants also have somewhat different reasons for leaving their villages. Some Vietnamese cultural factors that relate to migration are also examined. The chapter also describes the patterns of migration as well as the role of kinship and other social networks in supporting the newcomers. Who are kin and what are their roles both in the villages and the city? The cultural values that push many migrants to the cities include the fulfillment both of individuals' dreams and of their responsibilities in their households. While the attraction of the city or the search for new experiences are especially significant among younger migrants, obligations towards one's family are of greater importance among married migrant workers. I also argue that the migrants' social networks not only provide help finding jobs, accommodation, information and other support for newcomers to the city, they also act as a mechanism to recruit new migrants to the cities. In many instances, the unemployed in the countryside make use of their networks to get a job in the city, while businesses or households in the city also use their networks to get new employees as well. These are two ways that unskilled laborers make use of social networks in Vietnam.

Chapter 4 describes the work strategies employed by cyclo drivers in Hanoi. In this chapter, I classify cyclos into four categories: personal cyclos, cyclos for tourists, private cyclos and goods-carrying cyclos. Each group has different work and customers. Even through the nature of the work done by each of these groups differ, they each employ strategies to get regular customers in order to survive. One strategy is to form themselves into formal or informal groups. In this way they can help their members to get customers. This approach is evident among the second and third of these groups. The members of Hanoi's large tourist cyclo companies have a highly organized, co-operative strategy to get around the problems posed by traffic regulations and to access a share of the growing tourist market. Similar although less formal groupings are evident
among drivers affiliated to the large hotels. By contrast, private cyclo drivers seem to work alone searching for customers in the streets. However, in reality, informal co-operative groups appear among these drivers especially when customers need more than one cyclo.

The second strategy employed by cyclo drivers is to create relationships with their customers in order to ensure regular short or long-term employment. These exchange relationships between the drivers and their customers take time to develop. But when relationships are established, a patron-client pattern will often emerge. The employers act as patrons providing benefits to their clients who, in return, offer assistance and reliable service to these regular customers. This pattern is found most obviously among cyclo drivers who work as long-term personal drivers, particularly for foreign employers as well as among goods-carrying cyclos who work in the markets or in retail districts. Even though the nature of the work done by these two groups of cyclo drivers is noticeably different there are similarities in the way they try to ensure regular income by establishing patron-client relationships. This happens less among the majority of tourist cyclo drivers. They focus more on fulfilling the requirements and reaping the benefits of formal group membership than on creating relationships with individual passengers. However, private cyclo drivers, who work more autonomously, aspire to create the patron client pattern as well.

Chapter 5 investigates drivers' living arrangements and their social lives in the city. The word nha tro seems to be well recognized among the poor migrants. In this chapter, I describe the two types of nha tro. One is nha tro phong rieng, a small private cubicle for a husband and wife couple. The other type is nha tro tap the, a collective room for singles, who share all facilities with other roommates. This chapter explores the social interactions among drivers as well as their family lives in their living places. It describes how drivers spend their free time, what kinds of leisure activities that they usually do, who they most often socialize with,
how their wives earn their living and the social relations between parents and their children.

In this chapter, I argue that these drivers rent cheap accommodation in order to save money. Staying together with their network, on the one hand, seems also to have the benefit of providing support to anyone who need assistance. On the other hand, it can cause conflicts among roommates. Life in the nha tro is complicated and full of tensions. In order to avoid conflicts, both single and married drivers create their own groups of close friends comprised of a small number of people. They usually do activities together during their free time and consult each other about problems regarding their work and accommodation. The support person might be a driver’s wife if she stays with him in the city. These kinds of relationships play an important role in helping the migrants to reduce social tensions and resolve problems encountered while living and working in the city.

Chapter 6 deals with the attitudes of urban people towards migrant workers such as cyclo drivers. I explore some of the views held by established urban residents towards these migrant workers and discuss also the laborers' attitudes in response to these people's views. In this chapter, I argue that both local residents and migrants have conflicts in their minds. Frequently, urban dwellers associate the poor rural migrants with the inconveniences of urban overcrowding, traffic jams, poor hygiene, and disorder, as well as the increasing rate of thefts and pickpockets in the city. They blame these social problems on the migrants. Many times, they also believe migrants try to take short-term advantage of the city. At the same time, urban people consider the people from the countryside as strong and cheap workers, filling many jobs that are abandoned by city people. A large rapidly developing city like Hanoi creates many job opportunities for these migrants. Yet although the new migrants have made a significant contribution to the
economic vitality of city, established residents tend to look down on them and scapegoat them for some of the social evils that prevail in the city.

In a city such as Hanoi which has a long history of migration and displacement, rural-urban social networks often blur the class and status distinctions between established and new urban residents. These networks notwithstanding, there remain strong distinctions between these two groups of people. As for the cyclo drivers themselves, they also feel that many city people try to take advantage of them and treat them as second-class citizens. They feel they have few rights, little say and no power, particularly in disputes with long-term residents. Yet ironically, the urban attitude that most affects them is one of indifference to the services that they provide. Increasingly, cyclo drivers have come to rely on foreign tourists for their living. Even here, the drivers sometimes encounter hostility and mistrust from these customers. However, they have no choice; working in the city provides income they cannot otherwise get working in their hometowns. Since they need to stay, they have to endure discrimination in the city.

Chapter 7 presents some significant policies, which impacts on cyclos and on migrant workers, as well as the competition that the drivers face among the other forms of public transport in the city. Hanoi, nowadays, is experiencing many rapid changes. The Hanoi People’s Committee works very hard to improve Hanoi’s image as a “modern city”. The clean and green city campaign has been launched with the aim to “clean up” disorderly activities in the streets. This has affected many street workers including cyclo drivers. Moreover, the law banning cyclos known as decree No 21/2001 has impacted on cyclos, causing the number of cyclo vehicles in Hanoi to dramatically decrease. In this chapter, I argue that the attempts of Hanoi People’s Committee to create “Hanoi modern city” have impacted to cyclos by pushing the cyclo’s transition from a form of low cost transport for local people to a vehicle for tourists. Many old cyclos have been since refurbished to work for the
tourist cyclo companies. Furthermore, the government has attempted to maintain economic growth by stimulating the tourism industry. This has opened up the opportunity for cyclos to be simultaneously part of the "modern city" of Hanoi as well as to represent the city's cultural heritage, especially as cyclos play an important role in taking foreign tourists on heritage sightseeing tours. The refurbishment of vehicles, wearing of uniforms, formation of tourist cyclo companies and adherence to strict rules are among the innovations developed by cyclo drivers to adapt to the new policy environment. The function of cyclos has changed so much that local people now call them "high class" cao cap or "aristocratic" quy toc cyclos. These vehicles no longer serve as transport for local people but have become, in many tourists' eyes, a symbol of Hanoi.

The last chapter, Chapter 8, concludes the findings of the study and considers the future of the cyclos in Hanoi.
Chapter 2

Hanoi, Transportation and Cyclos

Introduction

Pedicabs are found throughout urban Southeast Asia. In each country they go by a different name. The characteristics of these vehicles differ from place to place but the common form is a three wheeler, peddled by foot. In Thailand they are called samlor, the driver peddles at the front and the passengers sit on the rear seat. This form is also found in the Mekong delta of Vietnam, where it is called xe loi. Becak in Indonesia, xich lo in Vietnam and trishaw in Penang, Malaysia place the passengers in the front and the driver pedals from behind. In several countries such as Singapore, Burma, and the Philippines, there is a seat for the passengers on one side of the vehicle. Whatever the arrangement, the shared features of these vehicles are that they use human power, serve as local transportation, and have been, in a given period, among the most important forms of urban transportation.
Since motor-powered vehicles emerged, many types of gas-powered transport have replaced these human-powered vehicles. These changes have been welcomed by urban people. Before we go on to understand the life of cyclo drivers in present-day Hanoi, this chapter discusses the history of the emergence and, to some extent, decline in this form. It starts with a brief history of rickshaws in Southeast Asia and then moves on to the development of pedicabs in Vietnam. I discuss the history of cyclos in Hanoi against a backdrop of other forms of urban transportation. Vietnam’s changing urban transport scene is also investigated in comparison with other countries. Changes and variation in urban transport are related to changing and variable urban land-use systems. The last section explores the cyclo’s functions during the 1990s. I argue that Hanoi like other cities in Southeast Asia developed from a walking city to a transit city in the French period and then further to an automobile city. However, the development of Hanoi city has been slower than other countries because of the wars. While the other countries abolished pedicabs in the capital city, cyclos in Hanoi still exist.

The development of Rickshaws in Southeast Asian region

Rickshaws first appeared in Japan around 1870. Their original name was jinrikisha which means ‘human-powered vehicle’, jin = man, riki = power, and sha = vehicle. There is no consensus about who invented the rickshaw; however, at least four people have been credited: one is Jonathan Gable, a Baptist missionary, who later took this vehicle to China. The second is Daisuki Akiha, the owner and founder of the largest jinrikisha factory in Tokyo. The last persons are Yosuke Izumi and Tokujuro Suzuki, who derived their ideas from pushcarts and Western horse carts (Rimmer 1986; Warren 1986). The rickshaw at first was
primarily used by well-to-do people. With its characteristic two wheels pulled by a man and a sedan chair for a passenger, it could travel faster and more comfortably than other kinds of transportation in those times.

In the pre-motorized age before rickshaws came into general use, people usually traveled by foot or by boats. If one could afford an animal one might use oxen, mules and horses as carriers. Wealthy and high-status people were carried in litters or sedan chairs and their luggage on men's backs. They might use a palanquin carried by two men (Robequain 1944: 99, 104). When the rickshaw was introduced it replaced the rear man with two wheels. That made it go faster and expended less labor force. From then, the rickshaws became popular and were in widespread use throughout Asia. According to Rimmer (1986) citing from jinrikisha written by Saitoch Toshihiko (1979: 219-230), between 1903-1911 Japan exported rickshaws to many countries throughout the region, mainly to British and French colonial countries. Those included Singapore, Hong Kong, India, China, Korea, The Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam.

At first, the rickshaw was primarily used by elite people as a private transport. A family would own rickshaws and employed the pullers to take them where they wished. Soon thereafter, these vehicles progressed from private to public transport and the number of hired rickshaws increased rapidly. In its original country, 10 years after the first rickshaw's appearance in 1870, there were over 150,000 vehicles. By 1890 the numbers of rickshaws in Japan climbed up to around 200,000. There were about 50,000 vehicles in Tokyo alone (Wheeler 1998: 180). In Singapore they were first employed as a vehicle for public transport in 1880. A year later, over a thousand two-wheeled vehicles were plying the city streets for hire (Warren 1986: 14; Wheeler 1998: 181). In Thailand, the record shows that in 1898 there were 1,575 vehicles in service in Bangkok and the number increased up to twice this in 1915 (Pannee Bualek 1999: 31-35). In Penang, Malaysia, the first rickshaw was in use
by the late 1880s. By 1930 their numbers had peaked, at 3,696 publicly licensed rickshaws. There were still 2,000 vehicles in use in 1940 before the Japanese occupation (Wheeler 1998: 182). In Vietnam similarly, once this vehicle made its debut as a form of public transport, the hired rickshaw business prospered.

Rickshaws have a colorful history in Southeast Asia. They were the 'king of the streets' before other forms of public transport superseded them. Rickshaws provided a job for pullers and owners. The majority of pullers were Chinese coolies who sought to fulfill their dreams in this region. The owners who ran the business hiring rickshaws were also Chinese – Cantonese, Hokkiens, Teochius, and Hainanese. The pullers brought a lot of benefits to the society by offering cheap fares to move people and goods around, as well as creating many social problems. They smoked opium, drank alcohol, gambled and frequented prostitutes. These seemed to be common leisure forms for coolies in every country in Southeast Asia. Much of their savings were spent on these pursuits. Another social event associated with rickshaw coolies were strikes. At least four took place in Singapore and three in Thailand. The reasons for these uprisings were opposition to rent increases and unfair laws (Warren 1986: 105-130; Pannee Bualek 1999: 148-149).

In many countries across Southeast Asia, the peak period of rickshaws was probably the early 1910s to around the 1920s. After that, facing challenges from other kinds of public transportation, such as trams, buses and pedicabs, the number of rickshaws declined, although rickshaws still could be seen after World War II. In some countries, moreover, the government believed that rickshaws were a source of traffic congestion in the city. Thus, rickshaw-free zones were introduced. These vehicles could operate only in side streets and alleyways, off the main roads, where motorized public transport vehicles could not penetrate. In Singapore, for instance, in the mid 1920s, the Rickshaw Department started limiting the working areas and withdrawing licenses,
aiming to improve the traffic flow. However, these measures did not improve the traffic situation on the main streets (Warren 1986: 322). By 1947, rickshaws in Singapore had been banned completely (Wheeler 1998: 183). Rickshaws in Thailand were in the same situation; the authorities considered that many pullers, especially the new Chinese coolies, did not understand the traffic rules and they were a source of road accidents and traffic obstructions. Frequently, collisions between motor vehicles and rickshaws caused serious injuries to passengers. In 1953, the government promulgated a ban on rickshaws operating in the city (Pannee Bualek 1999: 128-135; Textor 1961: 3). Similarly, in Penang, the numbers of rickshaws rapidly declined after motor vehicles became more common in the mid 1920s (Wheeler 1998: 182).

Before the French arrived in Vietnam in the 1860s, the only means of travel were by foot, boats, horse-drawn wagons, and palanquins for people of high social status. The ordinary people usually traveled long distances by foot or by hand paddled or sail powered boats. The means used depended upon the distances and geographic region. Boats were more common in the deltas and coastal areas (Cooke and Li 2004). After the French came, a few rickshaws were imported to Vietnam; however, these vehicles were at first only used by well-to-do people. A recent report on the history of Vietnamese transportation indicates that in 1884, the French Governor ordered two rickshaws (xe tay, xe keo or xe treo in Vietnamese) from Japan as a prototype in order to build them locally; however, the ones that were built were not as beautiful as the Japanese rickshaws. Shortly thereafter, six rickshaws were imported to Hanoi via Hong Kong, to be used as vehicles for hire (Ministry of Transportation 2002: 76).

Later, the rickshaws developed from private use to become a common form of public transport in the cities. The number of rickshaws in Vietnam rapidly increased. In 1915 there were around 1,500 rickshaws (400 rubber-tire rickshaws and 1,100 steel-wheel rickshaws) running in
Hanoi (Ministry of Transportation 2002: 76). Some merchant companies offered rickshaws for hire in Hanoi. Hung Ky had 92 vehicles, Nguyen Thi Hao had 35 vehicles, Bui Van Que had 35 vehicles, and Vu Van Giai had 28 vehicles. By 1920, Hanoi rickshaw factories could produce around 300 xe tay vehicles per year. By then, rickshaws had become widespread in other cities, for example, Hai Phong, Nam Dinh, and Sai Gon also had rickshaws for hire (Ministry of Transportation 2002: 114). Rickshaws at that time could carry two passengers and needed two laborers; one pulled in front, another one pushed the vehicle from the rear. This provided a job for the poor people in the city (Ministry of Transportation 2002: 76).

**Pedals in Vietnam**

Although bicycles were popular in the West from the 1890s, they were expensive in Asia and, in the first decades of the 20th century, very few in numbers. Paul Barter (1999: 49) noted that in Asian cities during the 1920s the number of bicycles was low and only wealthy people could afford this kind of transport. Even by the 1940s, it is likely that walking accounted for more than half of all trips in most Asian cities (Barter 1999: 49). Bicycles became more popular in Southeast Asian cities around the 1950s. For instance, Singapore had over 200,000 bicycles in 1960. The old photographs and films from the 1950s to 1960s suggest that Kuala Lumpur had high numbers of bicycles as well. Pictures of Bangkok of that time show a large number of bicycles and pedicabs sharing the streets with small numbers of motor vehicles (Barter 1999: 55-56). In Indonesia, after independence, the bicycle could be seen everywhere. In 1970, Yogyakarta was a city of bicycles and pedicabs, with scarcely a car and only a few motorcycles (Dick 2000: 194).
The French also imported bicycles from Western countries into Vietnam early in the 20th century. However, when the bicycle made its first appearance in Vietnam, it was in the hands of elite people and the police, who used them in order to more rapidly pursue thieves (Lackritz 2002: 8). During the early decades of the 20th century, only around 70 bicycles were sold in an entire year. The first model was the Hirondelle (Sparrow), manufactured by a French company and the bicycle accessories were also imported from France (Ministry of Transportation 2002: 115; Lackritz 2002: 9). Around the 1930s, civil servants and upper middle class people gradually adopted the bicycle for use in the city (Lackritz 2002: 9). Nevertheless, by the end of the colonial period, only a small fraction of people in Vietnam's provincial capitals owned a bicycle, even in relatively commercialized provinces of the colony of Cochinchna such as Tay Ninh (Taylor 2004b).

Around 1945, Vietnam began to produce its own bicycles for the first time (Martha Lackritz 2002: 9; Ministry of Transportation 2002: 77). However, Vietnam at that time was entering a prolonged period of difficult wartime conditions. People in the countryside still made their trips by foot. Speaking of the period 1960-1970, Co Thin1 (aunt Thin) told me, “In those times, bicycles were an expensive luxury commodity, but they were in high demand. People wanted to have a bicycle for their own use, more than Vietnam's bicycle factories could produce. ...The price of one was around 200 VND, or four times my salary (she was a teacher in Nam Dinh Province in that time). They were very expensive! Each family had a quota, allowing them to buy only one bicycle each. But not every family could afford one,” she said. “In that time, the owner was required to register his/her bike with the police and have his/her name on the frame. Around 1975, this requirement was abolished.”

Bicycles played an important role in Vietnam during wartime. In the battle of Dien Bien Phu, bicycles were used as conveyances to carry

1 Interview, 25 August 2003
supplies for the army. A picture of xe tho\textsuperscript{2} caravans shows that the bicycles had significant roles in the war. Each bicycle was loaded with around 200 kilograms of rice and walked in a group to Dien Bien Phu.

At Cam Thuy, we received our loads of rice at the storehouse. Each man took as much as he could carry, between 100 and 200 kilograms. Our bicycles, now turned into pack bikes, were carefully camouflaged with tree branches. At nightfall I gave the signal to start (Dinh Van Ty 2002: 7).

Co Thin said, "A bicycle has only two wheels, and thus can move on any kind of path, even on rugged roads, along the narrow raised edges of the rice fields, or in the hills like xe tho. It needs only one person to move it. Other vehicles have more wheels; sometimes they need more laborers to operate and are difficult to steer through rice fields. So, the Viet Minh chose bicycles as a vehicle for carrying supplies to the fighting areas."

Before rickshaws disappeared entirely from the scene in Southeast Asia, a new form of transportation emerged known as a pedicab. Records do not show clearly exactly when pedicabs appeared in this region. It is believed that this kind of vehicle was first introduced in Singapore in 1914, then re-introduced there in the late 1920s, appearing in the 1930s in Kuala Lumpur, Bangkok, Jakarta and, in the early 1940s, Surabaya (Rimmer 1986: 113, Barter 1999: 50). The origin of pedicabs is also mysterious. Tony Wheeler (1998: 183) noted that Singaporeans claimed that the cycle-rickshaw was the product of local Chinese ingenuity whereas Japanese people also thought that the cycle-rickshaw originated in Japan. It was melded from a bicycle and a rickshaw.

\textsuperscript{2} Xe Tho or a pack bike is a bicycle with two hard bamboo sticks, one to prolong the handlebar and the other to prolong the seat shaft. The first facilitated the steering and the second provides a support for pushing or stopping the vehicle. At rear of vehicle, there are two baskets for load goods.
Vietnamese people also believed that the cyclo was invented by French people for their own business. Later, this vehicle was developed for public transportation. A well-known piece of Vietnamese reportage and autobiography named *I Pulled a Rickshaw* written by Tam Lang described the first appearance of a cyclo in Hanoi.

Three rubber tyres placed on three steel rims, two wheels in front, one at the back. Place a rattan basket between the two front wheels. Behind the basket erect a long rod to support a roof; at the back edge of the basket, place handlebars so that the person pedaling the tricycle can drive it. .... At that moment, an idea came into my mind; we could use these tricycles to replace the rickshaw (Lockhart and Lockhart 1996: 117).

Speaking of the history of the cyclo in Vietnam, Duong Trung Quoc³ told me that: "Around late 1930s the first cyclo was introduced in Saigon. The French took it from Cambodia. As a result, cyclos became popular as a vehicle for transportation among upper-class citizens. Around 1950, cyclos became common transportation among ordinary people." Hazel Hahn referred to records in the National Archive in Hanoi which indicated that cyclos most likely existed in Hanoi in 1942. In 1936, a petition by an entrepreneur, Le-Hua, to circulate 500 cyclo-pousses was rejected. In 1942 another entrepreneur, Nguyen Cat Tuong, was authorized by the municipality to circulate 15 cyclos (Hahn 2003).⁴

The story of the origin and circulation of these three wheeled vehicles elsewhere in Southeast Asia is complex. The first trishaw was introduced to Thailand in 1933. A record noted a Thai named Luen

³ Mr. Duong Trung Quoc is a Hanoi historian. He is also an editor the magazine “Xua & Nay”. A member of National Assembly. Interview, 10 December 2003.

⁴ Hazel Hahn is an Assistant Professor in the History Department at Seattle University, USA. Her findings were reported to the Vietnam Studies Group discussion list on 8 May 2003: http://www.lib.washington.edu/southeastasia/vsg/elist_2003/cyclo.htm
Phongsobhon as the inventor of the *samlor* (Textor 1961: 2). *Becaks*, in Indonesia, were first taken from Makassar (Ujung Pandang) to Jakarta in the late 1930s (Azuma 2001: 1; Dick 2000: 194). Some sources indicate that the pedicab was introduced to Batavia from Hong Kong or Singapore (now Jakarta) in the 1930s (Jellinek 1991: 58). In Singapore, records show that 15 trishaw licenses were taken out in 1915. In the 1920s Singapore became the leading cycle-rickshaw city (Wheeler 1998: 183).

During World War II (1939-1945), motorized vehicles faced difficulties, with shortages of fuel and accessories. But the trishaws still provided transport for people and goods from place to place and they grew more popular in this period, when their use became widespread throughout this region. In Singapore, at the start of the war, the number of pedicabs reached about 10,000 vehicles (Wheeler 1998: 183). They remained in frequent use until around the late 1950s and early 1960s, when faster speed vehicles began to force pedicabs out of the streets (Rimmer 1986: 118-120). Likewise, with *becaks* in Jakarta; at first the *becak* was unpopular among road users but later on the numbers of *becaks* increased dramatically. Over 25,000 vehicles were circulating on Jakarta’s streets in the early 1950s, and this rose to around 160,000 in 1966 and over 200,000 vehicles in the early 1970s. This was a golden age for *becaks*, when people called them “king of the street” (Azuma 2001: 3-4). In 1970, the Indonesian government sought to eliminate the pedicab as part of the policy of providing better public transport. Many *becak*-free zones were established in the capital city. This policy pushed *becak* from the main streets to the side streets and alleys (Rimmer 1986: 163-165). *Samlors* in Thailand, were in the same situation as other countries. The peak period for *samlors* was around 1954. Since the first *samlor* was introduced in Bangkok, the number of these three-wheel pedicabs increased up to 11,784 legal licensed vehicles in 1954. Then the numbers started to decline and the *samlor* was completely abolished.
in 1960 (Textor 1961: 6). Similarly in Manila, sidecar pedicabs were phased out in the 1950s (Rimmer 1986).

However, in Vietnam, the cyclo’s history is different. During the socialist period in northern Vietnam the form was associated with exploitation.

Co Thin said, “During the collectivization period, people were equal. No one was more privileged than others. Thus, if anyone asked another to drive a cyclo for them, they would be censured by the society.”

Vietnam also underwent several wars, the Japanese War in 1940-1945, the French War or the first Indochina War in 1946-1954, the American War or the second Indochina War in 1965-1973. During wartime and the subsequent period of “building socialism”, the history of cyclos in Hanoi seemed to have come to an end.

Yet during the “open door” (mo cua) period, around two decades after other countries in Southeast Asia had banned or severely restricted pedicabs in their capital cities, cyclos returned to Hanoi and again began to flourish as a popular form of low-cost commercial transport. In 1990, Nguyen Van Chinh (1997: 49) noted that there were about 7,200 officially registered cyclos in Hanoi. Of these it was estimated that 3,000 drivers came from the provinces surrounding Hanoi. By 1995, the number of drivers from other provinces increased to over 5,000 people. Hanoi Moi newspaper (18 December 1994) reported that there were around 10,000 cyclos circulating in Hanoi, including both legal and illegal vehicles. Among this number, only 4,000 drivers were Hanoi residents.
**Motorized vehicle period**

The decline of man-powered vehicles in Southeast Asia resulted from improvements in transport technology and the rise of motor vehicles. Motorcars began to play an important role as a means of transport in the region from the 1920s, although they were largely restricted to colonial functionaries and wealthy local elites. Paul Barter (1999: 51) noted that *mosquito buses*\(^5\) started offering their services in Singapore around 1921 and became the dominant public transport mode by the 1930s. Jakarta and Surabaya also had motorized bus services around the 1930s. In Vietnam, although many motor vehicles such as cars, buses, and trams came to Hanoi during the French colonial era, they were not in common use during that period (Robequain 1944). The ordinary people in that time usually made their trips by walking. When rickshaws developed from a private vehicle to a form of public transport, they were welcomed by city dwellers yet their use as a form of public transport was restricted to a small urban elite.

During the early 1900s, another form of public transport entered the scene, the electric tram, known as *tau dien* or *xe dien* in the Vietnamese language. In other Southeast Asian countries, the electric tram first appeared in the same period, for instance, in 1891 the use of electric trams was experimented with at the Singapore docks. In 1893, Bangkok became the first city in Asia with a permanent electric tram system (citing from [http://www.tramz.com/tva/tvs.html](http://www.tramz.com/tva/tvs.html)). Hanoi had a tram junction at Hoan Kiem Lake (*Bo Ho*) and, at its height, the network spread in many directions, to Yen Phu, Cho Buoi, Cau Giay, Ha Dong,

\(^5\) The small 7 seat buses were operated by individual Chinese businessman or by small enterprises. The 'mosquito buses' run very few routes and had only a few buses. In 1921, there were 147 of them. However, by 1927, the number had increased to 456 buses (citing from [http://www.smrtbuses.com.sg/transport/bus/HISTORY.HTM](http://www.smrtbuses.com.sg/transport/bus/HISTORY.HTM)).
Vong, and Cho Mo (To Hoai and Nguyen Vinh Phuc 2000: 98). People could go back and forth between suburbs and the center of the city by tram. Because of the junction of trams at Hoan Kiem Lake, one Hanoi resident said, “Bo Ho was the center of town. It was next to the old quarter (Pho Co). People could travel to do their business at Pho Co by tram.” However, “I remember the tram was so slow. If I was in a hurry I needed to go by cyclo or ride my bicycle.” Another one said, “The tram was not too slow but we had to wait for a long time.” One cyclo driver said, “If you rode a bike quickly you could overtake the tram.” The electric trams operated until around 1990-1991, then the Hanoi People’s Committee decided to cancel the trams because of the increasing traffic in the city and the way trams blocked other traffic.

In the past, xe lam was another type of public transport in Hanoi. A xe lam or a three-wheel motorized taxi could take around 6 persons or more at a time. The passengers sit on two parallel seats in the rear compartment and the driver controls the vehicle at front. On the vehicle’s roof, it has a rack for carrying goods. The three-wheel taxi has different names in each country in Southeast Asia. For instance, in Indonesia people call them bajaj, in Thailand tuk tuk. The xe lam no longer operated in Hanoi after the year of 1998 due to many accidents. However, in many cities xe lams are still used for public transportation. One informant said, “In 1987, Hanoi had around 30 xe lams. I used to drive xe lam before peddling a cyclo. ...Driving xe lam provided more money than peddling cyclos.”

Motorcycles were another vehicle imported from Europe. Barter (1999: 61) noted that in 1960s motorcycles were still unimportant in Asian cities. However, by 1970 the number of motorcycles had risen dramatically in many Southeast Asian countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Bac Liu told me that in the past, motorcycles (xe may in Vietnamese) in Hanoi were mainly ordered from European countries such as France, Germany, and Eastern Europe. Around 1990,
Honda cub motorcycles, made in Japan, were largely imported from Thailand through Cambodian or shipped back to Vietnam by those who could travel outside the country. Motorcycle use increased after 1986. Later, xe may developed into xe om or Honda om (motorcycle taxis). Co Thin told me that the small scooters named Vespas which were imported from Italy were very luxurious and expensive and only the wealthy could afford them. "Around 1989-1992, many second-hand motorcycles from Japan were imported into Vietnam; however, these motorbikes needed to be fixed before being used and they were popular among the rich people. By 1994-1995, the ordinary people could buy the used motorbikes from the well-to-do people (and there were even third-hand or fourth-hand motorcycles)," she said.

During the period 1994-1995, the government allowed private companies to import motorcycles into Vietnam. The number of motorcycles in the whole country increased significantly. According to a report by the Ministry of Transportation, in 1995 there were over 3 million motorcycles circulating in the whole country, a 10.96 percent rate of increase compared with the previous year. The rate of increase maintained in the following years was 12.61 percent in 1996, 12.8 percent in 1997, 8.1 percent in 1998, and 7.1 percent in 1999 (Ministry of Transportation 2002: 156). Similarly, a study of motorcycle traffic in Vietnam by Hsu Tien-Pen, Ahmad Farhan Mohd Sudallah, and Nguyen Xuan Dao (2003) during the period 1990-2000 also indicated that the number of registered motorcycles since 1994 had increased and maintained a level of 91.4 to 93.4 percent of all registered motorized vehicles in Vietnam. The Vietnamese people living in the biggest cities such as Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City considered motorcycles as the most suitable vehicle for their private transport because the poor urban public transport system could not serve their needs. The public bus lines could attract only 5 percent of travel demand in both cities.
As the number of motorcycles increased, some people started to offer motorcycles taxi (xe om) services in around 1993. At that time, however, xe om was not yet popular. The year xe om truly arrived was around 1997-1998 because of limited bus routes and the increasing demands of people. Then, xe om began to be found at the corners, crossroads, bus stops, markets, bus/railway stations and everywhere people congregated. Co Thin said, "Around 1994-1995 there were only a few xe om in Hanoi because of the high price of motorcycles. No one bought new motorcycles to work as xe om. Xe om at that time were mostly the old model of motorcycles and people did not trust the xe om drivers. They were afraid of crime. At that time people preferred to take xe lams, buses, and cyclos more than xe om." "Around 1997-1998, there were a lot of xe om in Hanoi," Co Thin said.

Buses or xe buyt in Hanoi offered their services under the name of Ha Noi Transerco. The company was a result from the Hanoi People's Committee announced its plan to rebuild the city's bus system. However, the development of buses in Hanoi was slower than the city's expansion and people's demands. Thus, people turned to others public transport such as xe om. One Hanoian said, "Buses developed fast after 2000. Before that time, Hanoi had few old model buses. People used xe om more than buses." By 2000, Hanoi local buses had improved their services; the number of bus routes increased and new air-conditioned buses appeared. At that time, there were about 31 routes, more than 1,000 trips a day running from 5.00am – 8.00pm. Some routes functioned until 10.00pm. One person said, "This year there are more xe buyt than last year." The fare for all routes is 2,500 VND (US $0.16) per trip. Many people commented, "The cheap fares are very convenient for low-income people such as me and students who work/study in city." Some said, "Bus number 7 and 14 travel more than 40 km from the suburbs to center of the city." Another said, "I park my motorbike at the office and go by bus for business."
Urban Morphology

The previous section offers a brief history of land transportation in Vietnam, especially that of human-powered vehicles and some types of motor-powered vehicles. In this section, the relationship between city patterns and transportation will be explored by using a model that relates urban transport to land use patterns. Peter Newman and Jeff Kenworthy (1992: 1-6) observed that in every city's history, land use patterns are closely related to the major forms of transport in the city: walking, human/animal powered vehicles, and motor-powered vehicles. Each successive transport phase has enabled urban residents to travel further distances. Population densities have tended to reduce as speedier transport technology has been adopted. Newman classified cities into three categories: the traditional walking city, the transit city, and the automobile city.

The traditional walking city pattern can be found in many historical cities. This type of city developed around 10,000 years ago and still exists today in some places. It has many different names including pre-public transport city, foot city, and the walking city. This city's characteristics included high-density residence, around 100 to 200 people per hectare and sometimes higher in the larger ancient cities. Due to the most daily needs such as working places, markets, and other essential services could be met nearby people's house, they did not need advance transport system. The streets and alleyways were usually narrow. The main transport was only walking, animal drawn vehicles, and water transport in some cities for long distance. Traveling this way, people could reach all destinations within the city (Newman and Kenworthy 1992: 1-2; Barter 1999: 30).
Transit cities were established at the start of the train/tram period, or around 1860-1940. This type of city is intimately connected to real estate development, early forms of suburbanization, and a neo-traditional model of town development. The primary journey served by the transit city was the 'journey to work', generally in a central business district which also served as the center for higher order retail, service, and government functions. Most daily needs; however, could still be met in town centers. After trains or trams created sub-centers around railway stations. People used trains and trams as a means of transportation between suburban areas and the city center where the rail lines met. Newman and Kenworthy (1992: 4) noted that the characteristics of this type of city are mixed land use and medium density. The city could spread 20 to 30 kilometers based on these technologies. The residential areas tended to be strips along the railways/tramlines (Newman and Kenworthy 1992: 4; Barter 1999: 31).
Automobile cities have developed since World War II when motor vehicles became widespread as a mode of transport. Trams and trains opened new areas to real estate speculation. At the same time, lower land costs in suburban areas made it possible for manufacturers to move out. The labor force, largely confined to lower cost urban housing, was also moved out. The cities expanded to 50 kilometers from the center, with densities of only 10 to 20 people per hectare. The city plan was divided into zones such as industrial zones, business zones, and residential zones. Therefore, traveling distances increased, however, they could be managed due to the flexibility and speed afforded by cars. The city began to decentralize and disperse. Cars and buses were main mode of transport, supporting trains and trams which moved people between suburbs and the center area (Newman and Kenworthy 1992: 4; Barter 1999: 32).
Hanoi in 1873 was a small city. The population was around 50,000. A number of maps during that period show Kinh Thien Palace placed in the center of the Forbidden City. William Logan (2000: 56-58) notes that outside the city wall to the east, there were places for the chief judge and the military commander. The tax collector, temple, and the terraces dedicated to the spirits were on the west. Paddy fields, swamps and pools were numerous while the To Lich River flowed through the citadel moat, across the market area, through the external city walls and disappeared into the sandbanks along the Red River. The large buildings outside the city wall near the Red River were European trader’s depots. In the ancient quarter, there were a few streets; Hang Chieu Street was the main east-west axis. Hang Dao and Luong Van Can Street were the main north-south streets through the city. People’s houses were made from timber, bamboo, and thatch (Logan 2000: 57). The means of transport within the city was only by foot and palanquins for the wealthy and people of high status. All destinations were within a short walking distance. During this period, Hanoi city was a walking city.
Thereafter Hanoi became a modern town. Many new forms of infrastructure were built during the establishment of Hanoi as Indochina’s capital. For instance, in 1888, the French reconstructed Hanoi city by removing the internal gates between each section in the ancient quarter. The old wall on the eastern side of the city was dismantled. The streets were widened and straightened, allowing better access for troops, the fire brigade and horse-drawn carriages. Footpaths and gutters were also installed. The residents were forced to obey new street rules (Logan 2000: 72). In 1892, electricity was introduced but the energy could only provide lights for the major streets, official buildings, and the houses of French residents (Nguyen Van Ky 2002: 54). In 1895, a fresh water supply system was started. This reduced the problems of malaria and dysentery (Logan 2000: 72). Around 1900 electric trams were established (To Hoai and Nguyen Vinh Phuc 2000: 98). And in the same year, the railway lines and roads to Lang Son and Lao Cai Province in the north
and Vinh Province in the south were opened. Three years later, the Hanoi railway station was officially in operation (Logan 2000: 76).

Land use within urban city area was also expanded into low-density areas in the south of Hoan Kiem Lake. French architects designed Hanoi as a “little Paris” by constructing the new European quarter in the area of Ham Long Street and Nguyen Du Street. Many western styled two-story villas and new streets 20-30 meters wide were built. Hue Street became a busy new commercial street. A racecourse was established to the southeast of the intersection of Le Duan Street and Tran Hung Dao Street. And many massive neoclassical style buildings such as the opera house, the new resident’s palace, the post office, city hall, and the courthouse were constructed in that time (Ngyuen Van Ky 2002: 53; Logan 2000: 92). The elegance of the city was noted by an American missionary who traveled through Indochina in the mid 1920s:

Hanoi, northern capital of French Indochina, is somewhat larger and less obviously tropical than its southern rival, Saigon. It is quite a city, with expensive modern buildings, electric street cars --found nowhere else in the colony-- railways in four directions, many automobiles, both of the taxi-cab and private limousine variety, several excellent hotels; in short, it is a little Paris of the tropics, with some advantages that even Paris does not have (Franck 1926: 210).

The street life in Hanoi of that time, a mixture of many types of vehicles and pedestrians was, as Franck noted,

...even more nearly incessant that that of hotter Saigon. Hawkers, improvised restaurants, hundreds of rickshaws, most of them thumping their wooden wheels on the ill-fitting axle, queer carriages, wheelbarrows again for the first time since leaving China, Man-drawn freight-carts, automobiles bellowing their demanding way through flocks and shoals of
pedestrians, all testimony to the importance of the northern capital (Franck 1926: 203).

Since the city has expanded and new suburban areas built, the city needed effective vehicles for transporting people from place to place. Many kinds of transport appeared on the scene such as rickshaws, horse-drawn carriages, automobiles, and electric trams. Hanoi came to be what is known as a "transit city."

While the other cities in Southeast Asian countries developed into automobiles cities after the World War II, Hanoi and many major cities in Vietnam underwent particular changes due to the Indochina Wars. During the first Indochina War (1946-1954), Hanoi experienced massive destruction, especially in the sections of the ancient quarter and in the Cite Universitaire area. Many historical monuments in Hanoi and Hue were badly damaged. William Logan (2000: 136) mentions that the Mot Cot Pagoda was blown up by French troops as they withdrew from the
city in September 1954, while the inner pavilions and courtyards of the Royal Citadel at Hue were devastated. It estimated that 21 percent of the municipality of Hanoi’s houses were completely destroyed and another 8 percent partially destroyed. The central business and administration areas suffered little damaged. A large number of people moved out of Hanoi escaping the war. According to William Turley, during the first three year of the First Indochina War, Hanoi’s population might have been as low as 10,000 people, compared to 120,000 people in 1943. In the period of 1949-1950 the war mostly occurred in the countryside, thus, people from countryside moved into the city. By 1951, Hanoi’s estimated population was about 217,000 people. Of this number, around 80,000 persons lived in the citadel or inner city. By 1952, the population had grown to more than twice its pre-war size (Turley 1975: 371-372).

During the relatively peaceful time (1954-1963), the Vietminh government issued its Three Year Plan (1958-1960) which aimed to transform Hanoi city from a colonial consumption city into a producing city. Many industrial sites were created in the outskirts of Hanoi such as Bay Mau, Van Ho, Phuc Xa, Dai La, and An Dong (Turley 1975: 377). This was a magnet for people to move to work in the city. As a result, a report in Nhan Dan Newspaper (2 November 1960) indicated that the population in Hanoi was about 600,000 people and by 1961 the population reached 900,000 people. The suburbs were enlarged from 30,898 to 46,118 hectares. However, Thrift and Forbes (1986: 91) argued that although the population in the city increased and city’s land-use expanded, the rate of population increase still lagged behind the rate of increase in industrial employment. Several factors caused this slow growth rate, for instance, food shortages since the war and the sudden exodus of 860,000 people from the north to the south of Vietnam. This reduced the manpower for agricultural production (Jones and Fraser 1982: 114). Furthermore, infrastructural investments supporting an urban population, especially housing, were not provided, and there were some
limited attempts to discourage migration to the large cities (Thrift and Forbes 1986: 93). Thus, this period was called slow urban growth.

In 1965, the second Indochina War took place. Thrift and Forbes called that time zero-urban growth. Hanoi and other major cities in the North were the main targets of bombardments. In the first period of 1966-1968, American dropped over 860,000 tons of bombs in North Vietnam, averaging 32 tons each hour for three years. The bomb targets were railway stations and lines, roads, bridges, radars, artillery posts, ports, power plants, dams, and irrigation dykes. Some civilian areas were also destroyed, for example, the busy commercial areas in Hue Street and Ngyuen Thiep Street near the Dong Xuan Market in the ancient quarter were damaged. The second bombardment began in the years 1972-1973. This time, serious damage was widespread throughout Hanoi city. William Logan (2002: 173-175) noted that it was the most destructive civilian hit in the history of war in Hanoi. Almost one quarter of all the living areas of metropolitan Hanoi were wiped out. Hanoi Moi newspaper on 17 January 1973 reported that about 17,000 housing units in three districts of inner Hanoi—Hai Ba Trung, Hoan Kiem and Ba Dinh—had been destroyed.

During the war, the Vietnamese government ordered people who were not directly contributing to the defense of the city, such as elderly people, children, the unemployed, university and high school students, shopkeepers and craftsmen, to evacuate to the countryside. The roads, railways and bridges they needed to cross had been badly destroyed. People who had a bicycle cycled 50 kilometers or more to rejoin their families away from the cities. Many government agencies were relocated 25-40 miles outside the city. Motorized vehicles, both private and public, were reassigned for military use or for evacuations (Logan 2000: 158; Turley 1975: 381). Because of the war, the city's urban population declined until the aerial war's end in 1973. By that time, about one-half of the Hanoi population had moved out of city (Logan 2000: 158). Some
records indicate that over 500,000 people were evacuated from the city (Jones and Fraser 1982: 118). Some claimed that a total of 720,000 had been evacuated from the metropolitan area, or 60 percent of the total population, and over 75 percent of the inner city's population (Turley 1975: 385).

After the war ended, Hanoi gradually returned to normal. By 1979, the population had increased. The census indicated that there were more than three-quarters of a million people in the inner city and more than 2 million people in the whole city. The land-use was expanded into the outskirts of the city. Thrift and Forbes, referring to the Vietnam Courier (1982) noted that Hanoi had 254 state-owned factories, 433 small industry and handicraft cooperatives, 315 agricultural cooperatives, and 10 state-owned farms in the suburbs surrounding Hanoi. These employed over 250,000 laborers. By 1984, the Hanoi’s population reached 2.6 million people, with over 800,000 people living in the inner city (Thrift and Forbes 1986: 149).

Bac Liu\footnote{Interview, 18 March 2003} told me about the transportation during the early open door policy, “People mostly traveled in the city by bicycle. Many houses had a bicycle. Some people had motorcycles but the number of bicycles was higher than the number of motorcycles. In the streets there were a lot of bicycles. The public transport at that time consisted of trams, buses, xe lam, and cyclos. Although we had buses, we still walked if we did not go too far, or we took cyclos for public transport.”
Since the Doi Moi period began, Hanoi's urbanized areas have expanded outwards as a result of the increasing migration of people from rural areas and emerging relocation needs from downtown to the suburbs due to urban development. Several suburban centers developed in order to disperse the heavy use of the downtown urban area. Increased demands for long-distance transportation were an expected consequence of these changes. With household incomes in the city relatively high, some people could afford motorcycles. The number of motorcycles in the city increased dramatically as mentioned above. A study of urban public transport in Vietnam by JBIC (1999: 9) argued that there were three main reasons that urban people preferred to use motorcycles:

First, no driver's license was required when driving motorcycles of smaller than 50cc displacement.

Second, the asset value, the price of used motorcycles, did not depreciate significantly. For example, the difference was USD 2,300 for new motorcycles versus USD 2,000 for used
ones, especially Honda Dream II. The motorcycles held their asset value like real estate and gold.

Third, the matter of convenience: the city area was not still wide enough, so that people could commute almost everywhere easily by motorcycles.

Moreover, the main forms of public transport such as local buses were unable to serve the demands of urban people. The number of routes and services were also limited. The research indicated that the local buses in large cities—both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City—could serve only 25-30 percent of demands. The bus stops were located far away from the newly developed residential areas and the quality of bus vehicles was generally very poor. Therefore, the local bus transportation was no longer an attractive mode (JBIC 1999: 9).

While many large cities in other Southeast Asian countries had developed from transit cities to automobile cities after World War II or around 1945 onwards, Hanoi city underwent this process later. Up until the war ended in 1973, the city’s expansion was restricted. When Hanoi’s population subsequently increased as more people moved into the city, land-use in the city expanded. As with many other large cities in Southeast Asian countries the local authorities considered buses and taxis as means of public transport to allow people to move around the growing city. New large thoroughfares have also been developed recently. However, with the restricted size of Hanoi streets and the high density of the population as well as the high cost of imported cars, Hanoi people still prefer the motorcycles as a mode of transport. To this day, the number of motorcycles in Hanoi and many other large cities in Vietnam remains significantly higher than elsewhere in the region.
Cyclos after 1990

The absence of cars was striking; local people simply walked, rode bicycles or used pedicabs known as 'cyclos'. A few old Russian trucks turned through the streets, belching smoke; one or two embassy cars maneuvered their way through the silent traffic. (Logan 2000: 6).

As Logan describes Hanoi in 1990, transportation in the city in the early 1990s was limited. People traveled within the city by foot, bicycles, or took cyclos. The wealthy people had their own motorcycles. Bac Tran (uncle Tran) described Hanoi streets in those times, “There were few motorcars. People took their bikes or cyclos to do their business. Cyclos were everywhere.” He added, “cyclos of those times, are like xe om now. They could be found everywhere.” It was different from the period before Doi Moi. Hanoi Moi newspaper (18 December 1994) noted that in:

...Hanoi in the past, there were a few cyclos and few drivers as well as users. In that time, it seemed that no one took advantage of others. People were equal. When the times changed, the number of cyclos increased. The view of taking advantage of other people changed. Anyone who wanted to take cyclos did so. Those who preferred not to were not forced to change.

The number of cyclos rapidly increased from 4,500 vehicles in 1991 (Ha Noi Moi 13 October 1991) to around 10,000 vehicles in 1994 (Ha Noi Moi 18 December 1994). Many people said that cyclos occupied Hanoi streets in those periods. The newspaper also reported that among the 10,000 cyclos half were operated by drivers from other provinces surrounding Hanoi (Ha Noi Moi 13 October 1991 and 18 December 1994; Nguyen Van Chinh 1997: 49). One of the most important factor that caused people from countryside came to work as cyclo drivers was the
People’s Committee of Hanoi authorized the Department of Labor to register cyclo drivers in 1992. It opened opportunity for unemployed workers from countryside to be cyclo drivers in Hanoi. However, around 1994 non-Hanoi residents were banned from driving cyclos by the same People’s Committee. From that year, Hanoi resident cyclo drivers gradually got out of the profession by selling their cyclos and licenses to non-Hanoi resident cyclo drivers. Bac Da (uncle Da) who earned his living by peddling a cyclo told me that, “Peddling cyclos is a job for poor people. Many migrants from the countryside who have nothing might sell their labor at the construction sites. Some rent cyclos and peddle in the streets. In the past, there were many places where they had cyclos for hire, for example, at Cau Giay, Nga Tu So, Hoan Kiem Lake, Ga Hanoi, Van Mieu, and many places nearby markets. Some places had rooms (nha tro) for rent as well. Especially, the places close to the bus stations and railway stations. The poor workers might hire a vehicle during the day and stay in a shared room with others at night.”

Anh Lap told me that some places might have up to 20-30 cyclos for hire. Some might have only a few. For example, in the area of Hoan Kiem Lake, Cau Giay, Western Lake, Thien Quang Lake, Lenin Park, there were around 20-50 vehicles. In many places, the vehicle owners also ran a business renting a room (nha tro) to the drivers. The rent of a cyclo each day might cost around 5,000 VND (US $0.55) for an old one and up to 10,000 VND (US $1.05) per day for a new vehicle. In many cases, the drivers might pay a month’s rent for the vehicles if the owners trusted them. These were usually regular drivers who stayed at the owners’ guesthouse. New drivers always rented a vehicle on a day-by-day basis. “Some cyclos were not registered; the rent was cheap. When the policeman asked for the license, the drivers always bribed him,” he said. In 1995, the drivers who did not have a drivers license and vehicle license needed to pay a fine of 20,000-50,000 VND (US $2.10-5.26).
Nguyen Van Chinh (1997: 49) found in his research that in 1995, there were many places that had rooms for the migrants to rent such as the streets of Chuong Duong, Banh Dang, Dong Xuan, Bui Thi Xuan, Van Mieu, Cua Nam, and Kham Thien. In these streets, there were about 300 guesthouses for cyclo drivers from the countryside. Most nha tro consisted merely of an empty room. The drivers had to bring their own mats, blankets and mosquito nets. A shared room might have up to 10-20 people sleeping on planks of wood for a bed the rent cost around 500-1,000 VND (US $0.052-0.10) per night for regular guests and 1,500-2,000 VND (US $0.15-0.20) for casual guests. This price did not include the vehicle parking. If the drivers had their own cyclos, they needed to pay another 500 VND (US $0.052) to park their vehicles in the yard (Nguyen Van Chinh 1997: 49; Li Tana 1996: 42).

These workers who came from the countryside were mostly seasonal migrants. The cycle of these people started after they had finished the work in the rice field, returning home to help their family in the harvest season and then returning to the city. Mostly the migrants were men. They went to the city seeking a job to supplement their family income. These laborers came in groups, stayed together at the same guesthouses or nearby and usually worked in the same job (Nguyen Van Chinh 1997; Li Tana 1996; Hardy 2003).

"...The women work in the fields, and go off trading in nearby markets. Their men don't go for the whole year. At harvest time, they return. The women can't do the carrying. It's heavy. So the men return. But for the rest of the year, they work in Hanoi as construction and carpenter, or general laborers, doing whatever work they can find" (Hardy 2003: 128).

Anh Dung, a cyclo driver, told me, "People in my commune came to Hanoi in groups. Sometimes up to 10-15 people. We came together, stayed together in the nha tro, and worked as cyclo drivers together. When I came to Hanoi with my peers, I peddled a cyclo because I had been
told that peddling cyclos could get a lot of money. I followed him. When the harvest season comes, we will quit the job and return home to help our family working in the rice fields. After finishing the harvest work, we return to Hanoi and peddle the cyclo again."

The working places for the majority of cyclos drivers were at the markets and other crowded areas, especially the bus and railway stations. They waited for people who wanted to connect to other places. At the major markets such as Dong Xuan Market, Mo Market, and Buoi Market, the drivers would wait for the customers. Some might ride along the streets looking for customers. One said, "I did not like to wait at the markets. The sellers in the market always negotiated the fare and I got little money. Sometimes they had large loads. It was heavier than taking 1-2 passengers along the street." Another one said, "Waiting at the markets brought us less money than waiting at the bus stations, but there were more people at the market than at the bus stations."

Co Thin told me that, "People at that time traveled by cyclos to do their business. I always took a cyclo to work. My house was around two kilometers from the office. In the streets, there were many cyclo drivers waiting for passengers. Cyclos were everywhere. The traffic was not congested. Bicycles and cyclos were in the majority in the streets. Motorcycles, buses, xe lams were few in number."

"Night or day, cyclos crowded the streets. On one street less than 100 meters long, many cyclo drivers parked their vehicles on one side of the street. A group of drivers sit and talk. Some relax on their vehicles. Some take a nap. On the other side of that narrow street, the street vendors offer goods for sale" (Ha Noi Moi Newspaper, 18 December 1994).

In the 1990s, cyclo began to be adapted to become a vehicle for tourists. The five star hotels in Hanoi adopted cyclos to serve their guests. At the same time, the People's Committee of Hanoi began to
develop its transportation plan and accepted the hotel cyclos. The Sofitel Metropole Hotel seemed to be the first hotel in Hanoi that operated cyclos for their guests. A report noted that at first, there were about 18 vehicles. The hotel’s guests welcomed the cyclo services. The number of vehicles increased to 30 in 1993 (Lao Dong Newspaper, 12 August 1993). Bac Da told me that these cyclos for tourists had been renovated by providing them a soft seat, a parasol for shade against strong sunshine and a coat of paint. The vehicles looked new and clean. Behind the customer seat, there was a small compartment for keeping the driver’s items. The new form of cyclos became accepted by the tourists. Furthermore, when the hotel’s cyclos offered a city tour their guests were very impressed. Later, other hotels followed the Sofitel Hotel. Hanoi people called these cyclos *xich lo quy toc*, which means “aristocratic cyclos” and called the others *xich lo que* or “rustic cyclos”.

A once-popular form of cheap urban transport, cyclos have faced challenges with the increase in motorcycle use and the emergence of *xe om* (motorcycles taxis). The plight of these human powered vehicles became more difficult, especially during the period 1997-1998 (the strong emergence of *xe om* in Hanoi). The *xe om* offered cheaper fares and faster services than cyclos. People gradually turned to use *xe om* more than cyclos. At that time, the majority of people still using cyclos were elderly people and merchants in the markets. The *xich lo que* were only still used for hauling goods at the markets. In the meantime, some cyclo drivers began relying on tourists as their chief customers. The rickety vehicles were refurbished, making the vehicle look nice and clean.

The plight of cyclos in Hanoi worsened when the Hanoi committee promulgated decree No 21/2001 in 2001 banning cyclos peddling in the restricted areas between 6.30-8.30 am and 4.30-6.00 pm and prohibiting cyclos peddling all day in some areas. The drivers who broke the law would be fined and their vehicles were confiscated. *Lao Dong* Newspaper (25 May 2002) reported that over 2,000 cyclos were confiscated since the
beginning of 2002. Thach Nhu Si\(^7\), a Hanoi traffic policeman, said, "According to the law, the drivers who break the law will be fined 20,000-50,000 VND (US $1.30-3.25), and the vehicles will be confiscated for 15 days. If the drivers do not contact the police after this period, the vehicles will be destroyed." Anh Vu Van Nam, a cyclo driver, said, "Each day, I earn around 30,000 VND (US $1.95). This money is for my everyday expenditures here and some for my family in Nam Dinh. If my cyclo is confiscated, I need to return home and borrow money for the fine." Anh Loc told me that, "Since the policemen are strictly implementing the law, I only earn about 15,000-20,000 VND (US $0.96-1.30) a day. But I have no choice, as there are no jobs at home."

The implementation of decree No 21/2001 forced the majority of cyclos out of the inner city. Some drivers quit their job and many of them opted to work in other jobs. The number of cyclos in the inner city decreased obviously. Drivers who kept working in the city needed to work out of restricted areas. Many of them refurnished their vehicles and served the foreigners. The era of *xich lo que* or rustic cyclos was changing to the period of *xich lo quy toc* or aristocratic cyclos.

\(^{7}\) Interview, 25 August 2003
Chapter 3

Cyclo Drivers as Migrants: Their Motives and Methods

Introduction

The previous chapter considered the development of cyclos as a mode of urban transport by examining the relationship between urban land use and urban transportation in historical context. This chapter commences my ethnographic investigations into the experiences of the cyclo drivers themselves. The focus of this chapter is on the experiences of Hanoi's cyclo drivers as rural-urban migrants. Its first concern is to examine their motivations for migrating to the city. It addresses the meaningful intentions held by these migrants. Are their reasons for migrating to Hanoi primarily economic ones? Do cyclo drivers expect to find anything more in the city? The second concern relates to the methods and patterns of rural-urban migration. How do the cyclo drivers establish themselves in the city? Do social networks play important roles in supporting the newcomers? If so, how do the migrants create these social networks; who belongs to them and what do others want from the
migrants? And how do these migrants keep contact with those who were left behind in their native villages?

Population mobility is a social phenomenon that is strongly present in every society. In Vietnam, it has occurred because of people's material and cultural needs, as an escape from disasters such as floods or wars, or due to government policies for development (Nigel Thrift and Dean Forbes 1986; see Chapter 7 of this thesis for more details). People might move in and out in the same region or across regions. Some move for a temporary period and return to their village during the harvest crop season or whenever there is a demand for laborers in the villages, whereas some of them move and stay permanently in the city. According to the 1999 national census during the five years period of 1994-1999, over two million people moved between provinces. A significant number of these migrants 156,343 people, moved from other provinces to Hanoi. These people mostly came from the other provinces in the Red River Delta and from the Northeast region (GSO 2001: 14).

Studies conducted in many countries in Southeast Asia have found that people from rural areas have moved away from home due to a combination of economic and cultural factors. Among the many reasons given for changing one's residence, economic motivations appear to take precedence. Migrants frequently describe the disadvantageous economic situation of their village compared with the large cities. These problems include unemployment or less demand for workers in or near their communities, lack of opportunities in other fields outside agriculture, and the problems concerning low and unpredictable income from their agricultural products (Azuma 1994; Sartono Kartodirdjo 1981; Ocampo 1982; Textor 1961; Mills 1999).

Current studies of migration in Vietnam are mostly done by sociologists or economists whose findings are based primarily on macro level quantitative survey data (see Dang Nguyen Anh 2001; Nguyen Van Chinh 1997; Li Tana 1996; Peter Higgs 2003; Xavier Oudin 2005).
Although these studies provide a valuable picture of population movement trends, we still know little about the experiences of the migrants. What factors cause these people to move? Are economic factors the most significant? If so, why do the migrants need money? One simple and effective way to answer these questions is to ask the migrants themselves. My findings among cyclo drivers in Hanoi show that a lack of employment opportunities in their home villages and the relative abundance of work in Hanoi were among the most frequently-given reasons for their decision to relocate to the city. Most aspire to send remittances back home. Yet lack of skills and training also mean that their options for well-paid in the city were relatively limited.

In addition, some cultural factors such as the attraction of the city or the search for new experiences draw some of these people, especially youths, from the countryside. In the case of married people, men's heavy responsibilities in their household to work and earn money for their family are another factor that forces them to move. I argue that these cultural factors push many migrants to go to the cities, to fulfill either their dreams or their family responsibilities. These migrants tend to go to places where their social networks have been established and make use of these networks to set themselves up in the city. Frequently, their networks help them find a place to stay, act as a source of information, help them get jobs, and support them in other ways during their time in the city. While staying in the city, cyclo drivers maintain connections with their families and relatives at home and retain a sense of belonging to their home villages. These connections, and a lack of such strongly developed connections in the city, are one reason many drivers may eventually return home.
Reasons for moving

Rural-urban migration is a reflection of a mixture of conditions bringing about to push numerous teenagers and adults leaving home. Many unskilled workers in Hanoi mostly came from the provinces in the Red River Delta such as Nam Dinh, Thai Binh, Ha Tay, Ninh Binh, Ha Nam, Hai Duong, and Hung Yen Province. These people also came from some of the most densely settled agricultural areas in the north of Vietnam. In 1994 the population density of the rural Red River Delta was over 1,000 persons per sq. km. Between 1994 and 1999, the total population of the delta increased from roughly 15.8 million to 16.6 million people. About 5.7 million people or 34 percent of the population of the delta lived in areas with population densities greater than 1,500 persons per sq. km. Nam Dinh and Thai Binh provinces along with other provinces in the Red River Delta are in the same situation. The increase of population in this area and the decline of agricultural land per person forced many rural youth who had no land to farm moving out for permanent employment outside the agricultural sector.

Furthermore, rural-urban migration can also be considered of the transformation of the economy. The high income differential and availability of work in urban areas pulling the surplus workers from rural come to work for better remuneration. Thus, people in those provinces of Red River Delta with the most intensive pressure of population on resources had the high rates of net out-migration to major cities such as Hanoi. They mostly said, “there are no jobs in the countryside” such stories of Son and his friends. Son, 29 year-old from Nam Dinh Province and his friends are presented here as a case of many migrants who have moved to the city for jobs. Many of them have changed their work frequently. Finally, peddling cyclo becomes their current job. Son told me that he used to work as a general worker in a furniture shop close to his
home village in Nam Dinh. The income was low. He spent a couple of years there until he got some skills in woodworking. One day, his friend asked him to go to work in a neighboring country, Laos. His friend said, "We can work in construction sites and we will get more money than working here." Son decided to go to Laos where he worked for 2 years without a work permit. He said, "It was a horrible time in my life. I spent most of the day at the workplace: I slept and ate there as well. I was afraid to go out because if I was arrested I would go to jail. All I did was work and work and save money. I missed my family so much. It was a nightmare!"

Because of the growing demand for cheap labor in many large cities in Vietnam, Son decided to go back to Vietnam. He was persuaded by his brother to move to Hanoi. Son said, "I didn't know what I would do in Hanoi even though I had been here before. My brother invited me to stay with him and peddle a cyclo for foreigners. He told me that by peddling a cyclo one could get good money as well. He gave his cyclo to me and he changed to drive a motorcycle taxi (xe om)." Since then, Son has been a cyclo driver in Hanoi. "Working here (Hanoi) even though I get less money than in Laos, I can go back to see my family, my wife and my kids."

Unemployment and low paid employment at home were the common answers given by migrants in Hanoi when asked by researchers why they had left home to work in the city (Li Tana 1996; Nguyen Van Chinh 1997). The difference between incomes in the urban area and the countryside is a significant factor that pushes the large labor force to leave their villages. A survey of living conditions in Vietnam in 1998 indicated that two thirds of rich people lived in urban areas while most of the poor people lived in rural areas. What people in Hanoi earned on average (around 330,000 VND per month) was nearly five times higher than the income of people in rural areas of the Red River Delta (71,000 VND per month) (World Bank 1999: 25; Do Thien Kinh and et al 2001: 62).
Four years later another survey showed that the income disparities between urban and rural areas and between regions in the country had continued to widen (Taylor 2004a: 10).

Another factor that has stimulated migration to the city is the rapid growth of jobs in the urban economy. Due to its comparative advantage of relatively cheap labor, Vietnam has become, since the opening of the economy in the late 1980s a major foreign investment destination. Many industrial parks are found around the outskirts of the large cities, where access to infrastructure and services is better than in rural areas. They offer many jobs for both skilled and unskilled laborers. The fast growing urban tourist and service sectors are another source of employment. As urban incomes and standards of living have risen, established urban residents have also abandoned jobs such as construction workers, porters, scavengers because of the heavy work and low wages. This has provided a further opportunity for migrants to fill. By contrast, rural areas experience a shortage of jobs. Although many villagers can produce certain products, they also face difficulties with lack of markets. These reasons lead many migrants to decide to move and work in the city. Even children have come to Hanoi to work as shoe shiners. Thuc Hanh (2001: 15-16) reported that in Nhue Duong Commune, Hung Yen Province, approximately 10 percent of the children left this commune to work in large cities.

"...Young shoe shiners were shaking their heads when the author asked them about returning home. They said, 'unemployment and a boring life in our communes.' Two teenage laborers from Hung Yen Province told the story about their work in their province where many people in the villages and nearby usually do handicrafts such as rattan and bamboo furniture or weaving mats but these jobs are dying because of no market. More than a half of poor families leave the commune for Hanoi, Hai Phong or the other large cities in search for work" Thuc Hanh (2001: 15).
Son and his friends, fellow cyclo drivers from Nam Dinh and other Red River delta provinces, are among the many people from rural areas of Vietnam who have migrated to the cities for a better life (Figure 3.1).

These workers each came to Hanoi hoping to be better remunerated. Many of them said, "Working in the city gives us more money than in the village." Dang gave his own case as an example. If he works in his village, he can get about 10,000 VND (US $0.65) a day. But when he peddles a cyclo in Hanoi, he can get at least 20,000-30,000 VND (US $1.3-1.94) a day on average. If he is lucky, he might get more than 50,000 VND (US $3.22) a day. Before their departure, many of them, like Son, had no clear idea what they would do in the city. Some said they would have accepted any kind of job that offered a higher wage than could be earned at home. Thang, a cyclo driver from Nam Dinh Province, said, "At first, I had no idea what I could do in Hanoi. Then, my
friends introduced me to peddle a cyclo. If I can get another job that gives me more money, I will switch to it." He also said, "Peddling a cyclo for the tourists can earn you around 50,000-60,000 VND (US $ 3.22-3.87) a day. If I am lucky, I might get more than that. But if it is a bad day, I have no money in my pocket."

Several drivers, especially the older ones, said that the work was hard, but there were few alternative options. Nam has been peddling a cyclo for a long time. He said, "Now, I am 49 years old. I have been peddling a cyclo for almost 10 years. Peddling a cyclo is a hard job (vat va lam). Someday I get money, but some days I do not. If you peddle a cyclo for a long time, your knees ache because it is physically demanding." When these people were questioned about quitting this job, one man said, "Quit my job here and go back home? Are you kidding me? What can I do there? In my commune, there is no work except working in the rice fields. I can get rice but will not get enough money to buy other stuff." Another answered, "If I quit peddling the cyclo what I will do for a living? No jobs are available for a person with poor education like me. I have few opportunities."

Studies of trishaw drivers in many countries in Southeast Asia such as the becak drivers in Jakarta, samlor drivers in Thailand and cyclo drivers in Vietnam show that the majority of these drivers left school early and the main reason was generally economic hardships in the villages (Azuma 1994: 167; Textor 1961: 6-7; Li Tana 1996: 28). When I asked the cyclo drivers to write down some Vietnamese words they used that I could not recognize, they often said, "It would better for you to write it yourself because my writing is not beautiful. I have spent only a few years in school." I found that many drivers could write but they spent quite a long time writing some of the words. However, I found that these drivers could read newspapers. Whenever they were free, they would borrow newspapers from their mates and they often discussed the interesting topics with others. It seems to me that these drivers can read but hardly
Many cyclo drivers also consider themselves as semi-skilled laborers. Like Son, some of them have previously worked elsewhere or gained work experience in other jobs before peddling cyclos. But their opportunities for doing other work are limited. Son said, "when I worked in the furniture shop for a couple of years, the boss ordered me to do all kinds of jobs." I asked him, "Why don't you work at a construction site as a carpenter?" He replied, "I can do a little bit, I do not have enough skills to do everything. Working on a construction site is a very hard job. After one job is finished, I need to find another." He asked, "Have you ever seen those carpenters waiting for jobs at the side streets?" He explained more, "Those carpenters are daily workers. The boss will pay them at the end of each day. If he needs more labor tomorrow, he will tell them to come again. If he does not, they will have to wait for another job."

Figure 3.2 Daily carpenters waiting for a job on the side of the road. Photographed by the author, 14 August 2003.
Some cyclos drivers who can access funding might change to work as a xe om driver. Anh Loc, 49 years old from Nam Dinh Province, is an example of a cyclo driver who changed jobs. He said, “Driving xe om is less profitable than peddling a cyclo. We (xe om drivers) can make money bit by bit, 2,000, 3,000, 5,000 VND each time but peddling a cyclo one time they can get 40,000, 50,000 VND.” “…I am too old to peddle a cyclo,” he said. “Driving xe om is more comfortable. The vehicle runs by machine and does not need my energy. But I need to buy fuel.” Dung and Vi also switched from peddling cyclos to drive xe oms. Before working as a xe om driver, they used to peddle cyclos for awhile and decided to borrow their relative’s money to buy Chinese motorcycles. Then, they became a xe om driver. “Xe may (a motorcycle) can go farther and faster than cyclos. People (city people) prefer to go by xe may than by cyclo,” he said.

When these people were asked, “When are you going to quit the job here and return home?” All said in the same way, “There are no jobs in the countryside.” They came to Hanoi for money as mentioned above. Hanoi is a large city in the North and provides more opportunities with various jobs than other cities. They consider Hanoi as a working place and the countryside as their home. They came here for work and keep as much money as they can. “I come here for money. Nam Dinh is my home.” “…we are like overseas workers that one day they will return home but for now they need money,” one worker said. Even though many migrants have moved to work in the city for some period of time, they always regard themselves as a member of the native villages in the countryside. Thus, they frequently visit home and fulfill some obligations for example a financial support to those who have been left behind such as contributing money or goods to their parents, or by paying their debts.
Cultural expectations

Studies on decision-making by migrants in many countries of Southeast Asia found that the decision to move is made in the context of rural households and responds to needs, obligations, and aspirations of individual family members. Many decide to move based on decisions made by and for the family members of the household, while younger people will frequently decide to move on their own (Simmons 1981; Costello, Leinbach, and Ulack 1987; Mills 1999; Riwanto Tirtosudarmo 1985). Vietnam in this respect is similar to other countries in Southeast Asia. Married people usually make their decisions to move based on the needs and circumstances of the spouse and other family members. Generally, these people have children and they are a major condition of migration. Whenever either mother or father leaves home to work in the city, the other needs to take full responsibility in taking care of the children. In cases when both leave home, this responsibility falls to the grandparents. If the grandparents are elderly, one of the spouses needs to take this responsibility. Generally, the female is chosen to take care of the children. According to Vietnamese culture, women are very tightly related with the family and have more responsibility than men in household work. All household chores are taught to girls since childhood as are the gender role expectations placed on boys and girls (Rydstrom 2003). When they marry, it is Vietnamese tradition that women need to live with their husbands’ family (patrilocal residence) and they need to take care of the husbands’ parents including doing the domestic household chores. Because of this reason many males leave for the city alone, as in Son’s case.

He said, “My mom is too old. This year she is 85 years old and her health is not so good. My wife needs to stay home
to take care of the children and my mom even though she wants to work in Hanoi with me. But there is no one else at my home."

Many young people are more likely to make their own decisions to work in cities. The decision to go to the city is quite often made after making contact with members of their peer group who have spent time there. Among young migrants, the fear of lagging behind their peers often precedes other reasons for migrating to the city. Huong, 25 years old from Nam Dinh Province, who set off for Hanoi to fulfill his dream, is a clear example of this case.

He said, "After I finished military service, I had no job. Many friends of mine went to large cities. When they returned home they usually told me many vivid stories about city life such as how they worked and how much money they got. So, I wanted to be in their shoes. As a result, I told my parents that I wanted to go to Hanoi with my friends."

Going to work in large cities is a chance for adventure. Spending their lives in the city is a means to engage new, more up-to-date, and sophisticated activities than those are available in the village (Mills 1999). It is also a chance to accumulate both money and experiences that the peers in the village cannot acquire. Ha Thi Phuong Tien and Ha Quang Ngoc (2001) found in their survey that some young female laborers wanted to work in cities in order to escape from the miserable life in the countryside. Even though, in many cases, their families have enough land, they do not want to work in the rice fields.

"Ms. Nguyen Thi Le, 23 years old from Quang Nam Province, went to work in the city with her mate (Ms. Vu Thi Hoa, 20 years old). Their family life in the native place is fine. They own large amount of land but they do not want to stay home to assist their parents in farming works. They
want to go to large cities to find their own work" (Ha Thi Phuong Tien and Ha Quang Ngoc 2001:57).

These findings were confirmed by Nghiem Lien Huong in her study of young female garment workers many of whom who migrated to Hanoi in search of better prospects than an early marriage and a life of hard work in the fields (Nghiem Lien Huong 2004). Not only young females but also males prefer not to work in the agricultural sector. Such is the case of Dung. He is 35 years old from Hung Yen Province. He has been in Hanoi for almost 10 years and he did jobs such as a shoe shiner, a porter, a souvenir seller, and a cyclo driver. He said, "I would do anything in Hanoi because I did not want to return home and work in the rice field.” Li Tana also (1996: 33) also found that some migrants considered city attraction as a reason for leaving home and working in Hanoi.

Conversely, the married people who have their children in the school age gave the main reason of working in Hanoi that they need money for their children’s education. Many cyclo drivers said working in Hanoi would give them more money than working in the village or nearby. Son said, “When I work in the rice fields, I get only rice to eat but no money to buy other things. I have two children studying in schools. They need money. Each month, I need to send home at least 50,000-60,000 VND (US $3.25-3.87) for my children go to school and some for my family’s everyday expenditures.”

These workers hope that when their children finish school, they can obtain a good job. They believe that the higher education, the more money they will earn. They also want their own children be better educated than themselves. All migrants do not want their children to face hardship like their parents. Li Tana (1996: 28) reported that these migrants had a chance to study only at primary school level. Thus, they want their children to finish school at the highest level possible. Quy said, “We (he and his wife) work very hard to save enough money for our
kids' education. We do not want our kids to suffer like us.” Quy also said, “I want my son to be a doctor because doctors can get a lot of money. For my daughter, I want her to be a teacher. Teachers earn a lot of money as well.”

Many workers who have children in school said that they needed to save a lot of money. Each year, when the school starts, they spend a lot of money on their children's school activities. This is not only for school fees but also for gifts for the teachers so that they will take good care of their children. Sometimes, the parents are asked to contribute some money for school activities such as buying educational equipment, repairing the buildings, or other activities. Some parents believed that if they do not support the school, the teachers might not take good care of their children and the children may not finish school. Hence, all migrants who have children in school are very worried about money for their children's education.

The Vietnamese concept of filial piety (hieu) to their parents is another reason that forces people to migrate. Filial piety can be described as gratitude, an expression of moral character, that is realized through dutiful acts. In general, parents will bring up their children with love, sacrifice, and beneficence. Meanwhile, the children are taught to obey the parents and other elderly people whom they are supposed to give not only long life gratitude and respect but also labor and monetary assistance. When the children are old enough, the parents will assign both household and farm chores to them depending upon age and gender. Boys and girls learn a wide range of household and farm skills. They are expected to support their parents both in household and farm chores. If they do not, they become objects of ridicule. Thus, when they reach the age of work and can earn money, it is expected that they should contribute money to support the household expenditure and their parents when they are old. The parents in the old age can no longer work to support themselves. It is the children's obligation to provide their
parents' material needs and comfort. Even after their parents’ death the children continue to respect their spirits and organize the merit-making ceremonies. Therefore, many migrants both females and males struggle to work in the city in order to get some money to support their family and their parents.

Similar to young females migration in Thailand, Mill (1999) reported that children are obligated to their parents who have raised them. However, the debt of merit (*bun khun* in Thai language) is different between genders. That is, a son repays it by becoming a monk. Whether he is ordained for three days or three years, once a son has done this, his debt to his parents is paid. A daughter, on the other hand, is taught to be responsible for household chores. She is also expected to take care of her parents, as they grow old. Accordingly, her obligation lasts for life. Therefore, many young women decided to move and work as domestic servants or factory workers in Bangkok in order to earn money and to send some parts of their money home. This remittance is not only to support the household expenditures and for their parents but also to invest for their siblings’ education as well.

According to Vietnamese culture, sons are regarded as the pillar of the family. They must stay with their parents or reside near their parents’ house after they are married whereas daughters will leave and stay in their husband’s house when they get married. Nghiem Lien Huong (2004: 302) argued that because of a duty of females to return filial obligations to the natal parents before their marriage, it forces many of them to make decision to leave their villages in order to get money to support their household finance and their parents. These females feel that they are in debts to their parents in “giving out and raising up.” Many of them tend to leave home villages and work in the large cities. On the contrary, the males will live with their parents or close to parents’ house after they married. The youngest son is expected to remain in the paternal house (Hickey 1964: 91). Both sons and daughters have duties to take care for
the aging parents and contribute financial assistance to their parents and the household. Likewise husband and wife, if the man lets his wife work alone, people might insult him and call him, “cho chui gam chan” (literally, the dog sneaking under a larder) which means a lazy man who depends on his wife’s money. That is why many migrants said they need money to support their parents and their family.

Methods of migration

The majority of migrants in Hanoi mostly came from the provinces surrounding Hanoi. The census of population mobility in 1999 indicated that Hanoi received migrants from all over the country, but most migrants came from the provinces in the Red River Delta and from the Northeast Provinces (GSO 2001: 14). Migrants seek work in Hanoi not only because as a center of economic activities it has more jobs available than other provinces in the North but also because of its favorable transportation links. Stouffer (1940: 846) concluded that the three elements that migrants often consider before they move are: geographical distance, transportation cost, and accessibility. Distance and accessibility from villages are key elements in migration. The better the transportation network, the greater number of migrants flowing to the city.

Tuan, 35 years old from Nam Dinh Province, said, “I go to work in Hanoi because Hanoi is a big city. It is easier to get a job than in other provinces around here.” When I asked him, “Are you interested in working in Ho Chi Minh City? He replied, “Yes, Ho Chi Minh City is a bigger city but it is too far from my home and I cannot frequently return home. When I work in Hanoi, it is easy to go back to visit my family as
many times as I want. It only takes a couple of hours by bus. So, I decided to work here (Hanoi)."

Nowadays, Hanoi is a hub of public transportation in the North. People can connect to trains and buses to any province here. Travel by bus is very cheap and they are in common use. In Hanoi, there are many bus terminals. For example, Kim Ma Bus Station is the bus terminal for those who want to go to any of the northern and northeastern provinces. If one wants to go to a southern province, he needs to catch a bus at Giap Bat Station, which is located in the southern part of Hanoi. Each bus station provides many trips a day. For instance, buses to Son Tay Province offer 24 trips a day, for Quang Ninh Province 50 trips a day, and for Thai Nguyen Province 25 trips a day. Moreover, the Hanoi local bus company has also provided bus links between Hanoi and major towns near Hanoi such as bus number 27, 25 and 17 which run between Hanoi and Ha Dong Town in Ha Tay Province. Thus, it is very convenient for the migrants to go back and forth between their homes and Hanoi.

Some people who own minibuses also run a business offering bus services directly from the villages to Hanoi. Quy said, "Buses operate daily, twice a day in the morning and in the afternoon." He pointed at the bus-parking place. It was, in fact, not a bus station. It was a side road. These buses charge a fare from anyone who wants to take a ride. "It is only two hours by bus from here to my village in Hung Yen Province. Whenever I miss my kids, I can catch a bus to go back home and return to Hanoi on the next day. It's very convenient now," he said. Buses and mini-vans are found at the Dong Xuan Market where they are used by retailers from many villages around Hanoi take their agricultural products to sell at the market. Every morning and evening, these vehicles queue in line for services. The passengers know which bus they need to take. Many of them are regular customers and the drivers know where they get on and off the buses.
Studies conducted on rural-urban migration in many countries of Southeast Asia have found that the majority of migrants prefer to make the journey to the large cities with their kinsfolk or friends. When they arrive, they rent rooms close to their relative and friends' houses or stay at their places. These people provide them their main source of information about work and accommodation in the cities. During the first period in the city, many newcomers face difficult situations, for instance, adapting themselves to the new environment and finding jobs. Their kins are the only persons whom the migrants can trust and ask for assistance. Kin also provide financial support to the newcomers and help them to get a job as well (Azuma 1994; Browning 1971; Costello, Leinbach, and Ulack 1987; Dang Nguyen Anh 2001; Ha Thi Phong Tien and Ha Quang Ngoc 2001; Li Tana 1996; Li Zhang 2001; Mills 1999; Textor 1961).

Who is kin? It is a broad category; as implied in the Vietnamese term for kin, ba con, which can be applied to a great range of people. They might be a real relative of the migrants, their friend, a person from the same village or another acquaintance that the migrant's family can trust and ask to assist the newcomers during their stay in the city because they already work or stay there. He/she has more experiences in the city and can advise the newcomers. A study conducted in Thailand found that youthful laborers who move to work in Bangkok or the outskirt usually stay with their kin. At least, the migrants' parents can feel relieved that their children especially young females will be safe and far away immorality (Mills 1999). In Indonesia and the Philippines, the research also confirmed that kin plays an important role in persuading people to move especially from countryside to work in the cities (Costello, Leinbach, and Ulack 1987; Nurma 1990).

Another term for this kind of relationship is social network (mang luo), a set of interpersonal ties among members within a group of people. The members of the group use the network to achieve their goals. Dang Nguyen Anh (2001: 180) argued that among the migration networks,
family and relative networks tend to be the most intense and durable ones. The many ways in which family members are bound to one another make their ties more reliable and secure than those between them and outsiders. It is found that the migrants use the networks in order to reduce the risks and costs of movements and to support the flow of laborers into the city. The networks provide potential migrants with information regarding to job opportunities, places to stay, and also help the new comers when they get trouble during the first period of staying in the city. In many cases, the networks are also a source of funding as well.

Dang Nguyen Anh found in his survey of migration to Hanoi that over 75 percent of the new migrants tend to go to the places where their relatives or friends currently live (Dang Nguyen Anh 2001: 183-184). Likewise, a study conducted in Indonesia and the Philippines reported that the migrants are more likely to choose the destination community where their relatives or friends reside in so that these people can help them (Costello, Leinbach, and Ulack 1987: 74). In many cases, the migrants already have people from the same village (cung que) living at the place of destinations. They can settle down with little difficulty by staying with these networks. Even though these people might work in different jobs, they still live close together. Quy and his friends who come from Huong Yen Province are an example. While Quy works as a cyclo driver and his wife sells vegetables in the market, his friend, Giang works as a street vendor selling stickers, leather, and others. Meanwhile Mrs. Xuan sells newspapers and Mrs. Hoa collects recyclable goods for resale. These people came from the same commune and live close together in the same area.

According to Dang Nguyen Anh’s survey, it showed that, in Vietnam, like in other countries in Southeast Asia, over 75 percent of the newcomers get information about jobs and places to stay in the city from family, relatives or friends before leaving (2001: 183-184). Similarly, a
study on female migration to Hanoi conducted by Thi Phuong Tien and Ha Quang Ngoc (2001: 67) also found that many female migrants who seek a job in the city also get information about jobs and accommodation from their networks before leaving. The survey reported that around 63 percent of migrant laborers have information about jobs before they went to Hanoi from friends, parents, relatives, and acquaintances. This helps them make an easier decision about jobs on arrival. The report also noted that the workers take only a few days to get the first job in the city.

"The migrants do not face difficulties when entering the labor market of Hanoi. About 25 percent of respondents have decided about the job before their coming, and 37 percent get their jobs after their coming. Noticeably, the duration for getting the first job is two weeks. For seasonal migrants, it takes only two days on average" (Thi Phuong Tien and Ha Quang Ngoc 2001: 67).

In addition, the networks might be used as a linkage to recruit people to the cities. The migrants who have done well in the city may subsequently use their networks of relatives and friends in the home community to recruit people who could serve as house-helpers, or as workers in a family or business. Frequently, it is found that when these workers visit home, they might persuade other people to work in the city. The unemployed laborers in the village also make use of their networks in order to get a job in the city as well. These are two common patterns of rural-urban migration in Vietnam. Such is the case of Son, who was persuaded by his brother to work in the city and of So, who made use of close friend networks to get a job in the city.

Dang Nguyen Anh (2001: 179-192) also indicated that about a half of migrants get jobs through the assistances of relatives or friends. Only 3-4 percent of them find jobs from non-relative sources. And a few can get jobs through the employment promotion agencies. The research
found that these agencies mostly offer jobs for skilled laborers rather than unskilled laborers. They tend to recruit the skilled workers for the companies and they receive high profits from the contracts. The temporary labor migrants—who have poor skills, less training, and are more likely to work in the low-paid jobs—could not get benefits from these agencies. It can be seen that these migrants would rather look for jobs through their networks. In my research, I found that these workers usually stay in the same areas of their "kins" or at the "kins" place. Such is the case of So and Nam, both of them are from the same commune in Nam Dinh. So came to Hanoi to peddle a cyclo because Nam offered his cyclo to him to use on the nightshift until he had enough money to buy his own. So said, "I just came here last week. I work at nights and stay with Nam. We are friends. He can help me."

Moreover, applying for a job in the city, nowadays, requires a reference in person or some documents from the applicants. It is frequently found that if the newcomer applies for a same job where someone in their network works, this person is also used as a reference person. For instance, many cyclo drivers use their relatives or friends who are already working at one of the large cyclo companies as a referee. The company manager might ask the referee about the newcomer's background and assign that man to be a partner of the new employee, to tell the new members what they should know.

Anh Thu, the manager of the Sans Souci tourist cyclo company, said "Most of the new members are introduced either by their friends or their relatives who already peddle cyclos in this company. I have at least five entire families who have worked as cyclo drivers here. The elder brother came first and then persuaded his younger brothers to follow him. Some drivers are convinced by their friends who already worked as cyclo drivers here."
Likewise, those who need a maid in their household are very careful when they employ one. Thus, they might make use of their networks to get a maid. In this way, they can be assured that the employee can be trusted and might not steal their property.

Co Thin told me, “Many houses were burgled by their maids. They worked for a couple of month, then stole money and ran away. At present, it is very hard to find an honest person to work in the household. No one knows when she might steal money and run away.”

I asked her, “How can you get the maid?”
She answered, “I asked my relatives in the countryside to find one for me.”

Their migration networks not only offer newcomers a place to stay, information about job opportunities and assistance getting work but also help when they get into trouble. This sometimes includes financial support. Many cyclo drivers may request such support in many circumstances. For instance, Vi, a cyclo driver who switched his job to become a xe om driver, asked for funding from his network of relatives to buy a second-hand Chinese motorcycle. He said, “I returned to my village and borrowed money from my father-in-law to buy a motorcycle. And he supports me. If I borrow money from others, I need to pay interest at a very high rate.” Son is another who asked for help from his network of relatives in the city. He said, “On that day, my cyclo was confiscated and the ward policeman asked me to pay the fine. I did not have money at that time. So, I asked my brother to help me. I remembered that he said to me, ‘Next time show the policeman some money. Then, you will pay a smaller fine.’”

These workers can also learn more about the city from the experiences of people in their network. Each day, after they return to their rooms, they might share the experiences they had during the day with
these others. As the new workers usually stay close together or rent a shared room with people in their network, they have an opportunity to learn from others. From my participant observations, the conversation topics were mostly about their experiences during the day. For instances, Vi, a xe om driver, had a conflict with a man in offering a cheap fare to a customer. He told his friends how bad the situation was. Then, the others would advise him how to deal with this issue. Anh Duyet told his friends that he saw the ward policeman confiscating a cyclo at Hang Ga Street. It was a very interesting issue for the new cyclo drivers because the wanted to know how to deal with the police. One day, one of the drivers told the others about a funny scene he had witnessed when two taxis crashed while trying to go as quickly as possible to get a customer. The benefits of sharing experiences help the newcomers to learn directly from the others on how to deal with particular issues. Each issue might have a different way to be resolved. This sharing of experience assists the new members to be confident and minimize their disappointments while far away from home as well as bringing the migrants close together.

Connections with home

After these migrants have been in the city for awhile, they might start to make contact their family in the countryside. Nowadays, the communication is more efficient than before. In many communes, they have both private and public telephones. Son said, "If I have urgent news, I will call my hometown and ask someone to send a message to my family. In my commune, we have two telephones, each in a small grocery shop." Besides calling by telephone, another typical way of making contact is writing a letter. However, these laborers prefer to pass their message to someone who is going to visit their home. Because the
workers stay in the same area with relatives and other people from their hometown, when one returns home, the others will know and usually ask that man to pass the messages to their family. On the way back Hanoi, in the same way, their family might pass their messages onto that man to give to their relatives in the city as well.

The migrants who are married usually return home more often than the individuals do. They will visit their home at least once every one or two months. The workers who have young children at home might go back more frequently than the others. This pattern is also confirmed by Ha Thi Phuong Tien and Ha Quang Ngoc’s study, which found that married migrants who have small children at home always send money and go back regularly (Ha Thi Phuong Tien and Ha Quang Ngoc 2001: 162). It is common among migrants who came to the city together with their spouse to leave their children with their grandparents, as Quy’s case exemplifies. Either he or his wife usually returns home to see their children every month. However, mostly it is his wife’s responsibility. It is not often that they will go back together. Quy said, "If we both go back, we will lose all our income. But if only one of us goes, the other can still get money in the city."

On special events such as Vietnamese New Year (Tet) or other occasions or religious celebrations, it is a time for these migrants to return home to celebrate with their family. Especially during the Tet festival, they usually take a longer break to stay with their family. It is common for them to buy some gifts such as new clothes for their parents, their wife and their children. If they have enough money, they might buy small electric appliances such as a rice cooker or a radio for their family. These workers return home not only on these occasions but also on the other life rituals such as weddings and funeral ceremonies for their relatives or close friends.
Dinh said, “In Vietnam, the relationship among our relatives is very important. They can help us when we have problems. In the same way, we need to support them when they get hard times as well.”

When a close relative or respected person in the village dies, according to Vietnamese culture, the workers who have relationships with the deceased person’s family should attend the ceremony. Migrants who are working far from home are not exempted. However, if they cannot attend, they might ask their friends to let the deceased person’s family know. Generally, they will donate some money to the deceased’s family. Besides funerals, the migrants also attend wedding ceremonies, particularly their close friends’ weddings. On those occasions, they will get together with their friends and take the opportunity to visit their family as well.

Because of the strong social ties between the workers in the city and their relatives in the countryside, every time these people visit home, they would support their family and their relatives by giving them some money. Some of them who have much money might pay the family's debts and the expense in repairing their houses, and even buy new electric appliances for their houses. Working in the city seems to be the way to escape their hard life in the countryside and also to bring the new lifestyle into the villages. A wide variety of market commodities, new technology, and urban lifestyle particularly clothes, housing, electric equipments, and etc., are not simply materials for using in the household but also a symbol of wealth and modernity. They also reflect the social status of the owner. Therefore, many people especially the youths want to go and work in the city in order to catch up with their neighbors or friends.

Since these migrants usually work in low-paid jobs in the city, they can earn money only to support themselves. It is very hard for them, especially single male adolescents, to save money and send back home.
Although they all earn more driving a cyclo than they could have at home, the costs they incur in the city are high. Most of the single workers' money is spent on eating, drinking and other leisure activities with friends as is the case with Huong. His aim for working in Hanoi is to save money to open a small motorcycle-repairing shop in his village. However, he can only save a little each month. He said, "I try to keep some money. Every three or four months, I will send some home." On the contrary, married people, such as Son and others, who have children in school always think about their family first and try to save as much money as they can. Son said, "I try to keep much of the money I earn for my family, and my kids." Quy, a 32 year old driver from Hung Yen Province said he needs to send money home every month for his children's study. "My wife needs to go back home every month to see the kids and give them money to go to school. If she cannot, I will go instead."

Nguyen Duc Vinh (2001: 123-143) found that the migrants who moved for economic reasons frequently remit because their motivation for migration is to support their family. And the married migrants who have family members at home tend to remit more than the single. The research also noted that both permanent and temporary migrants who regard themselves as continuing members of a homeland community are more likely to send money home and visit their native village (Nguyen Duc Vinh 2001: 134-135).

For the migrants, frequent visits home not only reflect maintenance of a close relationship with those in the home community but also show that to the others that they are still members of the community. In the migrants' mind, many of them still consider themselves as a member of their home community. They usually said, "I come to Hanoi for money." "I want to open a small motorbike-repairing stall in my village." "I came here (Hanoi) for money. Nam Dinh is my home. In my village, there are no jobs available." However, although they retain a sense of belonging to their communes and, one day, might return home there, for now they
have a commitment to work for money and Hanoi is the only place that provides them job opportunities with a good wages.

This sense of connection with home also reflects objectively the difficulties of relocating permanently to the city. A study on the intentions of temporary migrants to stay in the urban areas showed that the majority of migrants of both sexes preferred to reside permanently in urban areas. There are three most important reasons for their intentions to stay: they have a satisfactory job; became familiar with the place of residence; and have strong family ties (Nguyen Thanh Liem 2001:152). However, the laws do not allow them to do so. Only a short period of time is permitted and they are required to register at the police station in the city after their arrival. While these migrants prefer to move and stay permanently in the city, in reality, they cannot. Vi said, "If I could, I and my family prefer to move and work in Hanoi. My kids can get a better education. We (he and his wife) can get a higher income than we get right now." These workers are satisfied with their jobs in the city. Many of them work in the city for a long period of time. They feel familiar with their place of residence. Yet one thing many cyclo drivers do not have in the city is family ties. They came to Hanoi alone leaving their relatives, parents, and children behind in the village. That is the main reason for these migrants to return to their hometown. Many drivers said, "If I still have enough energy to work here (Hanoi), I will keep working." It implies that they will continue to work and save money until they feel too old to work in the city. After that, it might be a time to return home.

In sum, these migrants are forced to move and work in the city either economic motivations or cultural factors. In this chapter, I found that some Vietnamese cultures play an important role to push numerous people to leave their home. Many of them come to work in the city for fulfillment their dreams or responsibilities to their family. The migrates usually make use of their networks of relatives and friends or their "kin" in order to reduce risks and costs of movements and to support them during
their stay in the city. The research also found that these people always stay close to or in the same place as their networks. Whenever the newcomers experience difficulties they will request for assistance from their network or “kin”. Furthermore, “kin” can be seen as a recruiter. When he/she temporary visits home, he/she might persuade others to work in the city. Because of strong social ties between the migrants in the city and their relatives in hometown as well as a sense of belonging to their home villages, these migrants usually contact those people in countryside by passing messages through their friends who visit home or making their temporary visits. And because of their aims of working in the city, these people try to continue working in the city until they feel too old to work. When one quit his job and return home, the next generations will follow this trend. The cycle of rural-urban migration will never end.
Chapter 4

Vehicle is Life: Strategies for Survival

Introduction

"Xich lo la gian diep. Cho nao cung bief" (Cyclo drivers are spies. They know every place). Anh Duyet said this to me when I asked him directions to the ethnological museum. He is 45 years old and has been peddling a cyclo in Hanoi for more than 20 years. He told me good drivers must know all the famous landmarks in Hanoi and should know where their regular passengers want to go. Everyday he waits for passengers in front of the Daewoo Apartments. While we were conversing, he kept glancing at the front door of the building. He said, "That man always takes a xe om, not a cyclo." I looked at the man he was pointing out. A minute later, a woman stepped out the front door and Anh Duyet hastily pushed his cyclo toward the woman without saying anything to me. Anh Oai, a xe om driver who was also waiting for passengers at that place, told me, "That woman is Anh Duyet's regular customer."

As motorized vehicles fill the streets of Hanoi, cyclos are losing many of their former passengers to cheaper, faster and more officially acceptable modes of public transport. Their passengers are not only
fewer, they are also more specific than those in the past. Therefore, in order to survive, cyclo drivers need to have strategies to find and retain customers. This chapter discusses the work strategies of four categories of cyclo drivers in Hanoi: personal cyclo drivers, tourist cyclo drivers, private cyclo drivers and goods-carrying cyclo drivers. Each group has different customers and works in different ways. Yet I argue that in order to survive the drivers of each category need to get together and form informal or formal associations. In doing so, they can improve their chances of getting work. Even the seemingly autonomous private cyclo drivers do so. Many of them seem to work alone; however, in reality, when they get a group of passengers, an informal group will be formed.

Peddling a cyclo is considered by many cyclo drivers to be an insecure way to earn a living. A daily income cannot be guaranteed. Some days the drivers might receive many fares while on others little or no money is earned. The cyclo men know that if they can get regular passengers, they can be confident and certain about their income. Many drivers, in different ways, try to create and develop relationships between themselves and their customers so as to get regular work. The development of such relationships takes time. For some, their employers act as patrons providing benefits to their clients who in return assist and behave honestly to their employers. However, the patron-client pattern cannot develop among the majority of cyclo drivers who work with the tourist cyclo companies or for luxury hotels. Such drivers are too concerned about their next fare to want to create relationships with their foreigner passengers. When a tour ends, the relationships between these drivers and their customers are also terminated. When a job is done they can be seen returning quickly to their bases in order to be ahead in the queue. While this behavior seems competitive, for these drivers the co-operative relationship between the fellow drivers in their group is more important than developing ties with their individual customers.
Some definitions and clarifications of the terms that are used in this chapter are needed. The Vietnamese phrase *xich lo cho khach* (literally, ‘passenger-carrying cyclos’) covers three groups of drivers. The first are those who work as personal cyclo drivers (*xich lo rieng*) for a regular employer, usually a foreigner. The main task of these drivers is to do regular jobs, such as taking children of a family to school. Sometimes, they might work as servants as well. The second group peddles cyclos for tourists (*xich lo du lich*). They do so in two main different contexts. The first is with the tourist cyclo companies. At present, there are two such companies in Hanoi: one is called Sans Soucis Company and the other is Huy Phong Company. The other context where tourist cyclos work is the luxury hotels, to which a number of drivers are each affiliated. The third group of passenger-carrying cyclos is ‘private cyclos’ (*xich lo tu nhan*). While they also primarily offer services to tourists, their drivers find their customers on the street and are not affiliated with any specific employers, companies or hotels. The fourth category of cyclos discusses in this chapter (*xich lo cho hang*) carries goods, not customers. However, the kind of relationships that their drivers maintain with their clients is similar to those maintained by some drivers of the passenger-carrying cyclo category.

“A lucky man” to be a foreigner’s personal driver

Not too many cyclo drivers can find steady work for a foreign employer. Every driver knows that if he has some regular passengers, at least, he will have a regular income. If he manages to become one of the few drivers who work long-term for a foreigner’s family, surely he will receive a regular wage. Those who have such work are considered lucky. It means that their income is secure. They do not have to wait in line or
peddle their cyclos looking for passengers in the streets like most other drivers. Many cyclo drivers think that working as a personal driver for a foreigner would be ideal: light work, maybe only taking a child to school, with a regular income each month. However, working as a personal cyclo driver entails more than occasionally giving their employer's family members a lift. When they are not driving in the streets, they might be asked to do other tasks such as sweeping the courtyard, gardening, trimming trees, watering plants, cleaning the fish well, and other errands for family members.

Anh Lap, 53 years old from Ha Tay province, has been working as a personal cyclo driver for a German family for more than 10 years. Previously, he used to be a private cyclo driver earning money to support his family. One day, he gave a lift to a foreign woman. On the way, the woman asked about Anh Lap's life and decided to employ him as a personal cyclo driver to take her to and from work until she left Vietnam for home. A year later, she moved back to Vietnam with her family and she met Anh Lap again. She asked Anh Lap to work in her new business and to take her children to school. Ten years have passed since Anh Lap first began working for the family.

Taking children to school is the primary job for the personal cyclo drivers. Many foreigners in Vietnam are deeply concerned about their children's safety on the way to and from school. It is dangerous for young students to go to school by motorcycles or bicycles and it is expensive to take them to school by taxi everyday. But a cyclo is ideal. Although small, it can take two or three children at the same time. The drivers are also entrusted to take care of the children's safety especially when they are among fast moving traffic in the street. With its slow speed, the sturdiness of its frame, protection from the elements and other special characteristics, the cyclo is considered by many foreign parents as a good way to take their children to school.
After taking the children to school in the morning, the drivers might have other duties to do depending on their employers. Frequently, the drivers work in gardens, trim trees, sweep up leaves, water and fertilize plants until it is time to take the children home. The drivers do not receive food from their employers. This is the drivers’ responsibility. Obviously, they are able to have lunch at small food shops nearby and then take a rest after lunch. Two o’clock in the afternoon is the time to take the children home. When the children return, their work is completed. These are everyday activities for the personal cyclo driver.

Around seven o’clock every school day, Anh Lap appears in front of a big house. After wiping the cyclo’s seat, he pushes his cyclo to the gate and waits for three foreign children to go to school. Soon, his employer (chu) takes the three children to the front door. They walk straight to the cyclo. Each child has a small backpack in his or her hand. After a short talk to their parents, they hand their bags to Anh Lap. He smiles at them, takes the children’s bags and puts some into a tiny compartment behind the seat; others he hangs on the cyclo’s handlebar. After the children are seated, they are ready to go to school. The small pedicab slowly moves out into the street. The parents watch until it is out of sight.

At the International School, many parents’ vehicles occupy the street in front of the school every morning. The parents usually take their children there in their own cars. Some use taxis to take students to school while some choose motorcycles as a means of transport. It is rare that parents take their children by bicycles. Although the school provides school buses to transport students between school and home, many parents still prefer to drive their own vehicles. Frequently, the parents’ vehicles remain in place after the children get out. The parents watch their children enter school. It is difficult work for the school guard to direct the disorderly vehicles in front of the school. This causes traffic
congestion every day. Anh Lap needs to stop his cyclo some distance from the school and the children walk to school.

Other cyclos taking children to school also stop at the same place. Anh Lap said, “This is Anh Khanh. That is Anh Oai. We know each other. They have been peddling cyclos and taking children to school here for a long time.”

Anh Khanh, 48 years old, peddles a cyclo at the Daewoo Apartments. His employers are a husband and wife from Korea. After he takes their son to school, he is free. He always returns to a parking place opposite the apartment and waits for other passengers who want to use a cyclo for their business. Anh Oai who is 55 years old, transports children back and forth between another foreigner’s house and the International School in the mornings and afternoons. For the rest of the time, he helps his wife in their small business at home. Neither of these drivers needs to work at their employers’ houses.

A personal cyclo driver is able to earn on average around 1,200,000 VND (US $80) a month. Some drivers might get a one-month bonus on special occasions such as Christmas day or Vietnamese New Year. Sometimes, they may receive tips for doing errands such as posting mail at the post office or buying some goods at the markets. On occasion, these drivers might get used clothes or old electric appliances from their employers. For some drivers such as Anh Khanh, an extra income can be earned by offering his services to other passengers. As mentioned above, after he finishes his job with the children, he returns and waits for foreigners who want to take a cyclo. He can earn extra money from this work. On New Years Day, he also gets tips from many of his passengers. Although these private drivers do not get food and board from their employers, cheap food and accommodation is available everywhere in Hanoi.
During school vacations, these drivers are free from their work with the children. However, their employers might request them to do something else. Anh Lap, who continues to get a monthly wage, needs to work in the garden some days and does other jobs requested by his employer. Anh Lap said, “Next week, I will come here (the foreigner’s house) only on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. The children are on school holidays for three months. My employer asked me to work every second day.” During the school holidays, Anh Oai helps his wife in their business at home. Anh Khanh continues to work as a private cyclo driver looking for passengers among the other foreigners at the Daewoo Apartments. These drivers said, “In summer, children do not go to school. The parents take their family on vacation to other countries. My income is less.” Many foreigners at that apartment complex also take their holidays and leave Hanoi as well. At that time, both the xe om and cyclo drivers there said, “I might go back home too. There are only a few passengers and many foreigners have their own cars. They do not need xe om or cyclos.”

The relationship between the personal drivers and their employers is very close. The longer these drivers work for their employers, the more loyal they become. Even though there are no contracts, whenever their employers make requests, the drivers agree to work without hesitation. One day, I saw Anh Khanh moving a big wardrobe out of his employer’s apartment. I greeted him and he told me, “It is broken. The employer bought a new one. He asked me to move the old one out.” The drivers’ view is that their employers provide them work opportunities and continue employing them because of the employers’ kindness. In return, they need to respond to their employers with honesty and reliability. As Anh Lap said, “nguoi ta la rat tot giup nguoi ngheo,” which means they (the employers) are very kind helping me, a poor driver. From the employers’ perspective, they get servants who work for them for a long time like Anh
Lap, Anh Khanh, and others. Because of trust, they still keep employing them.

Cyclos for Tourists

The next two categories of cyclos to be discussed, *xich lo tu nhan* and *xich lo du lich* both offer services primarily to tourists. Like the employers who retain the services of a personal cyclo driver, most of the customers who use these categories of cyclo are also foreigners. However, distinct from the long-term resident foreigners who retain drivers as regular employees, the passengers who use *xich lo tu nhan* and *xich lo du lich* are, for the most part, tourists, or those who stay only for a short time in Hanoi. The services provided are quite expensive for ordinary Vietnamese people when compared with the cost of other forms of public transport. Indeed, some Hanoi people refer to these cyclos as *xich lo cao cap* or *xich lo quy toc* which means high class or "aristocratic cyclos", a reference to their high prices, to the quite luxurious finish of the vehicles and their relatively wealthy clientele. The men who peddle the *xich lo tu nhan* and *xich lo du lich* are essentially no different from each other or in fact from those who operate other cyclos in the capital city. They are, by and large, temporary migrants from the rural provinces around Hanoi. In each case (as with other cyclo operators) they own their own vehicles and are personally responsible for licensing formalities and for fines incurred for violation of the traffic rules.

So what is the difference between these two categories of cyclo drivers? The main difference is in the way they find their customers. Those who operate *xich lo tu nhan* initiate contact with prospective passengers themselves, usually in the streets or near places where short-stay foreigners reside, work and play. The *xich lo du lich* drivers contact their passengers through the mediation of a tourist company or a
hotel. The places where this latter group meets their passengers are also quite specific. When not on a job they are queuing in a special place, according to rules that have been specially developed among themselves to regulate access to work.

The latter more regularized or co-operative approach to the cyclo business seems to have developed in response to the problems all drivers face finding work in an increasingly tough regulatory environment. It also seems to be associated with a movement to capture a share of the growing foreign tourist market. While working co-operatively in this way brings advantages to many drivers, in the way of higher fares or more regular income, the relatively costly entry requirements and demanding standards mean that many drivers still prefer to operate privately. Overall, there is a movement away from individualized operators towards a more corporate approach to accessing work. Yet it is not unilinear. And despite these distinctions, there is some blurring between the two categories and a movement of individual drivers between these two modes of organizing their work.

In the next two sections I discuss some of the commonalities between drivers of the two groups. I touch briefly on the context in which these two approaches have developed and examine the different strategies they each employ to find passengers.

To be or not to be a company member

The first requirement for making a living as a cyclo driver in Hanoi is to obtain a vehicle, the primary means of production. Nowadays, no new cyclos are being built. The workers who want to be a cyclo driver need to buy a used vehicle and sometimes repair and refurbish it. The price of old cyclos is quite expensive and the vehicles are difficult to find.
Since the municipal authorities prohibited cyclos peddling in many areas of Hanoi, many old cyclos, especially goods-carrying cyclos (xich lo cho hang), have been destroyed. If someone wants to buy a used cyclo, they need to find a source, and this very often is a former driver. The price depends on the condition of the vehicle. Refurbished vehicles in good condition are the most expensive. Older unmodified vehicles are quite cheap. However, the cost of repairs is often higher than the purchase price. Son said, "I bought an old cyclo for just 700,000 VND (US $45.20) but I spent 1,200,000 VND (US $77.40) to fix it." In sum, the most basic investment required for him to start his new job cost almost 2,000,000 VND (US $129.00). The amount Son paid is around the average of what most cyclo drivers would expect to pay for a serviceable vehicle in the early 2000s.

Like other vehicles that use the streets, cyclos are required to register at the Hanoi police traffic authority. All legally registered vehicles have plates at the front and rear. The drivers need to renew their vehicle license (le phi giao thong) every six months. Moreover, the drivers must have a valid drivers license (giay phep lai xe) which allows them to peddle cyclos in the streets. This license must be renewed every six months as well. All fees are the driver's responsibility. Each time, the driver will pay around 1,000,000 VND (US $64.50) for both licenses. There is a slight difference in the way that this is handled between the xich lo tu nhan and xich lo du lich. For convenience, the local traffic policemen will arrange with the two big xich lo du lich companies in Hanoi to extend procedures at each company's base. The xich lo tu nhan need to organize their own licenses at the police stations.

Li Tana (1996:25) found in her survey of rural-urban migration in Hanoi that in 1992 the migrants who wanted to work as a cyclo driver needed at least 600,000-800,000 VND (US $66.50-88.80) to start this job in Hanoi. This amount of money was about half the annual income of an ordinary family. Nowadays, the cost of starting this job, including both
license fees, is around 3,000,000 VND (US$193.50) which is more than six times the average monthly salary of a new university graduate student (456,000 VND or around US$30.00) who works in a private company. However, the return income made by the drivers is more when compared with the initial investment. On average, cyclo drivers who find work with tourists can earn around 40,000 VND (US $2.60) a day or 1,000,000 VND (US $ 64.50) a month. If they can get an extra job, like the drivers who take children to school, their income is greatly increased.

Peddling cyclos in Hanoi is a new experience for many drivers. Even though many of them had a chance to come to Hanoi before, they could no longer remember or had had no chance to become familiar with the layout of Hanoi’s streets. Most of the previous visitors came to Hanoi for only a short period of time and visited few places. At present, many streets in Hanoi have been changed into one-way streets. This is confusing for a new cyclo driver.

Loi, 32 years old from Nam Dinh, has been peddling cyclo for Sans Soucis Company for a long time. Earlier, he earned a living as a private cyclo driver (xích lo tu nhan). He told his story about his first experiences peddling a cyclo in Hanoi, "I had been here less than a week before I bought a second-hand cyclo from my friend. I started working. (He smiles) I did not recognize the Hanoi streets and I did not know how to set up the fares. When I got a customer, I just asked them how much they usually paid and also asked them the way all of the time. So, clumsy! It took a long time before I became familiar with Hanoi streets."

Cyclos are prohibited in many streets. All drivers must know which ones. In some streets, cyclos are forbidden all day while some are off-limits during rush hours. For instance, cyclos are banned around Hoan Kiem Lake, Luong Van Can Street, Hang Ngang Street, Hang Dao Street, and Hang Can Street. Regulations for Ba Trieu Street and Hang Bai Street do not permit cyclos to use them during rush hours. The penalties
for breaching the laws, or not knowing them, are heavy: a fine and sometimes confiscation of the vehicle.

Son told to me, "If the drivers do not know and peddle their cyclos in the prohibited streets, the police will wait for them at the end of the street." He pointed at a group of policemen at the corner of his street. "They are waiting there for drivers who break the traffic laws. The penalty fee is very high around 200,000 VND (US$13.00) and the vehicle might be confiscated for a week".

Another set of problems with the police is caused by drivers who do not keep up to date with their licensing requirements. Because it costs so much money to renew their licenses each time, many who work as xích lo tu nhan decide to avoid doing so. This causes them trouble whenever they encounter the police. Waving over a cyclo driver, the police always ask for both their drivers and vehicle licenses and fine them if they do not have either. Some drivers attempt to bribe the policemen so they will not be subject to the full penalty or have their vehicles confiscated. Son said, "I need to give money to the police at least three times a month. But some months I might need to bribe them as much as five times. If not, they might confiscate my cyclo. Each time, the bribe varies. It depends on how much money I have in my pocket. If I have a lot, they might ask for more money. If I have a little, they will take some." Son also revealed a tactic that he used: "When I bought the cyclo, I also bought both licenses from the previous owner." He showed me an old piece of paper. He said, "This is a driving license and that is a vehicle registration license." I said, "That picture does not look like you." He replied, "That is the previous cyclo owner's picture. It can help me sometimes, if the policeman does not look carefully."
"When you are caught, no one can help you" (bi bat, khong ai giup). Anh Thu, the manager of Sans Soucis tourist cyclo company, which represents more than 150 cyclo drivers in Hanoi, often repeats this warning to its new members. In reality, however, he or another person in his company will ask the policeman to lessen the punishment. If his negotiations are successful, then it is a tradition for the driver to thank that man by inviting him out to have food and beer (nhau). Similarly, the xich lo tu nhan, when they get into any trouble with the police always ask for assistance from someone in their network who has contacts with the authorities. They thank the person who intercedes on their behalf by inviting them to dine out.

Anh Dung told me about his run-in with the police, "On that day I was negotiating a fare with some foreigners. I had just jumped off my vehicle to go over to a group of tourists. At that point, a policeman came up and confiscated my cyclo. He said I had parked the cyclo against the traffic sign. I told him that I was negotiating a fare with the customers but the policeman insisted and held my cyclo for a week. I did not know what to do. Then, I asked my relative to help me to negotiate with that policeman. He succeeded."

These stories indicate the importance to the drivers of getting some form of assistance to help them in their dealings with the authorities. In an unfamiliar city, facing a hostile regulatory environment and some predatory behavior from the police, they risk losing more in fines than they can make from fares. This risk is all the greater since access to many of the areas where their best business is to be found is disappearing, due to increasingly restrictive policies towards their form of livelihood. In this context it is crucial for drivers to have the assistance of someone or some kind of organization who can mediate for them and keep open their channel to their passengers. It is in part in response to this need that, in the mid 1990s, some cyclo drivers developed a new co-
operative form to provide mutual assistance.

Anh Thu, the manager of Sans Soucis Company, explained the development of his company thus: "In 1994, I got together with my friends who were also drivers and established a cyclo club. At first, the club had five to seven drivers. I remember Hanoi in that year had a lot of cyclos. We got together and helped our members until the members gradually increased. In 2001, the members agreed to register as a company. That was the year the Vietnamese government passed the law banning cyclos in many areas. Many drivers who wanted to peddle cyclos joined the company. At that time, we had 137 vehicles. Each driver had both legal licenses - drivers and vehicle licenses. Up to now, the number of drivers has increased to 153 and I expect membership will increase to 300 vehicles in the next 5 years."

Nowadays, in Anh Thu's estimation, there are approximately 500 cyclos operating for tourists in Hanoi. The majority of them are working in two tourist cyclo companies: Sans Soucis Company and Huy Phong Company. Sans Soucis has about 153 member drivers and Huy Phong has almost 200. Around 150 other vehicles work for many of Hanoi's five star hotels or operate as private cyclos. Out of this total number, not all drivers work every day. Some might take a day off especially during the harvest season. Many of them return home at that time to help their family members working in the rice fields.

San Souci has its base on Ly Thai To Street, near the Vietnamese National Bank. Huy Phong is located on Tran Quang Khai Street, opposite the History Museum. Both locations are in downtown Hanoi, close to large hotels, tourist companies, the shopping district and not far from Hoan Kiem Lake and the Old Quarter. They each have a large parking area, conveniently located off the road for the drivers to assemble and park their vehicles while waiting for tourists. It is easy for large tour buses to pull up next to the two locations. This off-road location is
Vehicle is Life: Strategies for Survival

attractive to cyclo drivers as it means that they cannot be fined for obstructing the traffic flow while waiting for fares. One reason that the authorities might have found these new collective forms acceptable is that the majority of cyclos are not milling around empty in the streets at a given time but are instead waiting in an off-street parking area for the tourists to come to them, which they do by the busload.

Another of the attractions of this arrangement to drivers is that it provides a source of stable work. The two companies can provide this by taking block bookings from tourist agencies for the services of their cyclos, usually for sightseeing. The tourist agencies forward to the companies a portion of the total cost of the pre-paid package bought by their customers for a cyclo sightseeing tour of Hanoi. The cyclo company then divides the money among the drivers who conduct the individual tours. To make this system work requires good contacts and regular communication with tourist companies and a high level of organization.

The cyclo companies have a four tiered organizational structure. The first level is the manager, who oversees general operations and will often liaise with the authorities. The second is the deputy manager who, in the case of Sans Soucis, is the manager’s wife. She takes care of all financial issues such as taking bookings, collecting money from the tourist agencies, and arranging payment for the drivers. This reflects a pattern in Vietnamese culture in which women are commonly in charge of household finances and expenditures. The third level is comprised of the to truong of driver teams and the last level is made up of the drivers. Tourist company cyclos are divided into teams of around 20 drivers. Sans Soucis has seven driver teams. To truong are the chiefs of these teams. The to truong are responsible for organizing the work in their team, making note of which drivers turn up, what jobs they do, ensuring that they are paid and handling disputes. If there are serious cases that to truong cannot solve, the problems will go to the manager for consideration. Each team of drivers is in queue for sequential tours. The
manager will contact only the to truong and the deputy manager delegates tour groups to them.

In the morning of each working day, the drivers who work with the tourist cyclo companies need to report to the to truong of their team. The to truong will know the total number of drivers and organize jobs for each of them on an equal basis. If one of the drivers in the team does not get a passenger on a given tour he would be first in line for the next one. Normally, on busy days, each driver can get at least three or four trips. Sometimes they might have up to five trips a day. However, on some days particularly in the summer season (the low tourist season), they might not get any trips at all.

Drivers working for the tourist cyclo companies are easily identified. They all wear a white polo shirt uniform and a white cap with the company logo. The uniform is part of the membership fee and it is a rule of both companies that all members must wear the company uniform while working for the company. This uniform also represents an image of the company for the drivers. One driver said, “I belong to this company, so I must wear the company uniform.” Some also said, “This uniform helps the foreigners know I am a tourist company cyclo driver and offer a better service than private cyclo drivers (xich lo tu nhan).” Another man said, “The foreigners trust us more than xich lo tu nhan because of this uniform.” Sometimes even when they are taking time off from cyclo work, they still wear the company uniform.

Anh Hoan, 68 years old, has been working for Sans Soucis Company since it was established as a club in 1994. Before that, he worked as a xich lo tu nhan for more than 25 years. Everyday, he helps his wife sell draught beer (bia hoi) in the old quarter. He usually wears the Sans Soucis uniform even though most of his time he is selling beer and not peddling his cyclo. He said, “I am very proud to be a cyclo driver. I earn my living and support my family by peddling a cyclo. I wear the cyclo shirt because it reminds me of my life.”
The company logo is also on the exterior of cyclo vehicles so that it is easily recognized. All tourist cyclos are decorated with yellow tassels. The seat and the backrest are covered with white or red cloth. Many parts of the vehicle’s body are made of polished aluminum and look clean. The metal chassis is painted a silver color. Each vehicle has a hood and it can be quickly raised and lowered against the weather. When it rains, the passenger compartment is sheltered by a plastic curtain. Every vehicle has a big bell suspended beneath the passenger seat. It will ring as a warning to other vehicles.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, migrants who want to get a job in the city usually make use of their networks. Likewise, many drivers who seek to join the tourist cyclo companies also do the same. They use their relatives who already work as cyclo drivers in the companies as reference persons. If the new driver offends the customers, the company can raise the matter with the reference persons. The Sans Soucis manager said, “It has not happened yet but it must be prevented. Customers are very important. If some drivers offend, then it impacts on the company. We survive because of the foreigners.”

If the newcomer does not know anyone in the company, he can apply directly to the company’s manager by submitting personal documents. These act as records for the new vehicle and driver at the local police station. Even though the new driver has a reference person, he still needs to submit the documents to the police station. After the company accepts his request, he needs to be trained for three months in order to make sure that he understands all rules including the basic traffic laws for cyclos, the company’s rules, and acceptable behavior among workmates and customers. During the training period, the chief will observe him carefully. The manager said, “Many new drivers come from the countryside. They do not understand basic traffic lights and signs. Traffic laws are for our safety. The newcomers need to learn to observe them. If not, accidents might occur. That is why training lasts for three
months." During this period, the new drivers can join a team and provide service for the customers. They receive remuneration at the same rate as other drivers.

Each new member will get a white polo shirt and a white cap with the company logo on it. The companies also require the new driver to register his vehicle at the local police station, a requirement that indicates the co-operative approach that the companies have towards regulation of the industry. If a driver already has these licenses before joining the company, he may only need to renew them. If he is a new driver who has never worked as a cyclo driver, the companies will help him. However, the driver must procure his own vehicle first.

The new drivers receive not only the company uniform and assistance with licensing but also the new image of cyclo work as an admired occupation. Previous perceptions of cyclo drivers as unruly, unclean, drunken, coarse-speaking and dangerous has disappeared. The white shirt and hat portray politeness and good service. The vehicle's clean and new appearance has helped eradicate previous viewpoints. Furthermore, their major target customer, foreigners not local people, has helped to improve the value of the cyclo such that these have become known as high class cyclos (xich lo cao cap). This transformation, which has been consciously promoted by the tourist cyclo companies, has pushed cyclos from their previous negative image to a new role within the modernization of the city.

This new positive image is one that benefits cyclo drivers who work independently as private cyclo drivers. The private operators also use refurbished vehicles, whose appearance is similar to that of the tourist company vehicles. Sometimes these vehicles were formerly used by drivers belonging to the tourist companies. Like those used by the tourist companies, the bodies of their vehicles are covered with polished aluminum. The body structure is painted silver. The passengers' seat and backrest are also padded with sponge. Many have a bell which is also
used as an invitation to customers. When they peddle their vehicles close to foreigners, they usually ring the bell to get their attention before inviting them to be their passengers. Overall, the vehicle is an improvement on the goods-carrying cyclos (figure 4.3). However, these drivers do not have a uniform. They wear all kinds of shirts. Some drivers prefer long sleeve shirts whereas some drivers only wear t-shirts. These drivers usually wear trousers in darker tones. Some vehicles have no bell. Son said, “My cyclo does not have a bell. The previous owner took it off. It would cost me around 50,000 VND (US $3.25) if I wanted one.”

Son who worked as a xich lo tu nhan said, “The new drivers who have no experience might prefer to work in those tourist cyclo companies. They only need to wait and do what the to truong orders and get paid after the jobs are done”.

Peddling with the tourist cyclo companies is very simple. They do not need to search for the passengers by themselves. They do not need to compete with other drivers. They do not need to know many places where the tourists usually go. Working with the tourist cyclo companies is suitable for new drivers.

“However”, he continued, “A new cyclo driver needs savings to peddle for the tourist cyclo companies. You know how much money these companies require for their membership fee?” He told me. “It is 1,000,000 VND (US $ 64.50). That amount of money does not include registration fees at the police stations.” As a result many drivers decide not to join those companies even though they know that working with the companies is more secure than working as a xich lo tu nhan.

Many drivers who have peddled cyclos in Hanoi before do not want to join those companies. Instead of paying the membership fee they want to keep their savings for other things. Initially, many of them are already in debt. They need to buy an old cyclo and refurbish it, which
costs them a lot of money. They need to register with the police. And they need to have money for everyday expenditures during their stay in Hanoi. Drivers who do not have enough capital need to borrow it from other sources. "Money is important," Tien said, "...1,000,000 VND (US $64.50) is a lot of money. I needed to borrow from my relatives to buy the old cyclo and then it needed to be fixed. The costs are great." Thus, many xích lo tu nhan drivers try to reduce cost of starting this job by omitting to renew their licenses. Many drivers said, "They will renew both licenses whenever they have enough money." However, in reality, they still keep working without legal licenses. This seems to me that for them, saving money is important, renewing both licenses is less important.

Making a living on the streets

"Hey hey!" a cyclo man was shouting at the two foreign backpackers on the other side of street. He shouted again and waved his hands, "Hey hey... Mr!" At the same time, he pointed at his cyclo and tried to pull his cyclo across the street to those tourists.

This is a common way for xích lo tu nhan drivers to greet foreigners, even though it seems impolite to shout out loud and point at them. However, the drivers only want to make themselves noticed. "Hey hey," seems to be the usual words of greeting used among foreigners when they are far from each other. If the foreigners are walking on a footpath, the cyclo men might walk straight to them and offer their services. If they are peddling their cyclos and see foreigners walking along a footpath, they will peddle their cyclos over, ride alongside them and invite them to take a lift. Even after an initial rejection of the invitation, the drivers will continue to peddle alongside them for a while, just to
make sure that the foreigners do not want a ride.

_Đường phố tự hành_ drivers often have only a brief moment to make contact with their potential passengers so they have to be assertive, and able to approach and communicate with them effectively. As most of their passengers are transient foreigners, the drivers need to be able to speak a lingua franca and this is generally English. Many drivers have studied some basic English in school for a period of time. Some have studied at secondary school level although many of them have only finished a few years of primary schooling. They can read and communicate in the Vietnamese language very well; however, some of them can hardly write the Vietnamese language. Some drivers say that English for them is even harder than writing in Vietnamese. Many have learned English from other people. They know some basic vocabulary such as counting, greetings, questions, directions and negative words.

Anh Duyet is old working as a private cyclo driver in front of Daewoo Apartments. He finished primary school. He can read the Vietnamese newspapers but can hardly write. Every day he waits for passengers at the parking lot with three other cyclo drivers who work alternately. He has never studied English in any class but he has learned to speak English by speaking with foreign customers. Even though his grammar is not correct, he can communicate with the foreign customers and take them to the right destinations.

"Mr.... by cyclo go now" or "Mr.... by cyclo very good" are both sentences that Anh Duyet usually uses to invite the foreign customers. If he does not understand where the clients want to go, he might ask them, "You have card address?" Normally, foreigners carry a Hanoi map or name cards. These can help them to tell the drivers where they want to go. When he knows the destination, he will say, "I know OK".
While taking his clients to their destination, he frequently talks to them. “Where you now?” which means “which hotel are you staying at now” is the first sentence to begin the conversation. If the foreigner stays at the Sofitel Metropole Hotel, for example, he might respond next, “Metropole number one, I know people.” Because he has peddled a cyclo for a long time, he knows many former guests as well as many of the cyclo drivers who work there. With his vivacious and talkative nature, he always asks and invites his customers to visit many places such as “Go pagoda Van Mieu,” “Go shop souvenir,” or “Go barber.” This is a technique to provide a better service and to make friends with his passenger in order to get them as regular customers. He rarely negotiates the fare with his customers. When he reaches their destination, he will say, “Up to you” and he usually gets a lot of money from his passengers. This tactic makes him much more money than other drivers get.

_Xich Io tu nhan_ operators need good bargaining skills as their fares can be negotiated. There is no exact cost for certain journeys. Today’s fare might be different from yesterday’s, even though a passenger goes to the exact same place. As a general rule, the fare is calculated by distance and/or by time. _Xich Io tu nhan_ drivers working in the downtown area of Hanoi estimated that a normal fare for a one kilometer trip is around 10,000-25,000 VND (US $0.60-1.60) or 30,000-45,000 VND (US $2.00-3.00) per hour. The rate that a passenger gets will depend in part upon how good a negotiator they are. Yet the fare rates also fluctuate depending upon how wealthy the driver figures the passenger to be. Anh Suu said, “We need to set high fares because the passengers will lower them.” “…For example, like you,” he said to me. “You look like an Asian person. The drivers set a lower fare than the fare for people from European countries.” That is the same strategy adopted by many street vendors. They will set the prices depending upon the customers’ nationality.
Dai, a bookseller aged 25 years from Bac Ninh Province, told me about his tactics, "I have been selling guide books for a long time." "You know, we can increase the price depending on the buyer's nationality or where they are staying. If they stay in a luxury hotel, the price of books will go up. If they come from the USA or Japan, the price will be higher than the price charged for people from China, Malaysia and other countries. Because they are richer." A high price is also set to allow for negotiation. "The buyer always negotiates the price down so I need to set it high. If I can sell only one book, I still get as much as if I sell two."

In the streets, the xich lo tu nhan seem to work alone. However, their peers usually work in the same area. That makes it easy for a team of cyclos to operate. If customers want more than one cyclo, the drivers will join into a team. This makes an informal group among the xich lo tu nhan drivers. Even though many of them say they are all equal, no one is the head of the group, in reality, the informal head of the group will appear when they get a group of customers. The head of the group will call his peers to join the team. Other drivers who are not in his group are unable to join his team. They can only look and envy them.

Many cyclos peddled with great speed to a group of foreigners. They came from all directions. It looks like a flock of birds flying toward its prey. One man was talking to the foreigners surrounded by other cyclo drivers. No one helped him negotiate the fare. All were silent and listening. After the foreigners agreed with the fare, he turned around and pointed at many drivers who could join his team. Some drivers tried to get closer to the foreigners. But they could not. The man said something to them that made them walk away. In the meantime, he shouted at other drivers who came late, "Where have you been? I've got a group of guests. Come here and join me!" he ordered. Then, he turned back to the group of foreigners and arranged cyclos for them. Some drivers who had been there all along but were not in his group walked away and muttered to themselves.
The foreign customers for both xe om and cyclo drivers frequently seem to be the same people. Whenever foreign tourists get confused with Hanoi streets, both xe om and cyclo drivers will help them. In the meantime, the drivers might offer their service as well. However both xe om and cyclo drivers who work in the same area are rarely in conflict with each other over passengers. It depends on which type of vehicle the foreigners want. Nonetheless, cyclos seem to be at a disadvantage when compared with xe om. They cannot park their vehicles on the footpath like xe om and many streets prohibit them. Therefore, they must peddle and search for passengers while many xe om have regular places, usually on the footpath or on the corner of streets. Furthermore, the xe om drivers can serve both local people and foreigners while the main customers for cyclos are only foreigners. In many cases, both xe om and cyclo drivers know each other because they usually have worked in the same area for a long time.

Working in the same place needs rules. One common rule for the same type of vehicles is that the drivers cannot wait for or pick up passengers at another drivers’ place. They can drop their passengers at other places but not take them from there. This is a general rule for small-scale local transport services in many cities in Southeast Asia.

[When a] becak driver takes a passenger to the train station, if he is not one of the groups of becak drivers who usually wait there, he has to leave the station area and is not allowed to wait there. Often the becak drivers who wait at a strategic place like the train stations or bus terminals have formed a "syndicate" (Sartono Kartodirdjo 1981:44).

Daeng, a samlor driver in Bangkok, took a customer from Dam’s place. Thereafter, Daeng did not return to that parking place. It is possible that others will resort to informal sanctions that could include censuring him, threatening him, puncturing his tires, or even beating him up (Textor 1961: 22).
Similar rules are in place among cyclo drivers in Hanoi. For instance, *xích lo tu nhan* drivers cannot wait for passengers in front of five star hotels. Those places are reserved for the group of cyclos that are affiliated to those hotels. Other drivers who are not members of these groups cannot park and offer their services at these places. If they do so, they might be threatened by the hotel cyclo drivers. Even if guests come out from the hotel and ask a passing or an incoming cyclo driver for a ride, the drivers still cannot take them as their customers. They must explain that the hotel cyclos have priority. However, these cyclos can take the hotel guests once the guests walk far enough away from the hotel. At that point, any drivers can offer them a lift.

Among many cyclo drivers the strategy is to wait patiently in a place where a reliable supply of high-paying customers is found. This could be near hotels and restaurants or at one of the large apartment blocks where many foreigners reside. The interval between customers may be long, especially if other cyclo drivers are also waiting there. But the payoff makes the wait worthwhile, and sometimes drivers may even turn down fares that are not up to expectation.

Huong is 25 years old and from Nam Dinh Province. He usually waits for customers at the Hanoi Tower apartments. Mostly, his customers are regular foreigners who stay at that apartment and some other tourists who walk around there. One day while I was having a conversation with him, two foreign tourists asked him to take them to the History Museum. The distance from there to the museum is about two kilometers. He requested three US dollars for two persons while the foreigners negotiated the fare down to one dollar. After negotiating for awhile he exclaimed, "So cheap! One dollar for two people. I would rather sit here than peddle there. I will not work for nothing!"

Huong told me after he heard news that some of the Vietnamese laborers had experienced troubles in Malaysia that, "I have many friends working there. They asked me to join them and work as a laborer at construction sites but I
refused." He said, "If I work here as a cyclo driver, I can get almost 1,200,000 VND (US $77.00) a month. Although this amount of money is less than what those people get in Malaysia, I do not need to go far away from home like them. Here, I have a lot of friends but over there they have only a few."

The tourist cyclos that work with the five star hotels might charge higher fares than other cyclos. For instance, cyclos at Sofitel Hotel and Hilton Hotel will charge the hotel guests around 45,000 VND (US $3.00) per hour. These drivers give their services only to hotel guests. After the tour ends, they return to their base at the hotels and wait in queue for the next passenger. They do not take any customers on the way back to the hotels or peddle their cyclos to look for passengers on the sidewalk. The luxury hotels themselves expect the cyclos to be on hand to serve their guests, a rule readily accepted by the drivers because of the higher fee they can earn this way. The hotel cyclos drivers take turns, on a first come first served basis. They do not have a to truong because their groups typically comprise only a few members. They all know who comes to work first on a given day, who returns to the hotel first, and who is next in line.

The drivers who work for the tourist cyclo companies mainly take passengers that the company has secured for them in advance. Taking a tour of Hanoi by cyclo is one of the scheduled activities included in many pre-paid package tours. The company will collect the fares from the local tourist agencies who handle the tours and the drivers will receive their share of the divided income later. The company drivers do not negotiate a fare with tourists by themselves. On each working day, the drivers usually get tips from their passengers. After the tour ends, the foreigners might give them a tip. However, on an unlucky day the drivers may not receive any tips at all. Loi told me, "The old people usually give me tips. If my passengers are adults I might receive tips sometimes but I have
never got any tips from teenagers."

Before tourists arrive, the cyclos must be in queue and the drivers ready for service as shown in Figure 4.1. If one driver is absent when the tour group arrives the next one in line will replace him. When tour groups arrive, the chief of each team will arrange cyclos for them, directing the tourists to their vehicle. After the customers are seated and all vehicles are ready, the city tour will begin.

Two tourist buses stopped, not too far from the cyclo company base. Around 30-40 foreign tourists descended, walking across the street directly towards the group of cyclos. A man walking in front of the tourist groups turned and said something to them. It looked like he was telling them to find their way over to the cyclos. The drivers stood at their vehicles waiting. Not too long after, when the customers from one of the buses had each found a seat, the first group of cyclos started off on a city tour. A few minutes later the second team was ready and the next tour group departed.

Figure 4.1 Cyclos in queue. Photographed by the author, 23 September 2003.
There is no certain route for the tourist cyclos. Many French colonial buildings in Hanoi are visited, including the Opera Theatre, the Vietnamese National Bank, and the Government Guesthouse. When they pass by these buildings, the drivers frequently draw the passengers attention to them. They might stop for photographs, if the customers ask. In the old quarter, the tours will take the foreigners to many guilds which sell different products. Anh Thu, the manager of Sans Soucis Company said, “Foreigners want to see how the local people spend their everyday life. So we will take them to local markets, commercial areas, to see the people’s houses, and to watch the street life. Some streets have no footpaths. When they get out from their house, they get into the street. These are different from the customers’ culture.”

Many of the street names in the old quarter are related to the products that are sold in each street. For instance, Pho Hang Bac, which means Silversmiths’ Street, used to sell silver products, Pho Hang Da meaning Leather Street also used to sell buffalo and cow skins, Pho Hang Chieu meaning Mats Street used to sell bamboo and reed mats. Nowadays, many guilds do not sell the products that refer to the street’s name. Watches, clocks, and clothes are mostly found in Hang Dao Street (literally, Dyers’ Street). Hats, liquor, and wines are largely sold in Hang Da Street (literally, Leather Street). Carpets, nylon and plastic blinds and bead curtains are mainly traded in Hang Chieu Street (literally, Mats Street). In the Hang Vai Street (literally, Cloth Street) many herbal medicines shops are sold here. Because of a unique style of doing business in Vietnam, this area of 36 old streets is an attractive place for tourists to visit.

While taking tourists on a sightseeing tour, the first priority for all drivers is the customers’ safety. If any part of a passenger’ body such as hands, elbows or feet is outside the vehicle, the drivers may warn them, indicating that they might get hurt. They do not peddle abreast of each other, to avoid jostling with other vehicles in the narrow streets. During
the tour, the drivers will peddle their cyclos slowly, getting in the line and following other cyclos. They look like sluggish cyclo trains moving through the streets. Each procession might be up to 15 or 20 cyclos depending on the number of tourists. They pedal on the right side of the road so that others vehicles may pass. They turn left and right, into and out of streets passing many communities in the old quarter. In each street, people sell their unique products. Some drivers point at the products and try to explain what they are to the passengers even through they know little English. Some do not, only peddling their cyclos and following other drivers without saying anything. The procession of cyclos moves slowly until they finish the tour. After taking their customers to the destination, the sluggish cyclo trains turn into a swarm of bees flying back to their beehive. They peddle as fast as they can, in order to be back in time for the next job. The more passengers they get, the more money they receive, and the less time they waste.

Goods-carrying cyclos (*xich lo cho hang*)

Goods-carrying cyclos, nowadays, are very hard to find in Hanoi. Since serious implementation the promulgation of decree No. 21/2001 banning cyclos in the inner city, these undecorated, old and sometimes rickety vehicles have given way to a new class of aristocratic cyclos. The competition between small truck taxis (*xe tai nho*) and goods-carrying cyclos created further problems for the drivers of goods-carrying cyclos. Only a few of them still work and are usually found in markets and at construction sites. The nature of their work is quite different from other cyclos in Hanoi. Because of the limited times in which they are allowed to operate, the drivers have to work in the evening. Such is the case for Anh Bong, who peddles his *xich lo cho hang* at Bac Qua Market. He starts
work at 4.30 pm and finishes at dawn the next day. His customers mostly are restaurant owners and retailers in other markets who buy wholesale agricultural products from the farmers at Bac Qua Market and ask him to transport the goods to their places.

Around 4.30-5.00 pm each day, Anh Bong comes to the corner of Hang Khoai Street to wait for customers. He said, “If I can get three trips a night, I can make more than 70,000 VND (US $4.50) depending on the destinations.” He told me. “A cyclo can carry up to 500 kilograms each time, if you can peddle it.” He said, “In the past, I could easily peddle 300-400 kilograms but now I cannot. So tired!” Nowadays there are quite a few people peddling xich lo cho hang. “I am thinking I should quit this job someday because I am getting old. Many drivers have trouble with their knees.” Peddling cyclos is hard work and requires a lot of energy, especially at the beginning of each trip. When there is heavy load the driver needs to walk and push the vehicle first to get it moving. Then, he will jump onto the seat and peddle strongly with his legs to work up speed. Many goods-carrying cyclos at construction sites need two laborers to get the vehicle moving. One of them pushes it at the rear and the other pulls from the front. At the front of the vehicle are two iron hooks for the front man to pull. These hooks can be slid back under the vehicle when they are not used. Xich lo cho hang may be powered by a motorcyclist who rides alongside the vehicle, pushing it forward with his foot. This is another way to save the cyclo drivers’ energy. The cyclo driver only controls the direction and uses the motorcycle’s engine for power.
Working in this job, Anh Bong, has no days off. Through rain and very cold nights, he needs to come out and wait for work. He and his fellow drivers think that they have been able to earn their living up to now because of their regular employers. These employers give them jobs. If there is no work, there is no money. The drivers must work for them. Anh Bong said, "My employers trust me. I have worked for them for so long. I have never cheated them and they have treated me well. We trust each other." Some drivers said, "Nowadays, there are so many small taxi trucks (xe tai nho). If the employers use those services, we must die. But they don't. They still give us jobs." One driver said, "Because of them, I can get money to support my family. I need to come out and work every day. No days off, rain or cold, day and night. If I need to return home in the countryside, I must tell my regular employers in advance. They will find a replacement." As one driver said, at present, the competition between small pickup taxi companies and goods-carrying cyclos is fierce and it is forcing the small peddled vehicles out of business. The operating times and areas of these pickup trucks are unlimited while cyclos can only work in the evening and at night. Only a few customers still use
cyclos to deliver their products. The number of cyclo users is decreasing daily. The remaining cyclo drivers have long-term relations with these employers who still keep using their services.

In a similar way, the cyclo drivers at Le Duan Street said that they feel they owe a debt to their employers. In these drivers’ view, the employers provide them job opportunities. If not for their employers, they would have no jobs. Anh Tuan who is 45 years old and from Nam Dinh Province, peddles a goods-carrying cyclo at Le Duan Street where many furniture shops are located. His main employers are all shopkeepers. When someone buys a piece of furniture such as a bed, a mattress, or a sofa, from one of these shops, delivery to the customers’ house is made by his cyclo.

Anh Tuan said, “In the past, there were many goods-carrying cyclos (xích lo cho hàng) around here. After small truck taxis (xe tai nho) were introduced, they beat us. Now, there is only me and another man peddling cyclos around here.” He added, “These shop owners (chu nha) are all my employers. When they want to deliver items, they will hire us to do so. They know us and we also know all of them very well. They are very kind. Sometimes, they gave me clothes as well. Because of them, I still keep peddling a cyclo here.”
Working as a goods-carrying cyclo driver appears to be a stable job. Whenever anyone buys furniture, the drivers will get a job. Yet, because of the law banning cyclos during the rush hours and fierce competition between small truck taxis and goods-carrying cyclos as discussed above, the jobs have become less stable. Due to both factors, the number of goods-carrying cyclos is decreasing and it is very hard to find them in the inner city of Hanoi. In this street, as Anh Tuan notes, only he and his friend are still delivering goods by cyclo. Anh Tuan said, “My income is unstable. Someday I have two or three trips, other days I have none. Each time I get around 25,000-30,000 VND (US $1.60-1.95) depending on the destination. Sometimes, I receive tips from the buyers as well.” Chi Thin, a buyer who bought a new mattress from the furniture shop, told me that after she paid for her mattress, the seller said, “The item will be sent to your house in the evening by cyclo. No-one is available at the moment.” “Around 8 o’clock, the mattress was sent to my house by cyclo,” Chi Thin said.

These cyclo drivers always work in the evening; however, sometimes they peddle in the afternoon. Anh Tuan told me that because of the law banning cyclos, many xich lo cho hang prefer to work in the
evening. Nonetheless some still peddle in the afternoon. But no one dares to work during the prohibited time. If the police arrest them, they need to pay a high fine and that amount of money cannot be claimed from employers. He said, "For me, I will deliver items in the evening. But after lunch might be a good time too. I do not peddle between 4pm and 5pm. If I am arrested, it is a big problem. The money I earn that entire day may not be enough to pay the fine".

The drivers and their employers

The relationship between these goods-carrying cyclo drivers and their employers is very close. It is similar to that of the cyclo drivers who work for a regular employer to take their children to school. As many of the drivers of both groups mentioned, they feel that they are in debt to their employers. They can earn money to support themselves and their families because of the kindness of their employers who provide them job opportunities. Thus, these loyal drivers can be considered as "clients" who return services to "patrons" (employers and regular customers) in the manner of patron-client relationships. According to James C. Scott's definition, this pattern involves a dyadic (two-person) exchange relationship in which an individual of higher socio-economic status (patron) uses his own influence and resources to provide protection or benefits, or both, for a person of lower status (client). And the client offers general support and assistance including personal services to the patrons (1972: 92). Scott indicated three significant features of patron-client relations. The first is an unequal status of roles in the dyadic relationship. The second is the personal, "face to face" quality of the relationships. Thirdly, the reciprocities create trust and affection between the partners: the longer the continuing pattern of reciprocity, the more solid the patron-
client bond (Scott 1972: 93-95).

This definition can be applied to the relationships between these cyclo drivers and their employers. Frequently these relationships have developed from an initial business relationship after which employers have become regular customers. Cyclo drivers like Anh Tuan, Anh Bong are willing to assist their employers to deliver goods. This is not simply because of the money to be earned from a trip but because they want to retain a good relationship between themselves and their employers. They hope that their patrons will offer them benefits in the future. Even though they might want to take a day off, they cannot. From the employers' point of view, the employers also trust the drivers and continue to use their services because they are reliable. These drivers work for them for a long time. There is inequality here too. Their client drivers are poor and lack opportunities to work in other fields. Trust and positive emotional ties slowly develop an element of mercy into the relationships. Even though the employers might hire small truck taxis for delivery, they still keep using the services of the cyclo drivers. The close relationship is reinforced through gifts such as extra money, clothes, used electric appliances, and others that the patrons give to clients for special events. It confirms a close relationship between them. The patron-client pattern characterises the exchange relationship not only between goods-carrying cyclo drivers and their regular customers, but also between the personal cyclo drivers and their employers as well.

On the contrary, the relationships between cyclo drivers in tourist cyclo companies and their foreign passengers have not developed according to a patron-client pattern. The interaction between them lasts a few minutes or a few hours at most. The foreigners do not know the drivers well even though they might have a chance to talk during the tour. The interactions between them are too short to develop into exchange relationships. When the tour ends, the relationship finishes. They have few chances to meet each other again. Furthermore, sometimes the
foreigners might find it difficult to recognize the driver because they may look similar to each other in their identical company uniforms. Thus, the relationship between them is on the whole impersonal and lacking affection or intimacy. The divers also concentrate on being back in the queue, ready for the next job, not about establishing a relationship with their foreign passengers. The fares from the next job are more attractive and certain than spending a long time developing patron-client relations with them. For these drivers it is more important to observe the rules and working procedures in their companies than establish such relations of reciprocity for it is these former that guarantee them a secure regular income. For some drivers, pride in belonging to the company is more significant than attachments they may develop with their passengers.

This is quite different from the cyclo drivers who work for a regular employer and seek to create and maintain long-term relationships with them. Likewise, xich lo tu nhan drivers know that the way to make their income stable is to get and retain regular customers. For this reason, Anh Duyet, Son, and many xich lo tu nhan, even though they know little English try to communicate with their foreign passengers. And sometimes they succeed and these become regular customers. Many foreign tourists usually stay in Hanoi for a couple of days and then visit other cities. However, some stay longer. In the short period of a trip, if the drivers can develop a relationship with them it may be that tomorrow they will get more work from them. Therefore, these drivers try to make conversations and good friendships with their passengers during a trip as well as offering them services on the following days. If they are lucky, a good relationship improves and helps them to be private cyclo drivers like Anh Lap. Because of this, these drivers try to create relationships with many foreigners in order to make sure that they might get some regular passengers. Notwithstanding their endeavours, they may or may not succeed. If a regular relationship is developed their income will be more secure. Even though they may fail, they have nothing to lose.
Chapter 5

Living in Hanoi: A New Life in Town

Introduction

A cyclo driver’s life is mainly spent in two places, in the streets and at their place of accommodation. Life in the streets was explained in the previous chapter. We came to understand the ways in which each type of cyclo driver struggled to survive. In this chapter, I will explore the drivers’ lives in their living quarters, which is the other major place they spend their time in the city. As we have already learnt from Chapter 3 these workers are poor. They came from the surrounding provinces of Hanoi to work and earn money. After these migrants enter the city, their immediate task is to seek shelter. The cheap rental accommodation in cities is known as nha tro and seems to be popular with poor immigrants. Two types of nha tro will be distinguished in order to clarify the drivers’ living conditions. I also describe the everyday life of workers, both single and married, in nha tro. The discussion includes social interactions between people, including how they spend their free time after work, what kind of
activities these people usually do, and with whom they often associate. This chapter also explains the social relationships between the married drivers who stay with their wives in the city and their children.

Life in the city seems to be complicated for these drivers. In the streets, they face difficulties with intense competition with other drivers and other vehicles. As for their accommodations, they must stay in cheap housing with few physical or material comforts. The majority of these drivers leave their family behind. Some come to work in the city alone. Some come with their wife and leave their children with their grandparents. In order to save money, I argue, many of them rent a collective room sharing all facilities with other people. Living together in the same room, on the one hand, seems to be beneficial for anyone who might need assistances from others. On the other hand, staying together as a large group of people in the same room for a long time causes conflicts between individuals. These drivers try to avoid conflicts by ignoring some roommates and creating their own group or in-group within the large group. This in-group is usually a small number of people. Sometimes, it might only be one or two close friends with whom they can do the same activities during their free time or discuss their work problems. It might be the driver’s wife if she stays with him in the city. This in-group plays an important role in helping the migrants relieve their tension while working in the city.

"Nha tro" is their "Sofitel"

An "nha tro", or cheap lodging house, is a word that all migrants know very well. When migrants arrive in Hanoi, they need to find a place to stay. If they have no relatives in the city, the nha tro is a last resort for them. Among many types of accommodation in Hanoi, an nha tro is the
cheapest and can be found in many places, especially near bus and railway stations, hospitals and big markets. A large number are found at the left and right wings of Chuong Duong Bridge. Li Tana (1996: 41) noted that the number of *nha tro* in cities dramatically increased since the government launched a *doi moi* policy in 1986. *Nha tro* are precisely a product of rural-urban migration, which gained prominence in 1991. In May 1992, the city administration passed the law that prohibited the cyclo drivers sleeping in the open air or in public places. Since then, cheap lodging houses have flourished.

Pham Quoc Truong¹, a policeman, said that in Hanoi there are many places that the *nha tro* are located. The main areas are mostly close to the laborers' working places such as the area around the Long Bien and the Chuong Duong Bridge. This area is close to Dong Xuan and Bac Qua market where the agricultural products are loaded/unloaded and close to a bus terminal as well. It is easy for the workers to find a job in this area and go back and forth between Hanoi and their home villages. Nga Tu So, in the south of Hanoi, is another area which provides cheap housing for rent. This area is close to Ha Dong bus station. In Cau Giay area, Buoi market area, Gia Lam area and Giap Bat bus station, there are also many *nha tro*.

Bach Dang Street on the left side of the Red River is an area where the majority of cyclo drivers reside. This street is less than one-kilometer from Hanoi's central business area. In a short time, the drivers can peddle their cyclos and reach the old town area. In the past, during the rainy season, this area flooded annually. The local authorities decided to build a big soil dike to protect flooding into the city and also built many tunnels and gates under this dike. People could walk in and out through it between the city and their homes outside. During the flood season, all gates were closed. People outside this dike were evacuated into the city leaving their houses empty. Now this soil dike has become a street

---

¹ Interview, 15 September 2003.
named Tran Khanh Du and water no longer floods this area since the government built a large dam in Hoa Binh Province.

Both sides of Bach Dang Street now are crowded with cheap lodgings. Many migrants from the countryside group themselves and rent rooms here. Son pointed at a group of 10-12 unskilled laborers on the sidewalk. He said, “They came from Thanh Hoa province. People from that province are very poor and the land is very dry. In summer, they cannot plant any crops because of the shortage of water. They migrate to find jobs in large cities and return to their villages in the rainy season. People from this province usually work as construction laborers. We call them “general porters” or nguoi cuu van. They do not want to work as cyclo driver or xe om driver.” Son also said, “Perhaps they are too poor to have enough money to buy a cyclo or a motorcycle.”

People living in the nha tro have the same bad conditions. Because most migrants want to save money, they need to group together and stay in one room. It is a common pattern that people from the same village will stay close together. Sharing a room can reduce the migrants’ cost of living in a large city like Hanoi. The rent depends on the number of people and the location. The large rooms might be cheaper than the smaller ones. All facilities are shared such as the toilet, the kitchen area, even the bed. No private wardrobes are provided. The tenants need to be responsible for their own property and their own losses. No one takes responsibility to clean the room and the communal toilet. Most of the nha tro consists merely of a room with a sling bed made of rattan or a board and a light. In order to serve many tenants, the owner of the house will spread boards and mats on a long bed on which tenants sleep. In many places, 10 people sleep together on a long bed. It depends on the size of the room. The migrants work very hard all day so they need only a place to sleep. Thus, they accept these uncomfortable conditions.
Nowadays, nha tro can be divided into two types. One is called "nha tro phong rieng" a small private cubicle for a couple, which is more expensive than nha tro tap the. It costs between 200,000-300,000 VND (US $12.90-19.35) per month. The other one is "nha tro tap the" and is normally for a single share a big long bed with others in the same room. It costs the drivers around 60,000-120,000 VND (US $3.87-7.74) per month. Both types of nha tro one can be rented for a night or a week.

A small private room (nha tro phong rieng) looks like a cell. Each cell is around 2.00 x 1.50 meters. In the building, each floor is divided into many small cubicles. It is suitable for a husband and wife couple to stay while they are working in the city. The cubicles contain only a light and a bed. Some rooms have one window but some rooms do not, only a door. In some places, long houses are built on the ground in the open space, and bamboo and grass are used for the roof. When it rains the tenants use a plastic sheet to place under the grass roof to protect themselves from water drips. In summer they cannot stay in their cubicles during daytime since it is very hot inside. The toilet needs to be shared with others and the shower is usually located at a well.

The second type of nha tro is a shared room (nha tro tap the). It is common for single laborers to share with other roommates. Son invited me to visit his own shared room. On the way to Son's house, we passed many construction sites but no one was working in the afternoon. They usually worked in the evening until the late at night. The temperature in summer was around 35c-37c with strong sunshine. Even though all laborers looked healthy and strong, they still could not tolerate the high temperature and high humidity of Hanoi's weather. Son peddled his cyclo slowly and carefully turned left from the wide bumpy street into a small narrow alley. Only one cyclo could go through. When two motorcycles come from opposite directions, one must let the other pass. Son turned left and right many times until we saw a group of old houses surrounded by many high buildings.
Two long houses were built facing each other. One house was made from bricks while another was made from wood. Both buildings were one-story high. Between them was an open space for all tenants to use. Obviously, the drivers parked their vehicles in this area during the night. Close to the house was a well for a shower. There was no cement in this area. Many broken bricks were dumped here and there were a lot of puddles. Clothes were hung on the ropes linked between the houses. On the other side of the well was a toilet. Around 30 people shared this toilet with no light and no water tank. Behind the toilet was a kitchen area covered with the same roof. Three charcoal stoves were provided. A lot of soot and ash were spread around.

Figure 5.1 nha tro tap the Photographed by the author, 14 September 2003.
Son’s lodging house was on the northern side and was made from bricks. Another house was made from wood as showed in figure 7.1. No one knew how old these houses were. The color on the wall could not be identified. The roof-tiles were in many colors. Some were broken. We could see the light shining through. Each house was divided into three large rooms. Each room was around 3 x 5 meters. It had a window and an iron door. Under the roof, there were some big holes to ventilate the air. There was no ceiling in the room and a lot of old cobwebs under the roof.

In this area, many one-story houses like Son’ house in this area are going to disappear and are to be replaced with three-four-story buildings. Because of the demand for housing in the city, the investors buy a piece of land and construct a new building with many stories. Each floor is divided into many small rooms (*nha tro phong rieng*) which are rented. These return a higher profit than the smaller income from a few
rooms of the collective houses (*nha tro tap the*). Son said, "If the landlord sells this land, I must find another place to stay."

When I stepped into his room, one man still slept on a reed mat. It was around 2.30 in the afternoon. The temperature was very hot. All cyclo drivers know that at this time there are very few customers. They usually return home and get some sleep or park their vehicles under the tree and take a nap. Around 3.00pm-4.00pm, it is becoming cooler and they will return to work. Tien said, "It is so hot. There are no tourists at noon. People do not go anywhere. So, we usually go back and get some sleep."

A long big bed made from rough wood was put next to the wall. Many old reed mats were laid on it. Seven or eight people slept together on this bed. Some slept on pillows, which were covered with dust. Some used their clothes as a pillow. The mosquito nets were hung to one side on the wall during the daytime. An old electric fan was hung from the ceiling tied by a rope. Their possessions were in metal boxes placed on the shelves, some put under the bed. The everyday clothes were hung on the walls. On the other side of the room there was some free space for a motorbike, parked there as a safety precaution. A small mirror was hung on the wall next to a cup with toothbrushes in it. A small bin was placed close to a door; however, cigarette ashes, pieces of candy paper, matches and others were found on the ground.

Normally these people do not have many clothes. Some have only two or three shirts and two pairs of trousers. Every two or three days, they will do their laundry and dry their clothes outside, usually in the same place where they shower. This is an important strategy of transient single laborers who do not have superfluous things that tie them down. If one visits his room, one might see a sleeping mat, blanket, teapot, two or three small teacups, a bamboo water pipe and one or two changes of clothes. That is all. Tien told Loi's story about the time a foreigner gave
him some clothes. He took those clothes back home and did not give
them to anyone and he still wore the old clothes.

Figure 5.3 In a collective room (*nha tro tap the*).
Photographed by the author, 14 September 2003.

"...There are eight of us living in the same room. We come
from Nam Dinh province," Son told me about his
roommates. "We knew each other before we came here.
Dung is my brother. At first, he came here to work as a
cyclo driver then he switched to drive *xe om* because he
was getting older. Now, he is 47 years old. He gave his
cyclo to me. Loi is 32 years old and has peddled a cyclo for
10 years, since he arrived. Tien also came from the same
village as Loi. They came together and worked as cyclo
drivers until now. Vi used to peddle a cyclo but now he
works as a *xe om* driver. He borrowed money from his
father-in-law to buy a second-hand Chinese motorcycle. My
house is not far from Vi's house. Both families are related.
Another two men are Thang and Nam. They are the same
age (29) and also peddle cyclos. Last is So. He just came
here last week and borrowed his friend's cyclo to work the
night shift."
“Welcome to my Sofitel,” Son said. “Although it looks untidy, this is my “Sofitel”. We pay less than foreigners who stay in gorgeous hotels. Here is the number-one five-star hotel for us like the Sofitel Metropole Hotel,” he said.

**Life in nha tro**

Living together in one room means the drivers can support each other in many matters. Whenever someone needs assistance, their roommates are able to offer support. These workers know one another very well since their days in the countryside. Many of them are relatives and some are schoolmates. They not only know each person’s background but also know their parents and their family very well. Whenever they get into trouble, their roommates can help them. It makes the migrants feel secure. On the other hand, sometimes, staying close in a confined space causes conflicts between roommates especially in a collective house (*nha tro tap the*). When a group of seven to ten people stay together in the same room for a long time, conflicts might occur. They must be endured if they continue to stay in the same room. The main reason is that moving out and finding other accommodation is difficult and creates further problems for them.

Huong told me that he lost money in his room, “A couple of months ago I lost my money at home. I remembered I had 60,000 VND (US $3.87)—three 20,000 banknotes—in my wallet. I put 40,000 VND in my box and went out for dinner. When I returned, my money was gone. I asked everyone in the room. No one knew. It’s terrible! Even though we come from the same village and know each other very well, although we are not relatives. Everybody needs money. Someone might have got into trouble and stole my money but I do not know who.” The story about stealing someone’s money happens frequently. The workers try to protect
their property by not letting their roommates’ friends come into their rooms. And the door is locked when everyone leaves. Huong also said, “We stay together but we do not trust one another.”

To keep their money safe, they deposit it with their landlord. Some drivers give some of their income to their landlord for saving. How often depends on the workers. Some might give money to the landlord every week, every fortnight, or anytime they want to save money. The drivers will ask for their money when they are going to visit their villages or whenever they need money for emergencies. Quy tries to deposit 50,000 VND (US $3.25) each week with his landlord. He said, “It is safer than keeping money myself and it is a good way to save money for my family. Moreover, the landlord will be assured that I have money to pay the rent.” Li Tana (1996: 50) also found in her survey that the migrants tended to keep money with their landlord or with a woman who ran a food shop where they always had their meals. She would keep a record, and it was a service provided free of charge. These workers rarely kept money themselves and they did not put the extra cash into bank accounts or credit unions.

As mentioned above, each shared room might contain up to ten people or more. Even though those people usually know each other before they come to Hanoi, it does not mean they are all close friends. Some men might have two or three close friends to do the same activities. And some might have their close friends stay in other rooms. Obviously, among a large group of drivers who stay in the same place, there are many small sub-groups. And some members of small sub-groups might not be happy with other people from the other groups. However, in Son’s room, serious conflicts have not happened.

One day I had a chance to invite these cyclo drivers to share their experiences. It was obvious that the newcomers in town preferred to keep silent and listen to others and the man who either made more money or had more
experiences than others in the city would dominate the conversation. For example, Dung was Son's older brother who had been working in Hanoi more than 20 years but he earned less money than Thang who peddled a cyclo at the Hilton Hotel. Thang also could speak English a little bit. When the conversation related to tactics of negotiating a fare with foreigners, he would dominate the conversation and disagree with other people's views. Dung who was the oldest among them, only listened to Thang even though he disagreed with him. Dung told me later that Thang always boasted. Whereas So, who just came to Hanoi a week ago, did not raise any questions and only listened. Other participants shared their experiences; however, Thang who seemed to control the conversation refuted his roommates' ideas.

Living in the collective rooms (nha tro tap the), they need to tolerate conflicts amongst other roommates. If someone disagrees with another person's ideas, he needs to ignore them in order to avoid serious conflicts. Thereby, many of them have a small number of close friends or buddies. These buddies are always people who have the same interests and participate in the same activities, either in the working places or where they live. It seems to me that the buddy is usually a person close in age and more likely working in the same career. If one works in a tourist cyclo company, his buddies usually work in the same company. And if one works as a private cyclo driver, so do his buddies. For instance, Loi and Tien who came from the same village are buddies. They usually do the same activities together and work in the same company. Thang and Nam are also alike. They are the same age and work in the same hotel. Vi and Son are relatives but they work in different jobs. However, Vi used to work as a cyclo driver.

The married laborers who stay in nha tro phong rieng have simple lives. They use their cubicles only as a place to sleep. Because it is private and very small, no one is allowed to come into their room. Whenever they have guests come visit, they usually have a conversation outside their rooms. Generally, they talk in the open space outside their
Living in Hanoi: A New Life in Town

rooms, at regular tea stalls, or food shops (more details in the following section). Likewise, the problem of stolen property is less likely to happen. No one can get into other people’s rooms. When there is no one inside, the door will be locked. And only the husband and wife, not even their landlord, have the door keys.

Moreover, staying in a private room (nha tro phong rieng) causes less conflict with others. The husband and the wife are the only occupants. No other people can stay in the tiny room except their children. Their neighbors; however, seem to have a similar lifestyle. They usually return to their rooms in the evening, eat and sleep in their own room. They might associate with others sometimes; however, if they feel uncomfortable with either their workmates or their neighbors, they can share their feeling with their spouse. It can relieve the laborers’ tension during their stay in the city.

Dining in & Dining out

Living economically in the nha tro does not mean that the laborers cook every meal for themselves. Men who stay by themselves in the city prefer eating out with their mates at their regular food shops rather than cooking for themselves. Nearby their lodging houses, there are various food shops for the daily workers to select such food as noodles, rice, beverages—both tea stalls and beer shops—and even fresh food for anyone who wants to cook at homes. It is very convenient for them. However, the female migrants tend to buy fresh food and cook at home. In nha tro, there is a common rule that the tenants are not allowed to cook in their rooms especially nha tro tap the. The landlord provides a common kitchen, usually at the rear of the houses. Nonetheless, in the case of nha tro phong rieng, some property owners might allow the
tenants to cook in the room if the landlords do not provide a common kitchen area for the immigrants.

![Figure 5.4](image)

**Figure 5.4** A cooking area. Photographed by the author, 14 September 2003.

Quy and his wife rent *nha tro phong rieng* close to Chuong Duong Bridge. Their landlord allows the migrants to cook in their cubicles; however, the tenants who have electric appliances are charged 500 VND (US $0.032) for each item. If someone has a rice cooker and an electric pot, he needs to pay an extra charge 1,000 VND (US $0.064) each month. Because they want to save money, these migrants who stay as a couple like Quy and his wife tend to eat regularly at home. Eating and cooking by themselves at home is cheaper than eating at food shops. Quy said, "I always eat water-morning-glory vegetables. They are so cheap, only 500 VND (US $0.032) for a big bundle. My wife often boils them. We can cook soup with them. And there is no need to buy rice. I bring it from the countryside when we return home to see my kids. On the way back to the city, we usually bring rice." Sometimes; however, he might dine out with his friends at food shops nearby.
In Quy's cubicle, there is a tiny space at the end of the bed for cooking food. He has a few cooking utensils. It is quite common for all migrants to own some property.

A small pot was standing on a gas stove. A pair of chopsticks was still in the pot. On the right side of the stove, there were a few sauce bottles. Nearby was a small rice cooker. A couple of bowls were nearby. It looked like someone had just finished eating in this room.

Couples might eat out sometimes. Whenever they have friends/relatives visiting their cubicles and want to share food, it is common for them to eat at shops nearby. For example, Quy and his wife usually go out and eat at his friends' shop. The sellers also came from Hung Yen Province which is the same province as Quy. He is given credit for his meals and pays later. The food seller's house in the countryside is not far from Quy's house. Quy said, "Even though we are not related, we know her and her family very well. In my village we know everyone." Thus, when she goes back home to visit her family, Quy always asks her to stop by his house and let Quy's family know he and his wife are fine. In the same way, when Quy returns his village, she also asks him to visit her mother. As discussed in Chapter 3, the close relationship among these people from the same commune plays an important role in helping immigrant security. In case of emergency, they can have someone to rely upon.

The male workers who stay alone in the city like Dung and others, usually eat at small food shops regularly. Even though cooking at home might cost less, they need to have cooking utensils. Eating out at food shops near their accommodation is more convenient for them. Every time I had dinner with these drivers, they always took me to noodle shops. Noodles seem to be the favorite food for them. Tien told me that, "In winter, the weather is cool. Eating hot noodle soup can warm our body
and noodle shops are easily found everywhere.” Loi said, “We often come and eat noodles here. The owner, Chu nha, gives us a huge serving and it is so cheap, only 4,000 VND (US $0.25). You cannot find as big a bowl of noodles at this price in the city. She knows we are poor so she gives us a lot. After we finish noodles here we will have a cup of tea over there. That is my friend’s stall. He also came from Nam Dinh and works as a xe om driver. His wife opened a tea stall selling tea and cigarettes to support her family.”

The daily food expenditure includes drinks and tobacco for cyclo drivers is about one-third of their income or around 14,000-20,000 VND (US $0.90-1.30) per day on average. These drivers need to spend money for breakfast, lunch and dinner. During the working day, they might stop at tea stalls on the roadside and have a rest, sipping tea and sometimes smoking a bamboo water pipe. These workers usually smoke tobacco more than cigarettes. One driver said, “Smoking tobacco is cheaper than smoking cigarettes. One pack of tobacco is around 2,000 VND (US $0.12), it lasts for a week.” The total food expenditure does not cost the laborers much when compared with their incomes of each day. However, not all migrants, especially women, spend at this level. Expenditure on food and drink by female laborers is very low and different from those of males. They often cook at home more than eating out (Ha Thi Phuong and Ha Quang Ngoc, 2001:122).

In the evening, most of the beer shops were crowded with customers. The loud noise could be heard from outside. It seemed like no one was listening. Some men talked across their tables. Many peanut peels were left on the floor and on the tables. The customers went in and out all the time.

Nam and Thang --his buddies-- were drinking beer at a regular beer shop. But today they were dressed differently from the previous day. They wore white long-sleeved shirts and a black tie. Their neckties were loose at their chest. The shirtsleeves were rolled up. It was unusual for them to
wear a white shirt with a necktie. They talked out loud to each other. The other beer lovers also talked very loudly. It sounded like everyone was shouting at everyone else. Nam saw me walking past the beer shop and invited me to join his table. He said, "We got an extra job today and are having some beer before going home." I asked them, "What job?" "We peddled cyclos for an engagement ceremony (an hoi). The groom gave us extra money," they replied.

The drivers might want to relax with their friends after a long day. Whenever they get extra income, either from extra jobs or from lotto wins, they might get together with their close friends and drink beer before returning to their rooms. A couple of glasses of beer and a chat with friends seem to be a reward for these daily workers. Nonetheless, it does not mean they will have a glass of beer everyday. If they do not have enough money, they might pass beer shops without saying a greeting to anyone there.

Because these workers have low and often irregular incomes, they tend to live on a day-to-day basis. These workers both male and female are forced to buy food and everyday needs in small quantities. Every day in the afternoon around 4.00-5.00pm at the Bach Dang Street where the majority of immigrants live, there are many mobile street markets. In the Vietnamese language, they are called cho coc, which means "frog market". Some markets are quite large and crowded with people. Some are small markets. Many fresh food hawkers place their food on plastic sheets. Some sellers occupy the edge of the street to do their business. Some vendors place their bamboo baskets on the street and sell their goods such as pork, meat, and many kinds of vegetables for anyone who wants to cook for themselves at home. Everyday goods such as soap, plastic cups, toothbrushes, clothes and so on are also found here. The sellers also are migrants who work to support their family. Some come with their husbands. Some come alone. The sellers know that the majority of residents here are poor people. They earn a daily income.
Thus, the price of items here is much cheaper than in the city. One seller said, “These workers do not have much money. They only buy a few items at a time. Some earn less than 10,000 VND (US $0.65) a day. I cannot charge high prices. They have little money.” Another one said, “We are also from countryside. We don’t take advantage of these people.”

**Family in town or ... what else?**

As mentioned earlier, the majority of laborers who come to Hanoi and work as cyclo drivers are mostly from the surrounding provinces of Hanoi such as Hung Yen, Ha Tay, Thai Binh, Ha Nam, Nam Dinh, and Ninh Binh Province. From their villages to Hanoi, it might take less than four hours by bus, especially from those provinces. It is very convenient for the immigrants to catch a bus from their hometown and alight at Hanoi bus station. Furthermore, they can return to visit their family whenever they want, then return to work in Hanoi the next day. Some xe om drivers who live in Ha Tay Province can return home everyday; however, they prefer to share a room with their friends during the working day and return home on the weekend.

Many of these drivers are already married and they have to leave their family in the countryside. A survey on migration into the cities conducted by Nguyen Huu Dung also confirmed this evidence. This research also noted that the number of women who migrated with their husbands and family has reduced. On the contrary, the number of only either husband or wife coming to Hanoi alone has increased (2000: 38). However, the situation of a couple who come to work in the city to support their family still exists. When both of them come to work in the city, the children usually stay with their grandparents. There are a few
opportunities for children to be with their parents in the city. This happens only when the children finish school or no one can take of them in the village. Son said, “Children need to go to school and I cannot afford their education’s expenses in the city. You know, even though they study in the countryside, I need to send at least 50,000 VND (US $3.22) for each child every month.”

Each month, these workers take turns with their roommates to visit their homes. When one goes, the others frequently ask him to stop at their home and let their family know they are fine. Some might go with another close friend. Some go alone. When they return home, these drivers usually take a couple of days off, except during the harvest season. At that time they might spend longer than usual with their family because harvesting rice is a hard job for women to do alone. Many drivers, thus, decide to stop peddling cyclos in Hanoi and go back home to help their wives. During their vacations in the village, these men often help their wife to take care of the children. For example, they might take their children to school, play with them and visit their relatives. It is quite different for female migrants when they return home; they need to take all responsibilities and do all housework including working in the rice fields and taking care of all family members as well (Pham Van Bich, 1999; Hy Van Luong, 1992; Vu Manh Loi, 1991).

Mrs. Na is a good example. Her husband is a cyclo driver. She followed her husband to work in Hanoi five years ago selling plastic sandals. She works from 8am to 7pm everyday and earns around 300,000-500,000 VND (US $19.35-32.25) profit a month. The money is spent on rent, everyday expenses, capital for her business, her children’s education and savings. Besides, she gives some to help her relatives. Mrs. Na always returns home more often than her husband because she needs to take care of her children and her aging parents. Every summer, she will stay longer in the city. She does not need to go home as frequently because it is school holidays. She said, “I came here to help
my husband earn money for my children's education. They need more money each year. In my home village, there was no work available. So I decided to follow my husband to find a job in Hanoi. Now I am 32 year old and I have been involved in this job for nearly five years. In summer time, the children do not go to school. They have grown up enough to take care of themselves. Sometimes, I might take the children to Hanoi. That way, we can stay closer to my children."

I had a chance to meet Quy's children during the summer in Hanoi. The boy was named Tuan. He was seven years old. His daughter was called Ly and she was six years old. Both of them came to Hanoi for the first time. They wanted to see how beautiful Hanoi was; how different Hanoi and their hometown were and they also wanted to go to the zoo and to take a look around Hanoi city. During one month in Hanoi, they had a chance to go to the zoo only once because Quy and his wife were busy working. The children spent their time reading cartoons in their parents' cubicle or sometimes played together. They did not go out and play with other children because there were no others laborers' children around there. And because they were new to town, no Hanoi children played with them. Thus, they felt lonely in the city, even though they stayed with their parents. They only joined their family life in the evening after their parents returned home.

The drivers' wives work in a variety of jobs including as market sellers and junk traders, collecting old newspapers and cardboard, etc. Some work on construction sites. Some work as kitchen hands in food shops. However, mostly they work as food venders, selling fresh vegetable, fruits, bread, and others. Some might carry a pole with two baskets on their shoulders, walking in and out small alleys selling their goods. Some sell lottery tickets or newspapers. These street vendors work from early morning until late at night. They have to walk more than ten kilometers everyday. One woman who sells newspaper told me that she gets up before 5am everyday in order to get the newspapers from
her agent and then starts walking until all the newspapers are sold. Each day, she can get around 7,000–10,000 VND (US $0.45–0.64) profit. They work very hard all day and get a low income. It seems to me that they are willing to do any jobs, no matter how hard the work, in order to get money to support their families. Ha Thi Phuong and Ha Quang Ngoc (2001: 58) also found that these workers have little capital and education. They tend to do any kind of job that does not need much capital, knowledge or complicated skills; however, those jobs require their endurance.

Likewise, Mrs. Loan who sells vegetables at 19-20 Market needs to get up early in the morning to buy fresh vegetables from villagers who sell them wholesale at Bac Qua Market. Then, she takes all the vegetables on her husband’s cyclo to other retail markets. Everyday, she has to work from early morning until 5.00pm. She spends all day at the market selling goods. Many of her friends, except the neighbors from the same village, are vegetable sellers in the market. After the market closes, she returns to her room and cooks food for herself and her husband and then goes to bed. That is her everyday life. Dung, her husband, often takes her to the market in the morning. Then, he starts working. He usually waits for customers in front of the Melia Hotel close to 19-20 Market which is his wife’s working place. Around 5.00pm everyday, he takes his wife home. This is everyday life for both Loan and Dung. They work every day without holidays.

A bachelor driver like Huong does not worry much about his family, as his aim is to save money for his dream. He has the dream to open a small shop repairing motorcycles in his village. Now, he is 25 years old and has not yet married. He said, “If I have a lot of money I will marry whenever I want. If I have much money, I will propose to the most beautiful girl I meet.” Although his parents want him to marry, he wants to make money first. He also said, “In my village and around it, there is no work. People there work in the rice fields. I do not want to be a farmer. Thus, after I finished my military obligation, I decided to go to Hanoi. I
have a greater chance to find a job there than in other cities.” Each time
when he returns home, he usually associates with his friends rather than
staying at his home. He said, “I sleep at my friends’ houses more often
than at my home.”

The life of a bachelor is totally different from a married couples’
life. Son is an example of a man who was already married and left his
family behind at home when he migrated. With the poor conditions in his
family, he decided to work alone in many cities before settling down in
Hanoi. He said, “Working here (in Hanoi) is better than in other cities
because Hanoi is close to my family’s hometown. I can catch a bus and
return home very easily.” He always goes back home every month and
takes money back home for his children’s education and family’s
expenses. His wife needs to take care of their children and Son’s parents.
She also wishes to help Son working and keeping money in the city but
with her filial obligations, she cannot. Hence, Son decided to work in the
city alone. His parents advanced age also requires him to visit home
more often than his roommates. Son said, “I visit my family at least once
a month. In some months I go home two or three times because I am
worried about my mother’s health. Nam Dinh is not too far. I can reach
home within three hours by bus. It is more convenient now.”

Each time he returns home, he must have at least 70,000-100,000
VND (US $4.50-6.45) for a round-trip fare and for family expenses. That
amount of money is about two or three days’ earnings. Son said, “In my
wallet, there is usually at least 50,000 VND (US $3.22). In case of
emergency, I might borrow from my brother, get on a bus, and return
home.” When I asked whether he buys anything to bring back home, he
said: “If I get a lot of money, I will buy clothes or anything else that I
cannot find in my village such as small electric appliances which are not
too expensive. But mostly I take money home.” He said, “I need to keep
money for my kids’ education especially at the beginning of the school
term. There are a lot of expenses such as school fees, books and
stationery, uniforms, extra money for teachers and my children's expenses. Sometimes, the school asks the parents for money to repair classrooms or support student's activities at school and I need to contribute."

Life in the large city is not easy for many workers. Their families are often separated. Husbands work in the city whereas the wife takes care of the children in the countryside. In many cases, husband and wife came to work in the city and leave their children with the grandparents in the villages. It seems that moving and working in the city is breaking up families. The parents are in the city while the children are in the countryside. Their times together are few. The separation of family members, either migrants in the city or children in the countryside, might create social problems. A study conducted by Ha Thi Phuong and Ha Quang Ngoc (2001:169-170) found that even though fathers and mothers take turns to go back and take care of their children in rural areas, the children still suffer from many disadvantages. They lack parents' love and care. Sometimes, the grandparents are old and are less able to care for children. Many young children have to leave their parents when they are one or two years old. For instance, one female migrant from Nam Dinh Province had to leave her three children at home. "The greatest pain I have suffered was in the first few days in Hanoi." One man said, "When my wife comes to Hanoi, my children always miss their mother, they care less about their education." Moreover, these family separations cause problems not only for female migrants and children but also for the husband at home. In many cases, husbands who stay alone in the countryside are depressed. Some might have no job and gamble and drink by using the hard-earned money of his wife.

The immigrants recognize that working in large cities provides better rewards and more chances to get a job than in the countryside or nearby villages. As discussed in Chapter 3, among their reasons to move, these people need money to support their families especially for
children’s education. They also cannot afford the education in the city. Besides, due to legal limitations (discussed in chapter 7), their children cannot attend school in the city. However, they still prefer to have their family in the city but in reality they have to decide who needs to be in the city and how to sustain relationships at a distance.

**Leisure activities**

Cyclo drivers work seven days a week, from sunrise until late at night, with no days off. They stop working only when they get sick. During their stay in the city, they spend their time either in the streets or at their nha tro. Even though they know all the famous tourist places in the city, they have few chances to relax there with their families. Many workers have never stepped inside these places. After waking up everyday, they need to work all day long. They start working in the morning and go back to their accommodation in the evening, sleep, and then start working again the next morning. Their life in the city seems to be monopolized with working.

These people work so hard because of the pressure to earn money. Everything in the city costs money such as a rent, daily food and personal expenses. Those with children need a lot of money to educate their children and provide for their families. Minh, a 35 years old cyclo driver, said that, “If I had had money, I would not have come here. At my home in the countryside, I can get fish from the ponds. I have rice in my fields, but I do not have money for my kids, or for my wife to buy other things.” As a result of these needs, nearly all their time in the city is occupied working. However, at the end of the day, the drivers always associate with their close friends. They might talk about their work on that
day but the common topic is about earning money. Smiles indicate a good day. If he shakes his head that means it has been an unlucky day.

Cyclo drivers seem always worried about their income, especially if they have children of school age. Getting together and sharing their experiences with their close friends in the city helps them to relieve the tension. I found that the drivers usually participate with their close friends in activities such as dining out, smoking tobacco, sipping tea or drinking alcohol together.

At draft beer shops, *quan bia hoi*, which are plentiful everywhere in Hanoi, the price of beer varies depending upon the location and quality of beer. However, the cheapest ones are located near the workers' accommodation. Every beer shop is crowded with beer lovers. Some would come in without ordering anything. A minute later, the beer seller would pour them a glass of beer. It seems to be a custom that everyone in the beer shops drinks beer. If the customers want some snacks, they order them later. When new customers step into the shops, they are usually greeted by many people inside the shop. Some are invited to join a table. If the newcomer is a close friend of the drinkers, –it is a labor tradition to drink beer together-- the men invite the newcomer to sip their beer before ordering a new glass for the newcomer. And if the newcomer is younger than them, the younger must greet the older men first. It was common to see the newcomers sipping other people's beer and greeting many people by going from table to table. It looked like they were regulars.

Smoking cigarettes or bamboo water pipes and sipping tea are the most favorite activities for these drivers. They cost them very little. After work, they might relax by drinking tea, smoking, and talking with their friends. Places next to the tourist cyclo company parking areas are good locations for tea sellers to occupy for their businesses. Whenever the drivers feel thirsty, they might buy some tea there. Especially after the tours end, the drivers usually go directly to these stalls for a couple
glasses of tea. One glass of tea costs the drivers only 500 VND (US $0.03). At all these stalls, the sellers will provide a bamboo water pipe for anyone who wants to smoke. Smokers put a pinch of their own tobacco into a hole and set it alight. After one finishes smoking, the pipe will be passed around for others to smoke. Some drivers might have their own pipe. Whenever they want to smoke, they might stop peddling for a while and enjoy their tobacco.

A group of drivers sat on small chairs, some sat on their heels around a tea stall. One driver opened a bottle of candy and took some out. Some cyclo men were talking to others. One was taking out a bamboo water pipe for smoking. Some men sipped tea. The tea seller, an old woman, was busy making hot tea for new customers. In front of her were many old boxes and different-sized jars of candy, biscuits, and various kinds of snacks. The drivers could open any of the boxes or jars and take anything out. They only told the woman what snacks they had consumed. It looked like a self-service tea stall. The drivers sipped tea and turned to smoking tobacco. When one man finished smoking a bamboo water pipe, the pipe would be passed to other drivers. It seemed like that pipe had been smoked by the majority of drivers there. One driver said to me, "A bamboo water pipe makes tobacco taste better and it does not make my throat sore."

While waiting for customers at company parking places, the drivers might relax by taking a nap in their own vehicles. Some might group and play chess. Some talk with their friends or read newspapers. According to the company's rules, the drivers are forbidden to drink alcohol while waiting for customers. Thus, no one breaks this rule. Anh Thu, a manager, said: "Drinking alcohol at the parking place is a serious prohibition because our customers are foreign tourists. They came to Hanoi and wanted to take a cyclo on tour. Our service must be the best. Drinking alcohol creates a negative image to the customers. We want the
customers to return to Hanoi again. They can drink after work at home, but not while working here."

Most of the workers do not have their own radio or TV in their cubicles. Every morning and evening they listen to news via speakers mounted on the electric poles provided by the local authorities. Some houses can hear clearly while some cannot. Dung, 32 years old shoe shiner, is another worker who listens to the radio regularly. He told me that only 5,000 foreigners came to Hanoi this month. (April 2003). I asked him how he knew this. He replied, "I heard from the public radio." And he pointed at a speaker on the electric pole. "The foreigners are afraid of the SARS outbreak in Hanoi," Dung said. These workers have fewer opportunities to watch television because they do not have TVs in their lodgings and there are no public televisions available. They can watch TV at food shops during their meals. And they need to watch the same program that others are watching. These laborers are not allowed to turn on the television or to change channels. One day I saw a laborer ask a shop owner to change the TV program but the owner denied his request. Many times, the workers requested if the TV could be turned on while they were drinking beer. Sometimes their requests were granted but many times not. The owner always said, "Nothing interesting at the moment. Don’t watch!" However, when I asked, my requests were always granted. It seems to me that the laborers are treated as second-class citizens in the city.

The cyclo drivers also have few chances to read newspapers. Many of them can read but hardly write, as mentioned in Chapter 3. They might get an old newspaper from their customers and have a chance to read it at the parking places. When one finishes, others might borrow it to read. Even though the local newspaper costs around 1,200-1,500 VND (US $0.07-0.1) each, it is not necessary for their everyday life. As mentioned above, they can listen to local news on the public radio every morning and evening. Another way to catch up on the news is to listen or
discuss it with their workmates. However, the issues in which these people are most interested are everyday activities such as news about tourists, how to deal with policemen, new traffic laws, earning a living, and their relatives’ news both in the city and in the countryside.

The drivers who stay with their wives spend their free time talking with their wife and neighbors. They do not eat out unless they have friends coming to visit. It is usual for husbands and wives to eat together alone. After finishing their work, the wife usually prepares food for dinner while the husband might relax himself with hot tea and tobacco. After dinner, it is time for bed. Like all these migrant workers, they usually go to bed very early because they need to get up early in morning. The drivers and their wives return to their home villages frequently, not for leisure, but to take care of their children. Only rarely will both parents return home together. However, on special occasions such as New Year Day both of them will return home. Quy said, “I miss my children very much but I need to keep working for their education. I want them to study to the highest level possible. If my wife comes to visit them, I stay here to keep earning working. In summer, I will bring my children here. They want to visit the zoo in Hanoi.”

Quy and his wife have been working in Hanoi for almost ten years. Besides working each day, they have little time to go anywhere. Even museums, tourist attractions, shopping malls, convenience stores or supermarkets in Hanoi are out of their reach. They know where they are located yet they have no idea about those places. Everyday, Quy peddles his cyclo in the old quarter to earn money from tourists. His wife also sells fruits and vegetables in a market. If they stop working, they will have no income on that day. “Money is hard to get. We need to keep earning it for our children and our future,” Quy said.

Because of their concerns about money, all of these workers are forced to work extremely hard, morning to night, without any holidays. Only after the day is done, when they return to their rooms, can they
Living in Hanoi: A New Life in Town

relax. At this time, men who stay on their own in the city usually hang out with their close friends, doing the same activities whereas the married men spend their leisure time with their wives. Talking, sipping tea, and smoking tobacco are the most favorite activities for these drivers because they are not expensive. These are the ways to relieve their tension more or less, while working in the city.
Chapter 6

Cyclos in The Eyes of Hanoians

Introduction

One day after we returned from the nha tro, Son took me down a shortcut to avoid the evening rush hour. He turned left and right, in and out of many side streets until we were on a main street. I asked him, "Can you peddle on this street?" "No, we need to stay on this street for awhile. After this intersection we will turn right and be on the side street again," he replied. While we waited for the green traffic light, I saw a young pupil sitting on the rear seat of his father's motorbike and looking at us. He gazed at me a long time. After the green light changed, his father's motorbike slowly moved on but he still looked at me. I asked Son why the kid looked at us like that. Son did not answer the question. He peddled the cyclo silently. When we turned right into the side street he said, "The kid was not looking at you, he was looking at me." I asked him why. Son did not reply.

I once heard one Hanoian say, "cyclo men are the lowest class in society except nguoi cuu van (porters or workers)." This sentence expressed a conception of class differences in the city that I did not
understand clearly until I learnt more about urban dwellers' views about cyclo drivers and migrant workers in general. I thought that this person might look down on them because the image of cyclos as old and dirty still persists, even though today it is very hard to find old rickety cyclos in the streets, only xich lo cao cap. What do urban people think about these drivers? Why do some look down on them? And how do these workers respond to local residents' views? This chapter explores these questions.

What follows is an attempt to represent urban people's views toward migrant workers and cyclo drivers. I will elaborate on how mainstream society feels about these people and what the workers' attitudes are in response to those views. I argue that these people (both local residents and the migrants) have conflicts in their mind. The urban dwellers consider laborers from the countryside as a large, strong, and cheap work force who can fill many jobs that are abandoned by city people. Simultaneously they also view these workers as troublemakers who create many social problems during their stay in city. Therefore, they oppose the migrants' entry into the city. As for the laborers, they also feel that many city people try to take advantage of them and treat them as second-class people. However, they have no choice; working in the city means making more money than working in their hometown. Since they need to stay, they have to endure discrimination in the city.

“Xom bui” the place where migrants live

When one looks at a map of Hanoi, one will see two parallel bridges across the Red River. The first bridge, for trains only, is Long Bien Bridge and the second one, for other vehicles, is Chuong Duong Bridge. The area between the two bridges and to the right of Chuong Duong Bridge are the places where the majority of temporary migrants
Cyclos in the eyes of Hanoians

stay while working in Hanoi. In the past, this area was so notorious as a site for illegal activities, particularly crimes and drugs, that Hanoi people call it “xom bui” (neighborhood of dust) or “xom lieu” (literally shanty town) which by connotation has the meaning of “dishonest people’s neighborhood” or a dangerous place where law is not taken seriously. I was warned by many Hanoians not to enter this area, “Don’t take money or any valuable items with you while walking in there. No one knows what might happen to you, especially if you are a stranger.” All Hanoi people know this is an area where poor people live. Many social problems such as drugs, gangs, prostitution, violence, and physical conflicts are often found there and reported in the newspapers. Over a period of time rumors of illegal activities in this area have accumulated and circulated among Hanoi residents. This makes the area seem even more dangerous. For safety and security reasons, they try to avoid going into the neighborhood if at all possible.

In the past, this area was used as a garbage dump and people also planted their vegetables on the riverbanks between flood seasons. The past use of this area as a tip is a possible reason the neighborhood is now called xom bui. It may be also a reference to the neighborhood’s current residents themselves, for the term bui doi (dust of life), when applied for instance to children of American fathers and Vietnamese mothers in the war years, or to Vietnamese gangs in the US, implies people who have been abandoned by their society or family. Newcomers to this area took ownership of the riverbanks and started to build small temporary shelters. After they built a house and considered themselves as owners, they took the right to divide and sell the land. Over time, the number of people increased. Their squats also expanded along the riverbanks. Nathalie Harnois (2000:115) noted that between 1992 and 1993 the occupants were timber workers and people who practiced illegal activities such as drugs, prostitution, etc. Informal practices such as squatting and illicit activities like the drug and sex trade contribute to the
reputation this area earns among city people as *xom bui*.

This “*xom bui*” is located not far from the old quarter where the majority of migrants work. The workers can walk across Tran Quang Khai Street and reach the main business center of the city in a few minutes. This area has an abundance of stores with a variety of goods and a lot of budget hotels for tourists. Two significant markets, Dong Xuan Market and Bac Qua Market, are also located here. Many migrants who sell food and souvenirs usually walk around the tourist hotels; the laborers who load and unload goods also work in the markets. The “*xom bui*” seems to be the best location for the majority of migrants to stay and work in Hanoi.

Given Hanoi people’s negative perception of this area, I went there for the first time with apprehension. I asked Quy, who rents a *nha tro phong rieng* close to Chuong Duong Bridge, to accompany me while walking in the neighborhood. In the street at the entrance to the neighborhood many groups of unskilled laborers (*nguoi cuu van*) were waiting on the sidewalk. Some grouped at the bus stop while others were together in front of tea stalls. Some smoked a bamboo water pipe (*hut thuoc lao*), some were standing, some rested on their heels while sipping tea. Their eyes looked at the people walking in and out of the neighborhood. Quy explained, “They are waiting for someone who wants unskilled laborers to work. They have no tools, only labor. If you want to move heavy loads, you can get workers here. No contract is signed, they are paid after the work is completed.”
Walking into the neighborhood from the entrance of the street, one encounters a change of atmosphere and environment. A question arises, "Am I still in Hanoi or am I in the countryside?" The street and many alleys are slushy and bumpy. Every time it rains, they become muddy. People and vehicles zigzag to avoid ruts and holes. Some places are also flooded. People create passageways from bricks and planks. The further inside the area one goes, the more broken the streets become. On both sides of the street people dump their garbage. Some who live next to the river also dump their garbage into the river. Many rental houses do not have running water. They need to use water from wells. These areas seem to draw little interest from the local authorities to improve infrastructure and the quality of life for their residents.

For almost two kilometers on both sides of the main road, many alleys and small side-alleys lead off into crowded residential areas. Quy said, "These places are all *nha tro*. People from the countryside rent rooms here. They group themselves by their native village or by kinship relations. Around my own house most people are from Hung Yen Province but we work in different kinds of jobs. One person came first.
The other ones came after, renting a room close to the previous one. Soon, a small number of people become a large number."

Figure 6.2 A side-alley in *xom bui*. Photographed by the author, 22 September 2003.

No one knows exactly how many laborers stay in this area. Many of them frequently go back and forth between their hometowns and this area. Some stay in Hanoi for a couple of months and go back to their villages to work in the rice fields during the harvest season before returning to Hanoi again. Some of them once lived elsewhere in the city and moved here to stay closer to their relatives and friends. According to the residential registration laws, all migrants need to register with the police stations. Realistically, however, some of them only register once when they first came to Hanoi. After they return home and come back to work in Hanoi they do not bother to register again. Nathalie Harnois (2000: 132) also found that these people avoid registering due to the
complexity of the procedures. And they need to pay a fee of 10,000 VND (US $0.66) each time for a renewal or an extension period to stay in the city. This is why many of them maintain an illegal status in the city.

**Hanoians’ attitudes toward migrant workers**

Since Vietnam launched the new economic policy known as *Doi Moi*, Vietnam’s economy growth rate has grown at 7-8 percent each year. However economic growth in the countryside and cities is unequal. Most employment is found in the large cities. This forces hundreds of thousands people to leave their countryside and head to cities to make their fortune. According to the 1999 national census, during the 5-year period from 1994-1999, approximately 6.5 percent of the population aged 5 and over, or 4.5 million people, moved in these periods. Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi have been the main destinations for migrants. As the largest urban center in the north, Hanoi is the second largest gainer of migrants in the country. Most of the migrants came from the surrounding provinces in the Red River Delta (Li Tana 1996: 20; Nguyen Van Chinh 1997: 43-44; General Statistical Office 2001: 14). From 1989 to 1999, the urban population of the city increased about 1.5 times and accounted for nearly one-third of Vietnam’s total urban population (GSO 2001: vii).

The increasing number of migrants in the city each year has also created many social problems such as overcrowding, traffic jams, poor hygiene, and crimes and other law-breaking activities. The city dwellers frequently complain about the rural migrants, blaming them for such inconveniences as overcrowding on the city buses, or the increasing rate of theft and pick pocketing (*moc tui*) in buses, markets or crowded urban transit areas. They believe that the increasing rate of thefts and crimes is associated with these people. They see them as *outsiders* who might
easily commit illegal activities. As one urban resident said, “These people (migrants) want money. When they cannot get money, they commit a crime.” Some feel that because the new migrants have little education and few local resources to fall back on, in the event that they fail in their jobs they are more likely than established local residents to turn to criminality. Some urban dwellers also believe that after they (the migrants) break the laws in one precinct they may move to another and stay with their friends there, or else move on to other cities. As a result, the police cannot arrest them. In these ways city dwellers express their apprehension about the mobility and lack of fixed roots of this floating population of laborers.

Sometimes the migrants are accused of a pragmatic or exploitative attitude towards being in the city. Because they have no sense of belonging to the community, they take advantage of the city. One resident said, “They come here for money after finishing their work in rice fields and usually stay in the city only for a couple of months. After that, they return home. They only come because they need money. They do not belong to the city!” Another resident said, “Look at the street vendors. They come here in the morning, bringing in a lot of goods for sale, and take away money in the evening. What do they contribute to the city? Making it dirty!” was the answer. “Here (Hanoi) is just a place for them to get money.” Another one said, “Although we know the price, they raise the price. So they can make extra profit. You are a foreigner; have you ever faced things like that?” Indeed, many migrants also consider themselves as outsiders, just as they appear in city people’s eyes. Hanoi is not their hometown, just a working place where they can earn extra income. As in Son’s case: he always said, “We are not city men but we are men from outside the city. We came here for money.” This seems to emphasize the thinking of outsiders. The sense of community is lacking.

Many residents of the city see themselves as law-abiding citizens and see the migration of rural laborers to the city as dragging down the
formerly high standards of their home. However, crime rates are normally higher in cities with a high density of population than in small towns and rural areas, especially the rates of vice and crimes against property. Martin King Whyte and William L. Parish (1984: 232) noted that in small towns people tend to know each other and have frequent, face-to-face contacts. When these contacts emerge, a sense of solidarity and shared community norms and values arise. These norms and values serve as social ties. Because of their belief in those norms and their desire to retain the respect of others, people tend to behave themselves and avoid criminal and other deviant acts that might lose them this respect. In a large city, by contrast, people cannot know one another or do not have frequent face-to-face contacts. This fragments social bonds. Even if they come into contact with each other, the fact that they usually do different jobs, belong to diverse ethnic groups or social networks, or have different interests prevent tight social bonds from developing. Thus, large cities with heterogeneous populations tend to have more crimes than small communities.

A study of female migrants in the cities conducted by Ha Thi Phuong Tien and Ha Quang Ngoc (2001) found that these women are willing to do anything legally. They want to earn money by any means, including heavy and dangerous work. However, some of them work in stigmatized jobs such as prostitution. One local resident said, "All of the prostitutes in the city are females who come from other provinces. They have never worked in their own towns because they are afraid of losing face if someone from their village found them. They usually work as far from home as they can." Son said, "They want money and this is an easy way for them to earn more money." However he disagreed that migrants alone are involved in this activity, explaining his view of the different kinds of prostitutes in Hanoi: "Females from the countryside who work as prostitutes (gai pho) earn little from each job. The highly paid prostitutes (ca ve) are mostly females from the cities," he said. "They (nguoí ca ve)
use mobile phones to make an appointment. For example they will see you at a coffee shop and later go to motels \textit{(nha ngu)}. These women have expensive motorbikes because they get money easily. Many of them serve only foreign customers. Each time she gets $100 US dollars. A lot of money!"

A large and growing city like Hanoi, where there is ongoing development of infrastructure, creates many job opportunities for these migrants. Many do jobs such as working in construction sites, as scavengers, porters, or kitchen-hands in the food stalls: jobs that tend to be ignored by the city dwellers. This gives the migrants more job opportunities. Although they have made significant contribution to the economic vitality of the city, they are still unaccepted by urban society. Sometimes the migrants are accused of “uncultured” \textit{(khong van hoa)} or “uncivilized” \textit{(khong van minh)} behavior, such as disorderly \textit{(mat trat tu)} conduct on the footpaths, thoughtless driving on the roads, poor manners \textit{(mat lich su)} in interpersonal interactions, bad speech or wearing old or dirty clothes. Frequently, the local people look down on them. For instance, on the city buses, the ticket sellers always scold loudly at them to get inside the bus and complain about their big luggage. Their behavior is seen as different from that of city people who are more polite or wear neat dresses. Many of the migrants who work as shoe shiners or guidebook sellers are always shouted at by the shopkeepers who tell them not to work in front of or in their shops.

The elderly woman yells at a group of young shoe shiners when they approach the guests at her shop. She walks up to them and yells, “Go! go! Don’t work here. Go go!” Then, she returns to her work and complains to herself continuously.
In the Vietnamese language, there are many insulting names for these labourers such as dan dit den, which means dark buttock people, dan nho dit, which means dirty people, or nguoi den which means black people, referring to the sun-darkened skin of laborers who work all day outdoors, or as farmers in the fields. Though this relates somewhat to the mental/manual status distinctions that are characteristic of Confucianism (Luong 1998), there is a sharply derogatory edge to these terms. Because many of these laborers always wear plastic sandals (dep), the cheapest shoes, these kind of shoes have become a symbol of the poor people. In the Vietnamese idiom, there are also sentences referring to poor people such as “tren rang duoi dep,” which directly translates to “the top only teeth the bottom only sandals.” This sentence implies that these people have nothing at all. I have also been asked by many Vietnamese friends why do you take the sandals off outside the home? The first time I did not understand why, until I understood the meaning of “dep.” This idiom came from “thay a tren rang duoi dai dung ga con gai cho no,” meaning “don't let your daughters marry with the poor people who have only mouths to eat and only penises to make love.”

One example of anti-migrant sentiment and efforts to “clean” away these people can be seen during the 22nd SEA Games (Southeast Asia Games), which took place in Vietnam in the early December 2003. The local authorities prohibited all street vendors from working in the tourist areas especially in the old quarter. Many shoe shiners, hawkers, guidebook sellers, and other street vendors were forced out the prohibited areas. The campaign was launched a month before the SEA Games began. If they were arrested, they had to pay a high fine and might be detained for a week if they were arrested for the second time. The report said more than 10,000 vagrants, beggars, abandoned children, and the elderly were brought to pension houses (Vietnam News, 19 November 2003). One of street hawkers said, “I might go back home. I cannot work here. After the SEA Games, I will return to work again.”
Many shoe shiners who earn little money each day did not care, they put the shoe polish and shoe brushes in a plastic bag while working in prohibited areas. The police were unable to identify whether they were working, or not. Many people, including all hawkers, believed this was a temporary situation. After the SEA Games, the situation would return to normal. Because many special government guests participated in the first national game in Vietnam, they needed to impress the visitors (for more details see Chapter 7).

Historically, the residents of Hanoi are mostly people who have moved from other provinces since the end of the war. They have moved to the city in different periods of time. As mention in earlier chapter, during the wartime, the majority of people were evacuated from the city, while some preferred to go back and forth between the city and the countryside. Records show that in 1965 approximately 50,000 people were removed. In 1966, around one-third to one-half of the population left the city. In 1972, again, the number of people evacuated was between 550,000 and 720,000 persons, or around 60% to 75% of the inner city population (Nigel Thrift and Dean Forbes 1986: 145-146). After the war ended, thousands and thousands people moved from other provinces and stayed permanently in Hanoi. Although they are from other provinces like the migrants, many do not welcome the newcomers who move and work in the city.

Yet because many Hanoians are connected by kinship or ties of common homeland (dong huong) with newly-arrived migrant people from the rural areas, the sharp distinction between the status of old and new city folk is often blurred. Despite differences in economic and legal status between older and newer arrivals, their social networks can cross the boundaries of class that have emerged due to differences in their dates of arrival in the city. Older, established or wealthy urban people, who are looking for workers, might seek them from among those migrants who come from their own hometown or extended family group by activating
these common ties. Sometimes established urban residents like to eat food from the food stalls or buy from mobile vendors in the city who come from the same village or province as them. The food, a certain regional delicacy, might remind them of home. Or the local accent of the seller might make them nostalgic about what life in the countryside was like in the past. This may apply too to residents of Hanoi who in the past used to work in a particular rural area as soldiers, government workers or who were evacuees. These ties of kinship and common history can cut through the status distinctions and even the legal distinctions between older and newer residents although, it seems, these ties can just as often be ignored.

While many Hanoi residents are dissatisfied with the new migrants, they are very pleased to travel to the countryside, where they feel they can regain their calm in the “natural” atmosphere of rural areas, and buy cheap local products from “straightforward” local people. Sometimes these expectations reveal the big gap between realities in the countryside and their own assumptions:

In Sapa, one visiting city dweller was negotiating the price of a bag of herbs with a local vendor on a side road. Her voice was very loud and clear. She said, “Sell them to me. I’ll give you 50,000 VND (US $3.22). No one else buys them at this price.” She threatened the seller. But the seller insisted to sell the herbs at 100,000 VND (US $6.45). He said at a low voice, “I can’t.” The woman bawled him again, “Take this money. Don’t think too much.” She put 50,000 VND (US $3.22) in his hand and pulled the big plastic bag with herbs inside away from him. The seller was dazed.

Although there is resentment among many urban residents about the perceived lowering of standards caused by new migrants to the city, it is true that they benefit from the great many services the migrant workers offer and their life is made easier by the migrants doing work that no-one
else is willing to do. That few of the urban people who expressed critical views about the migrants ever said this to me may indicate that they take these benefits for granted. Indeed it appears that some city people are taking advantage of these rural people. Even the employers of domestics or kitchen hands in the food stalls, frequently look for girls from the countryside. Some say that workers from rural areas are reliable, honest and prepared to put up with hard work (*chiu kho*). Yet they also give them low wages for long hours and hard work. Many of the employees work about 12-14 hours a day, 7 days a week.

“... They are woken up at 6 o’clock by the owner. One girl cleans the house; the other prepares the shop to start selling noodle soup. The big shop at the corner of crossroad where there are a large number of customers and a lot of works, only two girls are employed. The assistant work appears to be simple but the owner is demanding. She always gives orders to them. Around 10 o’clock the customers are few but two girls are continuing to work. ‘One girl cleans the bowls and another cleans the shop. The owner continually gives orders when someone talking with her employees...’” (Ha Thi Phuong Tien and Ha Quang Ngoc 2001: 78).

“...Working without breakfast is normal. Sometimes we were hungry because it was time for meals but we were not allowed to stop working. ... We receive 100,000 VND (US $0.64) per month...” (Ha Thi Phuong Tien and Ha Quang Ngoc 2001: 78-79).

The truth is the truth. It cannot be denied that many people in Vietnam are poor and lack opportunities. Most of them live in the rural areas. Even in provinces or outer suburbs (*ngoai thanh*) surrounding big cities such as Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, the great majority of people are still poor. On the other hand, people in the city have more chances to access better services of education, health, and employment. These differences are real. Some would say that they are the inevitable result of
the liberal reforms. They may even be justified as inevitable or natural by those in the city who seek to defend their privileges. Yet they are not taken as inevitable by migrants themselves. Social inequality forces hundreds of thousands of migrants to move out of their native villages and to seek their fortune in the big cities. As many of them said to me, “Working in Hanoi provides more opportunities to make more money than working in the village.” As already mentioned in Chapter 3, when one succeeds and visits home, others will follow him, hoping to achieve success. The floating people who seek jobs will never disappear from big cities such Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City.

People of Xom Bui speak back

In the views of some residents of Hanoi, people who live in xom bui are all alike. Previous images of a “dangerous area” and “dangerous people” are firmly fixed in their minds. Some think that all these people might be involved in illegal activities, selling and or using drugs, or engaged in immoral activities. Thus, they try to avoid going into this area. Whenever someone whom they know is going into the area, they advise against it, “Don’t take too much money or valuables in there.” “…find someone to accompany you.”

A totally different attitude occurs among the people who daily interact with poor workers, either by living near them or by doing businesses in xom bui. They tend to hold positive attitudes toward these workers. They believe that these migrants are poor. Because of economic difficulties in their hometowns, they need to come to the city to support their families in the countryside. Here, the negative image of xom bui still exists but to a lesser degree. People who live there usually call
this area “xóm moi.” Anh Dung said, “In here we have a police station. The policemen have responsibility to take care and control crimes and outlawed activities here.” He pointed at the police station over the road. “... if anyone sell drugs, the police will arrest them.” Although, in the past, selling or using addictive drugs such as heroin or opium existed, nowadays, there is an attempt to clean “dirty activities” out. Nobody can guarantee that either drug using or selling has stopped. However, many cyclo drivers said, “Even though we are poor, we do not break the laws. If anyone did, the police will arrest them.” “The punishment for those who sell drugs is execution.”

In xóm bui, people try to create a new image of “xóm moi” by helping each other to prevent crime. However, thefts and burglaries are frequently reported because there are a great number of people moving into and out from the area everyday. One might stay here for a couple of months and return home. Newcomers arrive constantly. No one knows who the burglars are. Even if it is required by law to register with the local police station, the law is frequently ignored. The owners realize that the best way to protect their property is to depend on their own devices. Waiting for the police or other people to proceed is basically impractical in this area. Thus, many houses in side-alleys have guard dogs. Some houses have a concrete fence with a secure door. Only nominated persons have a key. Nonetheless, this does not mean there are fewer burglaries. Son said, “Look at my nhà tro, we have a door and we always lock the door. But Huong’s money was still stolen. I think someone in his room is a thief.” “In here we cannot trust others.”

A study of HIV infection and everyday life in urban Vietnam reported that drug addiction and prostitution are serious issues, linked to the incidence of AIDS. This has been a major concern of the Vietnamese government. During the period 1995-1998 public billboards on the side roads denounced social evils (Tê nan xa hoi) such as karaoke, pornography, prostitution, drugs, AIDS, and gambling. The number of
HIV-infected people has increased because of these social evils. And the target groups at risk are people such as laborers, drug users, and sex workers (Stephen McNally 2003:113-116). Up to now, many billboards still exist in the areas where migrant workers live.

The cyclo drivers are aware that many Hanoians see the area where they live as a nest of drug dealing and other outlawed activities. In response, they argue that drugs are found everywhere, even in universities, not just among less-educated people. They say that students also use drugs. Not all poor people use drugs and break laws; and rich people also are among those who use and sell drugs. As one told me, “Some people here might sell drugs but we do not. You know, many students in universities sell drugs because they want new motorbikes or mobile phones.” From my general reading of the newspapers, the problem of drugs and other narcotics has spread though many groups of people including daily workers, teenagers, and students in universities. Yet my close friend Son said there was truth to the portrayals of some drivers as involved in drug use: “One xe om driver uses opium. All his money is gone on drugs.” He warned me not to associate with that man. He also said that drug sales were common among other people who made a living in the street as well.

“You know many guide book sellers (nguoi ban sach) in streets also sell opium.” “… They sell opium (phien) only to the foreign tourists (nguoi nuoc ngoai). After they make friends with them for awhile, they will ask the tourists if they want to buy opium. In Hanoi, drugs (ma tuy) are found everywhere.”

These remarks confirm that drug users still exist in xom bui, although like others, Son said this was not confined to this place alone:

Another official program is to build cultural neighborhoods (xom van hoa). This program advises people to create a wealthier and more
civil society by adopting a “cultured lifestyle” (đoı sŏng vӑn ᕚă), avoiding
gambling, drinking, having too many children and taking part in self-
improvement activities that will lead to prosperity such as going to school.
Billboards that promote this program depict social vices such as drinking
and gambling as something to be avoided, as they may lead people into
poverty. Yet the message can be twisted by people who read these
billboards to see poverty as a consequence of the low moral standards of
the poor. One popular stereotype about low-paid workers like cyclo
drivers blames them for their poverty. They are poor because they drunk
their money away, or, because they might always be drinking and
fighting, they are unable to hold down a better-paying job. Chi Than, a
food stall owner in this area, disagreed with this depiction. She said,
“These laborers are working from morning to night everyday. When they
return home they need to get sleep so they are able to work tomorrow.”
When I asked her about the payment, “Do they buy your food by credit?”
She pointed at a piece of paper on the wall that said, “Pay cash no
credit.” That implies, “No money no food.” Chi Than said more:

These workers have not much money. Each day they can get 20,000-30,000 VND (US $1.29-1.93). They need to buy food and save some for their families. They might drink a glass or two of beer or whisky,...except on a lucky day if they get extra money. Then they might drink more. Theft and fighting occur sometimes, but the policemen handle them.

One day, when I had a chance to have dinner with some cyclo
drivers at a food stall in xom bui, I bought them drinks. I found that Loi
ordered whisky while others ordered beer. I asked him, “Do you drink
whisky everyday?” He said, “One glass a day. So I will have power for
tomorrow.” Tien, his close friend, joked with me: “He is an alcoholic.” Loi
smiled. Every beer shop is crowded with many people. Some are daily
laborers, some are elderly people, some are xe om or cyclo drivers. But
one thing common to every beer drinker is that they are male. The only woman there is the owner. The customers sit on small chairs. Some only sit silently, having a glass of beer. When they meet someone whom they know, they exchange a greeting. It looks like beer shops are the meeting place at the end of each day. Having some drinks and chatting with others may be a reward for daily workers before they go home to sleep.

Cyclo drivers like other migrants who work on the streets feel they have been treated as second-class citizens in the city. Sometimes the work they do is stigmatized. In the past, some residents of Hanoi said, cyclo drivers in Hanoi were considered as rough, impolite and even dangerous. One story, which is told about cyclo drivers in Ho Chi Minh City, where a greater number of cyclos are still in operation, criminalizes the work itself. The cautionary tale advises people not to take cyclos because some drivers who do this work may drive passengers into an unfamiliar or unpopulated area and steal from them. They may even drive them down a dark alley into an ambush of other cyclo drivers who are waiting there to rob them. Another story is that the vehicles can be used as the tools of trade of criminals. On the pretext of asking someone for a lift the cyclo drivers can loiter close to the pavement in areas where wealthy foreigners congregate. When the chance arises, they steal from people, then make a quick getaway in their cyclo.¹

Like other migrant workers who make a living moving around in the streets cyclo drivers in Hanoi feel that they have been treated as “junk men.” No rights, no powers, no influence, no meanings in this society. Whatever the city people want to do to these people or think about them, they cannot counter. For instance, shopkeepers always yell at the shoe shiners and street vendors. They are told to go away from the front of their stores. In case of cyclos, when accidents happen, cyclo drivers are blamed, as Son’s case.

¹ Personal communication, Philip Taylor June 2006.
“While I was peddling my cyclo in the old quarter, I saw one foreign tourist walking out of the hotel. Then, I stopped my cyclo. Suddenly a car hit my vehicle in the rear. My rear wheel was broken but his car was not damaged. The driver blamed me because I had stopped suddenly. I could not claim any money from him. He yelled at me and said it was my fault,” he said. Son asked me, “Do you know how fast I can peddle my cyclo? Is it so fast that the car could not stop? I think that the driver wanted to hit me!”

I asked him, “Did you report it to the police?” He replied,

No. The police will never trust me. They always trust the rich guys. And the police might charge me with other allegations and arrest me or confiscate my cyclo.

It seems to me that many immigrant workers do not like Hanoi people. Likewise, many local residents do not welcome immigrants to work in the city. Only the group of drivers who stay permanently in the city and still peddle cyclos such as Anh Thu and his friends have positive attitudes toward the city dwellers. On the one hand, they have stayed in the city for a long time until they have gained the right to stay there permanently. People know they are from the countryside. On the other hand, they are in the middle between migrant workers people from other provinces who work in city such as cyclo drivers and the local residents. They are pressured to do something to relieve the conflicting attitudes. Those with a high rank in the Sans Souci tourist cyclo company—Anh Thu and his friends the chiefs of each team (to truong)—agreed to create a new image for cyclos by replacing the dirty old cyclos with refurbished vehicle, making all drivers wear the company uniform, teaching the drivers a few foreign greeting words and basic traffic rules, and creating rules such as no drinking of alcohol during work or while waiting for customers. All members’ vehicles need to be registered with the traffic police department. In addition, there must be valid licenses for both the vehicle and the driver while working for the company.
Because of their endeavours, many times the cyclos for tourists especially from Sans Souci Company had been chosen to be the symbol of Vietnam at special events such as the 2003 SEA Games, and to provide services for government VIP guests on city sightseeing tours. These forms of recognition have made Anh Thu and his fellow drivers very proud.

Anh Thu said, "We are very pleased to have been given the chance to participate in the opening ceremony of the SEA Games. We need to practice before then to make sure what we do is done perfectly. We are Vietnam's face."

Do urban people still need cyclos?

The urban attitude that perhaps has the biggest effect on cyclo drivers is not hostility or disparagement but, ironically, disinterest. As urban wealth increases and cheap imported motorcycles become available, more and more Hanoians are buying their own motorbikes, sometimes two vehicles or more to a family. Other forms of public transport like taxis and motorcycle taxis are also increasing. One can see xe oms drivers waiting at every intersection and bus stop. At the same time, the local bus authority has also improved its services by operating new buses with cheap fares and covering all residential areas including the outskirts of the city.

The Ha Noi Transerco bus Company informs that the new 143 buses with different sizes will service in this October, 82 buses in November, and 41 buses in December. The company plans to finish replacing the old buses in next year. The total of the new buses expects to reach 1500
buses operating over 12,000 trips a day. (*An Ninh Thu Do* Newspaper, 19 August 2003).

Meanwhile, new traffic laws banning cyclos and limiting working times have been enforced. Combined with the preference among city people for cheaper and faster forms of private and public transport, the picture of Hanoi, crowded with cyclos, is disappearing. Even elderly people, who once used to rely heavily on cyclos, think twice about using them because of the high cost of the services.

Bac Liu (Uncle Liu), for example, told me that in the past he regularly used cyclos or his own bicycle. Since the number of cyclos for passengers (*xich lo cho khach*) has decreased, he needs to ask his grandchildren or others to take him to do his business. He said, “If I go somewhere nearby, I will ride my bike. If it is far, I need to ask my sons or grandchildren to take me. If no one is available, the last choice is xe om.” Many elderly people prefer to travel anywhere with a person who can take care of them. These persons are mostly their relatives or at least someone who the elderly people’s family members can trust. For instance, “My sons or grandchildren or other relatives will take me,” Bac Liu said. Some said, “I will ride a bicycle if I can.” “... Buses are so crowded!! I always go by xe om, a regular xe om driver, if I know he will drive slowly.”

In the meantime, many small truck companies have been established and are the preferred forms of transport among the retail storekeepers in the inner city where large trucks cannot deliver goods. At least five companies operated in Hanoi in 2003, for instance, VT Taxi Company, Taxi Kien Vang, Taxi Tai 43, Taxi Tai 7.18.18.18, Taxi Thanh Hung. Each company has almost 100 trucks in service. These small pick-up trucks (*xe tai nho tac xi*) can carry much more than cyclos and their operating times are unlimited. Nowadays, goods-carrying cyclos can work only in the evenings and nights. As mentioned in Chapter 4, many of
those that still offer these services do so thanks to the support of their few regular employers. For example, three xich lo cho hang can be found at Dong Xuan Market and two in the furniture store area. These drivers have regular employers who, even though they did not sign contracts, fulfil a merit contract that allows the drivers to continue to peddle.

Anh Bong who peddles a cyclo at Bac Qua Market to transport agricultural goods has three-four regular employers. “Usually, they pay me once or twice a week. We trust each other. So because of them I have a job. Otherwise, I might have no work. We help each other: they give me a job. I give them reliable service.

Anh Tuan, a cyclo driver waiting in front of the furniture stores, said, “I wait here every day. If they need me to deliver big chairs or cupboards, they will call me. Sometimes people might call me to help them move big goods. Not too often, sometimes this store, sometimes that store gives me a job but around here only me and one other still peddle cyclos. The store owners are very kind and usually help poor people like me. Now, there are so many small trucks (xe tai nho), I don’t know what will happen. Maybe I will return home to the countryside.”

Figure 6.3 A small truck taxi. Photographed by the author, 10 August 2003.
Where have the cyclos gone? Because of the increased use of motor vehicles among urban people and the laws restricting cyclo use, the outskirts of the city remain one of the best places to work. Many cyclos operate at construction sites hauling heavy goods such as cement, sand, stone, and wood. Because of its small size the cyclo is a convenient way to move large and heavy equipment along small alleys and needs only two laborers to handle it. Cyclos are also used by street vendors for direct sales of heavy goods in the small streets and alleys as well.

**Figure 6.4** A goods-carrying cyclo bearing processed charcoal bricks used for domestic and commercial cooking. Photographed by the author, 15 September 2003.

Many cyclo drivers have switched to work as a xe om driver. This is a response to the demand among city people who prefer to use a xe om rather than other kinds of public transport.
Anh Toan and Anh Hoang are an example of cyclo drivers who have switched their job to xe om drivers. They said, “Driving a motorcycle (xe may) is very convenient. We can go as far as we want but cyclos cannot. Whenever we are not taking passengers we can use the motorbike for our own business. People prefer to go anywhere by xe oms more than cyclos. We can get money more easily than peddling a cyclo.”

Many cyclo drivers think that xe om drivers can make more money and more easily than they do. Operating a xe om is a job that many cyclo drivers find suitable because they are familiar with locations and directions. Driving a xe om is more comfortable than peddling a cyclo and it is not so exhausting. Yet they need money to buy gasoline. Switching to drive a xe om also requires a large amount of money to buy a motorcycle. When one begins in one’s career, either as a cyclo or xe om driver, it takes some time to find the funding to invest in a new vehicle and then pay off all one’s debts. Yet another problem xe om drivers face is the glut of private and public motorcycles in the city. Many drivers who operate a xe om service are dissatisfied with this work and some even envy those cyclo drivers who still operate a private service.

Anh Vinh, a xe om driver in front of the Vietnamese National Bank, told me, “The xe om is for Hanoi people, xe xich lo is for the tourists. I spend most of the day just sitting here. I only get a few lifts each day. Xe oms are everywhere. Look over there,” he pointed to the other side of the street. “There are 4-5 xe om drivers over there. We are so jealous of cyclo drivers. Each time they get a lot of money and a tip. For me, since the morning until this afternoon I have had only two passengers, and have made only 9,000 VND (US $0.58).”

Due to decreased demand among city people and troubles with the traffic authorities, only a few drivers still peddle xich lo tu nhan. Some who can access the funding might refurbish their vehicles and apply to
become a member of one of the tourist cyclo companies. To become a member in these companies, they need to pay the fees and follow the companies' rules. Working for the cyclo companies is an excellent option for the new drivers. They do not need to search for passengers by themselves. The companies will arrange the passengers equally and deduct some money from the drivers for the operation fee. Many veteran drivers prefer to work for the companies only in the high tourist season. In the off-season, they prefer to work alone. Because there are very few tourists at that time they think they may have more opportunities to attract passengers by searching for them themselves rather than waiting in the queue.

At the waiting place of Sans Souci Tourist Cyclo Company, the vehicles are in line waiting for passengers. Looking around, it seems there are two groups of drivers. One is a group of young drivers, aged less than 35 years old and another group are people of advanced years. I guess that their average age is over 55-60 years old. Anh Thu, said, "These elderly people have 'cyclo in their blood'. Look at that man." He pointed at the old guy. "He has peddled a cyclo for a long long time and has earned money to support his family by this job. Even though his family does not want him to keep working now, he is still peddling."

Bac Duc, 62 years old, said, "If I still have power, I will peddle. My daughter told me to stay home.... Don't need to work, but I want to peddle. If I come here, I can meet many friends. If I stay home I have nothing to do."

Nowadays, in Hanoi, other forms of transportation are replacing the cyclo's function by offering urban residents the cheap and fast service that they need. Very few cyclos operate privately, and only a few have managed to hang on to regular customers. Most of those still operating in the inner city have moved to work for the tourist cyclo companies. Given the lack of demand for their services among people in the city, serving
Cyclo drivers in Hanoi seem to be the last chance for cyclo drivers to survive this difficult situation.

**Cyclos though Tourists’ Eyes**

Nowadays, cyclos and foreign tourists seem to go together. Since most urban residents no longer use their services, the cyclo’s function as a form of low cost urban transportation has shifted to provide sightseeing tours. Currently, the two tourist cyclo companies in Hanoi operate city tours and their main customers are tourist groups from other countries. The managers of each company have plans to increase the number of vehicles, since tourism in Vietnam is becoming more popular among foreigners. During the high season, Anh Thu said, “The drivers make at least five trips each day, while the bookings are full everyday.”

Taking a cyclo on tour is a new and exciting experience for many foreigners. To ride a slow vehicle such as a cyclo in the midst of Hanoi’s busy street life thrills the tourists. It is also suited to those afraid of accidents. Using a cyclo for the first time in Hanoi, passengers always sit in the middle of the seat and try to keep all parts of their body inside the vehicle because they fear accidents. Anh Thu said, “Many foreigners who have no experience with cyclos might fear accidents because in their countries they usually take cars or buses, whose solid body can protect the passengers. Cyclos are totally different. Cyclos have no bumpers, no windows, and no doors. People sit on the seat with no protection. It is normal to fear that other faster vehicles might hit them. Thus, during on tours the cyclos peddle slowly in line, keeping to the right side of the streets. We are concerned very much about the customers’ safety. As implied by the company name, ‘Sans Souci’, which means ‘feel
comfortable, or relaxed,’ the customers feel safe with our services”, Anh Thu said.

Some customers particularly male teenagers might have fun by acting as a cyclo driver, following along after the others or taking photographs. Son said, “They want their pictures taken while peddling a cyclo. Some want to know how driving a cyclo compares with peddling a bicycle. Mostly, they just peddle for a short distance and take photographs.” This is similar to the practice of some foreign females who wear a Vietnamese hat while carrying two bamboo baskets in order to have their photographs taken. Because in their own countries there are no cyclos or street vendors selling vegetables or fruits, this is an opportunity for them to have pictures taken with them.

Different cultures create misunderstandings. One story concerning cultural misunderstandings between some western elderly people and the cyclo drivers was told to me. The senior people felt sorry for the driver who sold his labor for money. So, they gave him money without asking for a ride. That made the driver perplexed. While many drivers are proud of themselves as a cyclo driver, they are not beggars. Peddling cyclos is their work and their life. Many of them have earned their living by peddling cyclos since they were young. Anyhow, after finishing the tour, they are happy if they are given a large amount tips.

Sometimes the method used by xich lo tu nhan drivers to invite customers is viewed as an annoyance by foreign tourists. These drivers often peddle their cyclos slowly alongside foreigners and keep asking them where they are going, or inviting them with manners or words that seem impolite. For example, when they see foreigners walking on the other side of street, they will shout and point at them; “Hey! hey! Cyclo go go.” Many times they run across street directly to the group of tourists and ask if they want a ride again and again. “Cyclo go?” “Mr... Cyclo?” “Go where, Mr.?” These drivers need to get as many passengers as they can. The more passengers, the more they earn. On some days they may
not get any passengers at all. Trying to invite them by following them and asking them again and again is a way to increase their chances. Furthermore, the xich lo to nhan have no certain places to wait for passengers like those that work for tourist cyclo companies. Many times, the drivers compete among themselves. The one who is quickest is the one who can get the passengers.

Many western tourists might not recognize these concerns. Following foreigners or shouting or pointing at them seems to be impolite in other cultures. Normally in their countries, when they need transport they will go to certain places for services. In Vietnam, and especially in the case of xich lo tu nhan the service provider needs to go in search of passengers. In the cyclo drivers' colloquialism, it called di bat khach, which means, "catching customers". They have no regular places to wait for their customers. When they find tourists either walking on the footpath or walking from their accommodation or restaurants, it makes sense to ask them if they need a ride and many times they will follow them. This seems to disturb the tourists. The foreigners might prefer to walk and look around rather than take any kind of transport. This kind of disturbance comes not only from cyclo drivers but also from the street vendors who want to sell souvenirs to the tourists. They call out to ask them to buy their goods and sometimes they try to put their products right into the foreigners' hands. This seems to irritate tourists, who feel that the sellers are invading their personal space but in terms of the sellers these are the tactics to sell one's products.

Because of these tactics, many foreigners believe that these people are trying to take advantage of them and they avoid direct contact with these street sellers. Often, when the hawkers are not successful in business, they might speak to the tourist in coarse language or act rudely toward the tourists. This creates a negative image of people who earn their living in the streets including the cyclo drivers. One tourist said,
The fare of 2-3 US dollars is not too much for me but I do not want anyone to take advantage of me." “Sometimes, the cyclo drivers try to explain that the way is very far but in reality they can make a short cut and get a higher fare than it should be.

Another said to me:

While walking in streets, don’t make yourself look like you are looking for a place. If you do that, these drivers will flock directly to you and offer to take you there.” Also, “Ask someone first what the fare should be. If you don’t know, the price will double. My friends told me, ‘cut the price in half if you want travel with them.’”

Dai, a street vendor, revealed his own counter-tactics: “if I want to sell my guidebooks, I cannot go and sell them directly. That will give me less opportunity to sell successfully. We need to make friends first, exchange a greeting with them, ask them many questions, for example, where do you come from, where is your hotel or what is the name of your hotel, and sometimes we need to act as a local guide, advising the foreigners where they should go. If they respond, we will start selling our books.” Furthermore, this conversational strategy helps in his business. “We can increase the price depending on the buyer’s nationality or the place where they stay.”

Similarly, cyclos from the five star hotels ask for a higher fare than others. On average, it costs around $US 3 per hour while others might charge around $US 1-2 per hour. Tien said, “At the Hilton Hotel there are only four cyclos. Mostly we serve only the hotel’s guests. The customers are businessmen, not tourists. But many of them walk further from the hotel and ask other cyclos for service because it is cheaper. Then, I can do nothing,” he said. I asked him more, “Have you ever reduced the fare?” He said, “No, this is our standard price for this hotel. Although we can get less trips than others, only one-two trips a day is OK for us.”
Because of the difference in cultures, many tourists misunderstand and have negative attitudes toward these people. They think that the daily workers are going to take advantage of them. In reality, it cannot be denied that these workers also view the foreigners as a source of income. They try to use every tactic to get money from them even though sometimes it might violate their personal space. As for the tourists, when they visit Hanoi, all of them want to have a chance taking a cyclo or buying some souvenirs from the local people, however, they do not want anyone to take advantage of them. Misunderstandings often occur between them. Many times these tourists use a middleman such as the tourist cyclo companies or tourist agencies to arrange a city tour in order to avoid direct contact with the workers. That seems to be a compromise solution. For the drivers in tourist cyclo companies, they are happy to get one or two passengers a day. This is better than not getting any money at all.
Chapter 7

Government Policies and Their Impacts

Introduction

In many capital cities of Southeast Asia, pedicabs or trishaws were forced out of the streets. The government in each country claimed that these kinds of vehicles were a source of traffic problems including an obstruction of the traffic flow, dangerous driving, and increase rate of accidents. Therefore, in 1960, the Thai government banned samlors working in Bangkok while the trishas in Malaysia also were confined to specific streets in 1969. Likewise, beaks in Indonesia were started to eliminate from Jakarta in 1970. Recently, in April 2005, the Burmese Government increased the penalty fee for sai kaa drivers who broke traffic laws. This policy appears to be aimed at forcing them out of the streets. Many scholars who have studied these issues argued that because of a façade of modernization, these countries implemented plans to restrict or eliminate the use of these vehicles (William Lim 1975; Azuma 2001; Rimmer 1978).
It is the same situations for cyclos. The Vietnamese government promulgated the decree No 21/2001 limiting working times and areas of cyclos. The drivers who break the law will be fined and their vehicle confiscated. The number of cyclos in Hanoi has decreased. Simultaneously, the other forms of public transportation have also increased. In this chapter, I will illustrate some significant policies, which impact on cyclos and the immigrant workers as well as the competitive situation that drivers have faced among other various forms of public transportation in the city. I argue that the attempts of Hanoi People’s Committee to create “Hanoi modern city” by launching many campaigns to “clean up” disorderly activities in the streets especially the law banning cyclos known as decree No 21/2001 pushed the cyclo’s transition from a form of low cost transport for local people to a vehicle for tourists. Because of this law, many rickety cyclos were forced out of the inner city. The rickety cyclos is now hard to find. Many of them have been refurbished to work for the tourist cyclo companies. Furthermore, since the Vietnamese government has tried to maintain the economic growth rate by using the tourism industries, it encourages cyclos in a rapid change into the new functions of modern city as a vehicle for sightseeing. The fare is calculated by the hour, not by distance. The drivers have a uniform and the vehicles are also to be refurbished. The status of cyclos has been changed so much that the people call them xich lo cao cap or xich lo quy toc which means aristocratic cyclo. These vehicles are no longer transportation for the local people anymore.
An overview of population redistribution: a result from the policies

Population mobility in Vietnam has been considered differently by governments in different periods of time. In some periods people were forced to move as a result of state policies and sometimes people moved because of the wars. During the colonial period (1859-1954), the French recruited workers from overcrowded provinces of the Red River Delta to the plantations of the south or mining zones in upland areas. Dang Nguyen Anh, Goldstein and McNally (1997) noted that two-thirds of these peasants from those areas moved to the mines and plantations opened under the French. These movements were for economic reasons rather than to relive population density. Another population movement was that of the landless people who moved from rural to urban areas. The last group was the unemployed laborers who searched for temporary work during the transplanting and harvesting seasons. These seasonal migrations seem to account for the largest volume of population movement in the colonial era (Dang Nguyen Anh, Goldstein and McNally 1997: 314).

In 1954, Vietnam was divided into two armed and politically separate territories according to the Geneva agreement. North Vietnam formed a socialist government whereas the South followed a capitalist model of development. At the time the country was divided, people could choose which side to live in. Nigel Thrift and Dean Forbes (1986: 88) noted that over 900,000 people left the North. Conflicts of ideology between northern and southern governments led the two Vietnams into the war. During wartime, the population of the urban areas of the North declined. Such a massive number of people were evacuated from the main cities targeted for bombing that the population in many northern
cities reached the lowest point in 1975 (Barbieri et al. 1996: 225; Forbes 1996a: 26).

While people in the North moved out of the cities, in contrast, people in the South moved into cities to escape the fighting in the rural and mountainous zones. The war and population mobility resulted in dramatic food shortages in both countries. Jacqueline Desbarats (1987: 48) mentioned that during the war both North and South Vietnam had received a free supply of one million tons of grain a year from their allies. The war laid to waste as much as one-third of the pre-1975 cultivated areas. The total domestic food production had declined to 11.6 million tons of grain. The food deficit rose over 6 million tons. Because of the food shortage, after the end of the war in 1975 the Vietnamese government implemented an ambitious plan of population relocation into the “New Economic Zones,” one of the significant policies in the second five-year national development plan, which aimed at increasing food production and decreasing the number of unemployed people who had returned from the war. Furthermore, this resettlement policy also relieved population pressure in the high-density areas especially in big cities such as Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi (Harvie and Tran Van Hoa 1997: 36).

This policy was followed up in the third five-year plan (1981-1985) and the fourth five-year plan (1986-1990) by setting the target at approximately 3 to 4 million people to participate as resettled migrants in each plan. However, this program was not as successful as hoped. More than half of the migrants who moved to New Economic Zones had returned to their original places after they arrived (Dang Nguyen Anh, Goldstein and McNally 1997: 319). The aim to reduce the population density in the Red River and Mekong River Delta had failed. A lack of adequate infrastructure and poor social services created a “push pressure” for some migrants to leave the resettlement areas. According to Jacqueline Desbarats' article (1987: 61) which referred to many foreign and Vietnamese scholars' papers, “15-20 percent of the population that
had left returned to the urban areas.” Some said that of “two million people displaced from the Southern urban areas to rural areas after 1976, 30 percent came back to the cities.” Some estimated that, “from 30-40 percent of the transferred persons have flowed back toward the urban centers.” And others said, “Around 300,000 persons or 20 percent have returned home instead of remaining in New Economic Zones.”

Many migrants returned to their home villages. However, the majority fearing arrest and being forced to return to the New Economic Zones moved to illegally stay with their relatives and friends in cites. A report indicated that in 1989 the population in Ho Chi Minh City was 4 million or increasing around 1.85 percent on average from 1979, and 2.3 percent for Hanoi. It was estimated that the population in Hanoi reached 3 million by 1989 (Barbieri and et al 1996: 226). The increasing population numbers in the major cities showed that the redistribution programs could not achieve their goals. The main objective, to reduce the high population density of the large cities, failed. One possible reason was the inequality of living standards between the rural areas, particularly in the New Economic Zones, and the urban areas, even though the Vietnamese government had tried to improve basic infrastructure and social services throughout the country.

In addition, the implementation of the Doi Moi liberal reform policy has rapidly increased the economic growth rate in urban areas. Vietnam’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew from 3.4 percent in 1986 to 9.5 percent in 1996, and 8 percent on average over the five years 1996-2000 (Mallon 1997: 9). In 1996, the industrial growth rate was about 14 percent, increasing the foreign trade turnover to about 27-28 percent and the inflation rate maintained at the level of 6 to 7 percent (Tuong Lai 1997: 182). The open door (mo cua) policy also created plenty of job opportunities in various sectors for both skilled and unskilled labourers while the number of registered private companies also rapidly increased during the 1990s, from 770 in 1990 to nearly 25,000 by mid-1995. Small
trading businesses like shops, restaurants and services were estimated to have increased from 568,000 in 1986 to 835,800 in 1990 and 1,882,798 by 1995 (GSO 1996). However, this new employment was largely available in urban areas rather than in rural areas. These disparities drew a host of surplus laborers into the cities to seek jobs with a higher income and improved living standards for themselves and their families. In early 1990s, the three major cities in the North -- Hanoi, Hai Phong and Quang Ninh province -- absorbed a large number of migrant laborers from the north and central provinces during the economic boom (Li Tana 1996: 9).

The difference in income between people in the countryside and those in urban areas seems to be the main factor that has motivated migrants to move out of their home villages. A survey by the Ministry of Labor Invalid and Social affair (MOLISA) reported that the total income per head of Hanoi residents and of urban dwellers of Ho Chi Minh City is often 5-7 times as much as that of farming laborers in rural areas annually (Ha Thi Puong Tien and Ha Quang Ngoc 2001: 31). Furthermore, the increase of population in urban areas was confirmed by the national census in 1999 that during the 10 year period of 1989-1999, the population living in urban areas has markedly increased from 19.4 percent in 1989 to 23.5 percent in 1999. Particularly in the large cities such as Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, the total population of both cities increased about 1.5 times accounting for nearly one-third of Vietnam’s total urban population (GSO 2001: vii). The urban-rural economic disparities that appear to account for this population movement continued to widen into the mid 2000s (Taylor 2004a).
Vietnamese household registration system and coupon rationing system

In the past, the Vietnamese government used the household registration system and coupon rationing system as powerful instruments to control population mobility. Under the household registration system, based on the Chinese model, people in every household were required to record their personal information such as name, place of residence, date of birth/death, ethnicity and religion as members of a household. Families in the urban areas kept their own registration booklets whereas the local police stations kept the records on behalf of each household in the countryside. This system also recorded people's movements. Whenever the members of a household moved in or out, it needed to be recorded (Hardy 2003: 108).

During the collectivization period, this system affected the movement of people when combined with another system called the coupon rationing system. In those periods, all essential commodities such as rice, clothes and fuel were subsidized and distributed to people by the state. The person who had registered as a resident of the locality could get the rations on presentation of a coupon or voucher (phieu). On the contrary, people who moved away from their registered places without transferring their household registration records could not obtain rations. Phieu, in that period, could be used as “money;” however, people still needed money to buy goods. These systems ensured that everyone stayed in their place of registered residence. Trinh Dieu Thin, a 66-year-old teacher who used to reside in Nam Dinh province, said:
“During the state subsidized period, anyone, who went out of their commune without permission needed to bring rice with them. No one could treat them; there were no shops to buy from, only the black market but its prices were very high. So it was only very few people who moved for jobs in the cities. Once there, they needed to work illicitly.”

One benefit of these systems, from the perspective of the government, was that the expansion of many urban areas was limited. People stayed and worked in their communes. Only state employees who had permission could move to other places. This was the only channel for rural people who wanted to move to the cities. They needed to get state jobs. Andrew Hardy (2003: 109) noted that migration to the city was almost impossible if one could not get a job in the state sector either in production or administration. However, there were a few people who moved without permission and stayed illegally in the cities while some joined the state programs to relocate to other rural areas in order to get rations. Between 1961 and 1966, more than one million people were recorded as participants in agricultural and forestry enterprises and other cooperatives in the highlands (Hardy 2003: 109).

By the Doi Moi period, the subsidy system was no longer in use although the household registration system was still mandatory. The restriction on people’s movements was less intense. Because of the endeavors of the Vietnamese government to expedite economic growth and expand industrial zones in order to attract foreign investment, many jobs were created and these needed more labourers. Hundreds of thousands of people moved out from their native villages to seek opportunities in the cities. Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi seemed to be the main destinations. Research conducted in Chuong Duong area in Hanoi, where many transient workers stay, found that in 1994, this residential quarter had 12,653 people with 3,180 families. Of this number, it was estimated that 3,693 people or 29 percent were considered illegal, as they had no permanent registration (Harnois 2000: 108).
On moving to work in the cities, migrants are required to change household registration status, as either a permanent or temporary resident. According to the law, temporary migrants may continue to work away from their places of origin; however, they are denied by regulations of the local state bureaucracy from registering a vehicle, building a house, admitting children to school, or opening a business. Abrami and Henaff (2004: 104) mentioned that there are two channels to change their registration status: first, the social networks of some migrants provide access to long-term employment within the public sector that allows an individual to change their household registration status on the basis of official sponsorship. Second, individuals can bend the rules by changing their residence status to become long-term temporary migrants. However, for the most part, cyclo drivers are only able to obtain seasonal migrant status.

Workers who migrated to Hanoi before 1997 and own a house with active employment in the city can request permanent resident status (Abrami and Henaff 2004: 105). One of these, Anh Thieu, a cyclo driver from Ha Nam Dinh province (the former name of three provinces: Nam Dinh, Ha Nam, and Ninh Binh), spoke about his move to work in Hanoi, "In the period of economic boom, many people from my home town and nearby searched for jobs in the city (Hanoi). Mostly we worked as unskilled laborers because we did not complete school to a high level. Here (Chuong Duong area), there was a wood storage company that needed workers. So, I worked there for a couple of years. In those times, there was no need to pay rent since all workers built their own shelters and planted some vegetables on the riverbanks. We stayed here until we borrowed someone's money to buy a piece of land."

Cyclo drivers who migrated after that year need to request temporary permission from the local police station, although many do not
follow this requirement strictly. Tui, a cyclo driver from Nam Dinh, said, “The first time I came to Hanoi, I requested a temporary registration permit because the landlord told me to do so. But whenever I have returned here after a period of time spent back home, the landlord has not asked me for the temporary labor card anymore.” Many laborers did the same as Tui. Nam told me, “We need to pay a registration fee of 10,000 VND (US $0.64) each time and it takes a lot of time to process.” Even though they are required by law to register at the local police station, they tend to ignore the requirement. Many of them register only their first arrival and have never renewed their permissions since.

The household registration system now can only prevent migrants from moving to stay permanently in the city but it cannot stop seasonal migrants moving out of their native villages. As long as these workers cannot access state services (health, education, and others) in city, they do not mind about the registration identification. Whenever these laborers get sick, they either buy medicine themselves or return to their hometowns for health services. Because of their seasonal migrant status in the city, their children cannot attend schools in Hanoi.

**Cyclos in competition**

In the competitive market, the people have power to choose the best services at a reasonable price. The suppliers must improve and provide the best products/services to customers. This is the case with public transportation in the city. The various forms of public transport in Hanoi compete to attract customers to use their service. In the past, cyclos appeared to be the biggest service provider. People went everywhere by cyclos. The emergence of motor-powered vehicles, taxis, motorcycle taxis (xe om) and buses have replaced the cyclo’s function by
offering cheaper fares and faster traveling times. In a medium-sized city like Hanoi, people can commute from one suburb to another within a few minutes by motorcycle. At present, motorbikes are cheap, especially those from China. People are able to afford them. In consequence, the number of motorcycles in Hanoi has increased by 15-18 percent each year (Thanh Binh 1999: 24). Many people register motorbikes for use in their own businesses while many of them are used as xe om for public transport. No one knows how many xe oms there are in Hanoi. Every bus stop, every intersection, and every crowded area has xe om. Even walking on the footpath one might be offered their services. It is easy to become a xe om driver. There are no special requirements by law. People who have a motorcycle driving license can operate a xe om service. In terms of official policy, the government does not promote the xe om as a vehicle for local public transport. On the other hand, the government also does little to control driving licenses for public transport or inspects motorcycles used for public services. Therefore, this kind of job is becoming a new choice for young migrants who can afford a motorcycle either by cash or credit.

Tuan, 21 years old from Ha Tay Province, chose to be a xe om driver for his first job in Hanoi. He came to work here only 3 months ago, "...I borrowed money to buy a secondhand Chinese motorcycle and started my career driving xe om here, sharing a small room (nha tro) with my friends and returning home on the weekends. .....Some days I get sufficient money, some days very little. It is better than doing nothing in my village..."

Nowadays, the population in Hanoi is increasing annually and the outskirts of the city are expanding. The demand from commuters to travel quickly over longer distances is to be expected. The local authorities are concerned to increase the efficiency of mass public transportation in the city in order to reduce the cost of fuel consumption, the number of traffic
accidents, congestion in the streets, as well as air pollution. The public bus service (Ha Noi Transerco), which is run as a state-owned corporate enterprise, is one solution to move commuters from one place to another in a short time. Since the company was established in 1960, the services have improved greatly. Currently, the company offers passengers new air conditioned buses and a low fare of only 2,500 VND a trip. The bus routes cover all residential areas including the outskirts of the city. According to Vietnam Economic News, in 2004 an average of over 500,000 passengers traveled by bus daily. There were 1600 buses operating on 31 routes and the number of passengers was expected to increase to 200 million by the end of the year (Vietnam Economic News: 21 September 2004).

One Hanoi resident told me, “1997-1998 was the year of xe om, 2002-2003 is the year of xe buyt (buses). Now, there are many new buses in Hanoi. It is very good but the buses are very crowded.”

Because this company is state owned, Hanoi provides a large amount in subsidies to it each year. The report said the city spent 80 billion VND in subsidizing this service the previous year and estimated that it would spend some 94 billion VND in 2004 (Vietnam Economic News, 21 September 2004). Compared with buses, cyclos are absolutely inferior vehicles in terms of lesser passenger capacity, longer traveling times, exposure to the elements and a higher cost of service. The cyclo drivers operate their business without any form of subsidy. In addition, many of them have to borrow money and pay interest on their loans. As mentioned in Chapter 4, a lot of money is needed when one wants to start such a business. Nowadays, many cyclo drivers switch to other jobs since they face difficult conditions with the laws restricting cyclo use and competition from other forms of public transport.
Anh Bong, Anh Dung and Anh Oai are among the many xe om drivers who used to drive cyclos. Each of them said, “Driving a xe om is better; it is not exhausting. However, each time we receive less money than a cyclo driver.” Some said, “We are getting older every day, peddling a cyclo is so tiring and our knees ache some days.” In reality, peddling cyclos nowadays is very exhausting. Very few Hanoi people want to take cyclos. They usually go by xe om, even people of advanced years, because the fare is cheap and the service faster than cyclos. At present, the cyclo’s main customers are foreigners and tourists. Frequently, tourist groups book in advance with the tourist cyclo companies. Thus, the private cyclo drivers need to peddle around and look for backpackers. Many times they return home in the evening with empty pockets.

Meanwhile, the competition between small truck taxi companies and goods-carrying cyclos continues as a result of the government granting licenses to many truck companies and implementing bans on cyclos. It forces the goods-carrying cyclos into a difficult situation. The small pick-up taxis offer reasonable fares and are able to carry more than cyclos do. They can go anywhere without being limited and become more popular among Hanoi merchants. Currently, it is very hard to find xich lo cho hang in Hanoi. Many drivers have quit this job and work in other careers. A few cyclos carrying goods still work at the markets or at construction sites.
Urbanization and modernization

Hanoi, like other capital cities in SEA countries, is changing very quickly particularly its population, economy and society, and is becoming a modern city. Its population has increased annually as people from the countryside have moved there to work. New apartment blocks have been built to replace low-density housing. Many new suburbs have been developed in the outskirts, both as residential areas and around industrial parks. People have changed their occupations from agriculture to manufacturing. The city's economic growth rate is higher than in rural areas. These are significant elements in the process of "urbanizing the city".

Since the early 1990s, after the implementation of Doi Moi, the rate of urban population growth in Vietnam has speeded up. As the economy began to open, opportunities to work outside the state sector increased. The workers who were laid off from the state sector moved to work in private enterprises usually in the urban areas. Restrictions on
people’s mobility particularly rural-urban migration which kept people in one place have become more flexible. In 1993, Vietnam’s urban population increased to 13.6 million, or 19.2 percent of the total population. In 1996, the percentage of people living in urban areas had grown to 23.5 percent, increasing by about 80,000 residents per year in Ho Chi Minh City and around 22,000 persons in Hanoi (Forbes 1996a; DiGregorio, Rambo and Masayuki 2003).

The more people moved into the city, the more urban land use expanded. According to the paper by DiGregorio et al., which refers to Le Anh Ba, in 1960 urban Hanoi had a land area of 58 square kilometers. By 1998, this grew to 91 square kilometers and is expected to increase to 121 square kilometers by the year 2010. In 2004 Trinh Dieu Thi\(^1\) explained Hanoi’s story to me, “In the past, around 15-20 years ago, Kim Ma area, which is now the Kim Ma bus terminal, was on the outskirts of the city. There were very few people living in that area. It was quite far from the center of the city and a lot of crimes occurred. People were afraid to go there at night.” About two kilometers from Kim Ma is the Cau Giay area. At that time, that area was paddy fields. 67-year-old Nuyen Thi Thuy who currently operates a small stall in Cau Giay Street told me, “Me and my family have stayed here until it became part of Hanoi city. Previously, the area around here was all rice fields. People grew rice and planted vegetables, carrying their produce by boats or bicycles to sell at the markets in the city (she pointed at To Lieh River). This was until rich men from the south (Sai Gon) came and bought land and constructed buildings for sale (she pointed at an old two-story building). Now, this area is much more prosperous and very expensive.”

Due to the process of industrialization and modernization, Hanoi city, the heart of government administration and one of the main business centers of the country, established many industrial parks in the suburbs of the city and other nearby provinces. For instance, in 1994, Noi Bai

\(^1\) Interview August 15, 2004.
Industrial Zone with an area of 100 ha was set up in Soc Son district in the north of Hanoi. Thang Long Industrial Park, a joint investment between Vietnamese and Japanese investors, was founded in 1997 at Dong Anh district with an area of 300 ha. In 1996, the huge industrial park, covering an area around 1,000 ha named Saidong Industrial Zone or Taiwan-Hanoi industrial park, was founded in Gia Lam district, only eight kilometers east of Hanoi city. This industrial park also combined with the Dai Tu Industrial Park in the same area. Moreover, in Ha Tay province, the neighboring province to the west of Hanoi, the Vietnamese government established two large industrial zones named Hoa Lac High Tech Park and Bac Phu Cat Industrial Zone, only 27-30 kilometers away from Hanoi.

With the aim of attracting foreign investors and hope to maintain economic growth at 8 percent per year, many industrial zones were set up in the outskirts of big cities throughout the whole country. These do not only attract foreign investors but also act as a magnet for surplus laborers from the countryside to move and work in the area. The local people who live near these zones have also changed their occupations from working in the rice fields to doing small business, serving the workers, for instance, driving xe om, offering rooms for rent, selling food and other everyday essential services. Only the old generations still maintain their work in the rice fields, whereas teenagers prefer to be employees in the factories. Working outdoors such as in the paddy fields may cause a darker skin complexion which is considered undesirable. Fair skin is an important indicator for urban or upper-middle-class female status. Thus, rather than working in the rice fields, many female factory workers are willing to work long hours up to 12 hours a day at least six or seven days a week. Sometimes, when a delivery is urgent, these workers have to work overnight (Nghiem Lien Huong 2004:301-303).

---

2 For more details of Vietnamese Industrial Parks, see http://www.grips.ac.jp/vietnam/VNIPs/home.htm
Government Policies and Their Impacts

**Campaign for a “clean and green city”**

As people have come from everywhere to do business in Hanoi the city has rapidly changed. The Vietnamese government has also worked very hard to transform Hanoi into a “modern city”. One of many projects that relates to street workers such as cyclo drivers is the Campaign for a Clean and Green City. This campaign aims to “clean up” untidy and disorderly activities in the streets, for example, re-arranging the parking places for motorcycles, prohibiting businesses on the footpaths, organizing street vendors, and encouraging street users to follow the traffic rules.

This campaign had a significant impact on the daily workers especially the hawkers who earn their living on the streets. There is no record of how many street vendors work in Hanoi. Peter Higgs (2003:75-88) argued that because of the open door policy sidewalk businesses have increased. Peasants from both the suburban areas and nearby provinces take their products to sell in the city while Hanoi residents also sell goods on the sidewalk in front of their houses. In the old quarter area, for example, vendors occupy some part of the narrow footpath in front most of the houses to do their business. In many cases this tiny space can makes extra money for the house owners either by letting other rent or by doing their own business. One businessman said, “I need to keep this space for the customers to park their motorbikes. If I do not have the space, customers do not want to buy my goods.” Son, a cyclo driver, told me, “These shopkeepers need to pay some money to the police. If not, the police will confiscate all the motorcycles there.” Whereas motorcycles occupy the pavements, pedestrians need to walk on the streets, and some foreigners are afraid to walk on the streets because of the risk of accidents.
Before the 2003 Southeast Asian Games (SEA Games) took place in Vietnam (which was the first time that Vietnam hosted the games), the Vietnamese government especially the local authorities in Hanoi city worked very hard to prepare the city to impress foreign visitors. They did this by cleaning up all the “ugly” activities in the city, such as fining the drivers who broke the traffic law and confiscating their vehicles and launching the clean and green city campaign. This policy impacted on migrant laborers who were prohibited from selling their goods on the streets in the restricted areas. It affected many daily workers. These people said, “We need to go back home. We cannot work here any longer. The police will arrest us. We will return after the SEA Games end.” Some said, “I believe, everything will be back to normal after the SEA Games.” In reality, however, many of them still worked while living in fear of the police.

With the decree of UBND TP Hanoi No 13/2002/NQ-CP, many footpaths were returned to pedestrians. The prohibition of businesses on the footpaths extended to many streets. This included bans on motorcycles parking on footpaths. The shopkeepers complained much about this issue but they could do nothing but reserve a tiny space in their shop for a parking place. At many intersections, the ward policemen (Cong an Phuong) kept watch on the footpath traders during the prohibited times. Police patrols checked many streets, especially in the old quarter area. The picture of hawkers running away from the police in advance of a patrol was a familiar scene. However, after the policemen were gone, they returned to do their business again. It was a kind of game between the police and street vendors. Ironically, the more footpath vendors were arrested, the more mobile peddlers increased. Many of them such as shoe shiners, souvenir sellers, and guidebook sellers avoided apprehension by carrying their products in black plastic bags. Dung, a child shoe shiner, said, “Since the arrival of the Cong an Phuong,
I have not had any customers. Yesterday, my friend was arrested and his shoe brush box and other accessories were confiscated."

Traffic in Hanoi

As Hanoi has grown in size and population, traffic flow within the city has become an important issue among commuters. Although the local authority has increased various types of public transport in order to meet the people needs, people still prefer to buy and use motorcycles to do their own business. A report from the Transport Development and Strategy Institute (TDSI), Ministry of Transport, indicated that in 2003 the ratio of cars and motorcycles in Hanoi increased around 13-18 percent for motorbikes and 10 percent for cars every year (TDSI 2003; Thanh Binh 1999). The number of motor vehicles in the city increased so rapidly that before the SEA Games the UBND TP Hanoi announced Decree No 98/2003/QD-UB halting services for registering new motorcycles in four inner districts of the city. This decree aimed at reducing the number of motorbikes in the streets during the SEA Games. Furthermore, the police began strict traffic law enforcement on drivers who broke the rules or drove without a license.

The increase in various forms of motor vehicles in Hanoi has created abundant problems in the city such as air and noise pollution, traffic jams during the rush hours, accidents, and high cost of fuel consumption. The problems of traffic congestion and road accidents are prominently reported in many newspapers. On every working day during the rush hours many major intersections in the city always experience traffic jams. It is demanding work for the policemen trying to keep the traffic moving. One reason for the traffic congestion is that drivers do not respect the traffic laws. In many one-way streets, it is common for
motorcyclists to drive the wrong way, even driving on the footpaths or not stopping at a red traffic light. This is the cause of many accidents. In 2003, 20,774 traffic accidents occurred nationwide, killing 11,864 people and injuring 20,704 people (Tuoi Tre Newspaper, 31 December 2003).

Because of the determined efforts of the traffic authorities, the Tuoi Tre story claimed, traffic congestion in the city has reduced and the number of road accidents has also decreased. For the whole country, traffic accidents had reduced by 27.2 percent and the death toll per accident to 8.1 percent, while the number of injured people had also dropped by 34.8 percent from 2002 (Tuoi Tre Newspaper, 31 December 2003). However, the number of registered motorcycles is still increasing. The road safety campaign needs to continue. Recently, a law requiring the wearing of helmets for all riders and passengers has been again enforced. Although the law was introduced five years ago, it was largely ignored. Many drivers complained that the helmet was not suitable for a warm and humid country like Vietnam. Others that it was like wearing a “rice cooker” on the roads. Some of them were more concerned about how they looked than the safety issue. They feared looking stupid. “I can't imagine how I will look like when I'm wearing a rice cooker” (Cited from BBC News: ASIA-PACIFIC Helmet fever sweeps, 18 May, 2001).

Another problem is that the streets in Hanoi and many historical cities in Vietnam are short and narrow. These are not suitable for big vehicles passing through, only for bicycles, motorcycles and cyclos. A report indicated that 69.6 percent of the city’s roads are less than 500 meters in length and 60 percent of the roads are less than 10 meters wide. Many streets are less than 7 meters wide (Thanh Binh 1999:24). Many footpaths in the old quarter area are very narrow and some streets do not have any footpaths. The footpaths in the rest of the streets are generally blocked by parked motorbikes and stalls. Many intersections lack traffic lights or flyovers for both vehicles and people. These cause traffic congestion.
Pictures of confiscated motorcycles are often published in daily newspapers. During the clean and green city campaign, almost 7,200 motorcycles were confiscated and the fine was more than 122 million VND (Hanoi Moi Newspaper, 12 November 2003).

Figure 7.3 Ward Policemen (Cong an Phuong) overseeing organized vehicle parking on the footpath at Lang Ha Street. Photographed by Khanh Linh. Hanoi Moi Newspaper, 12 November 2003.
During the SEA Games, cyclos appeared to have more advantages than other forms of low-cost transportation in the city. The local authorities concentrated on motorcycles (xe may) and motorcycles taxi drivers (xe om) who broke the traffic laws. Cyclos for tourists (xich lo cho khach), which had been already reorganized, seemed to draw less attention from the police. However, Anh Thu, a manager of Sans Soucis tourist cyclo company, always reminded all his drivers of the new traffic restrictions. Anh Thu said, "This is a special event. All cyclo drivers must present a good impression to the foreigners, to draw them back to Hanoi. ...On this occasion, there are more customers than usual. We work hard during the SEA Games. Some days there are no cyclos available for service, they are occupied all day long. The drivers are very happy to receive tips. We decorate the vehicles by putting small Southeast Asian flags on them all for this special event".
A new law banning cyclos

The years 1994-1995 can be called "the high tide of cyclos" in Hanoi. During that period, people said, "Only cyclos and bicycles were popular among ordinary people. These kinds of vehicles could go anywhere. The rich people had their own motorcycles but they were expensive." Up to those years, increased demand for transport had seen the number of cyclos dramatically increase. Figures provided by the Hanoi traffic police indicated that drivers from outside Hanoi province (xich lo ngoai tinh) who registered to work in Hanoi rose from 3,324 drivers in 1990 to around 5,000 drivers in 1995. These figures did not include many who did not register their vehicles (Nguyen Van Chinh 1997:49).

During that time, cyclos for passengers (xich lo cho khach) did not look attractive like they do today, even though the vehicle's body was the same. Many people said, "The body of the cyclos at that time looked like it does today but it was not beautiful and clean. Many of them were rusty and decayed. The drivers had no uniforms. Sometimes they wore dirty clothes. The drivers were always drunk, spoke coarse language, and it looked dangerous to take a ride with them alone at night." One said, "Cyclos for passengers in the past were like the goods-carrying cyclos now. They looked the same." Even though cyclos look better today, many Hanoians still recall their negative image in the past when the drivers were involved with gangs and crimes, especially a group of cyclos at Dong Xuan Market in the old quarter, which was the largest group in that time.

The number of cyclos gradually decreased when motorcycle taxis (xe om) were introduced in Hanoi in around 1993. The xe om seems to have been welcomed by people in the cities because of their cost and convenience. The era of man-powered vehicles had ended and the
motor-powered vehicle age had begun. In other countries in Southeast Asia, pedicabs were restricted or eliminated in the capital city. The Samlor in Bangkok was prohibited in 1960 whereas becak was forced out of Jakarta in 1970 (Textor 1961; Azuma 2001). The trisha in Malaysia was confined to specific streets in 1969 (Rimmer 1978.) In April 2005, the Burmese Government increased the penalty for sai kaa drivers who broke the traffic laws. In Vietnam, like other countries in the region, the Hanoi Peoples Committee promulgated decree No 21/2001 banning cyclos in restricted areas during the rush hours of 6.30-8.30 am and 4.30-6.00 pm and prohibited cyclos from many areas during the entire day.

![Figure 7.5 The confiscated cyclos depot. Photographed by Richard L'Anson. Chasing Rickshaws. Victoria: Lonely Planet Publications pp 93.](image)

The reasons given for banning pedicabs elsewhere were the obstruction of traffic flow, dangerous driving habits and the potential dangers to the passengers. William Lim (1975:130) argued that the motivation behind some of these actions was the concern for national prestige and image. These forms of transportation presented an image of underdevelopment as in President Sukarno's words, "... youths of Indonesia, you can become a coolie, but do not become a becak driver,
because that is humiliating work..." (William Lim 1975: 130). Or “…The last example of man exploiting man...” (Wheeler 1998: 162). In Vietnam, the reason for prohibiting cyclos was, as in other countries, the obstruction of the flow of motor traffic because of their slow speed. However, it is doubtful that the removal of slower vehicles such as cyclos from streets can dramatically improve the traffic flow in the city, especially when other vehicles do not follow the traffic laws. Many motorcycles do not stop at red lights, some use the wrong lanes, drive against the traffic flow, park in the main traffic lane and even drive on the footpaths. Parked cars and trucks frequently block the passage of traffic. The main traffic problems in Hanoi are caused by drivers who do not obey the traffic laws. Yet since this decree has been implemented, many old cyclos have been confiscated and destroyed. Nowadays, the older cyclos used both for carrying goods and for passengers are very hard to find in Hanoi, whereas the new form of cyclos for tourists are plentiful in many areas. The implementation of the decree seems to have discriminated against some types of cyclos as if aimed at clean the old and dirty cyclos out of streets.

“The decree does not ban cyclos for tourists. If it banned us how could I have registered the company for doing business with the tourists? The decree bans the old cyclos (both cyclos for passengers and xich lo cho hang) and operates only in the inner city. They can work outside the restricted areas. No policemen can arrest them,” Anh Thu said.
Tourism policy and cultural heritage

The tourism industry in Vietnam has developed very quickly and has become one of the government's important strategies in order to boost the whole country's economic growth. In the early 1980s, the visitors mostly came from the socialist countries of Europe or from Cuba. In 1988, at the point when Vietnam was just opening its doors to non-socialist countries, the number of visitors was 40,000 people (Kennedy and Williams 2001:139). Although in that period much of the infrastructure was poor and uncomfortable—for instance, there was a shortage of hotels, traveling conditions were difficult and communications infrastructure was in bad repair—the revenue from tourism industry in 1988 was already around US $ 57 million dollars (Kennedy and Williams 2001:139). In 1990, the Vietnamese government declared a "Visit Vietnam Year" campaign and continued the expansion of the tourism industry in the whole country. In 1994, over one million overseas tourists visited Vietnam and in early 1995 the government signed cooperation agreements with eight countries and over 170 travel agencies throughout the world to develop the tourism industry (Kennedy and Williams 2001:140).

According to the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT), the number of visitors continued to increase rapidly. Their figures showed that international visitors made up to 2.5 million people in 2004, a 20.5 percent increase compared with 2003, and a 36.81 percent increase since 2000. Mr. Tu, Vice General Director of VNAT, expected that there would be 3.5 million foreign tourists and roughly 17 million domestic tourists by the end of 2005, which would bring in US $4.5 billion dollars in total revenue (Vietnam Economic News, 15 July 2005).
With this huge potential income, in the past four years the government has also made large financial investments to improve tourism infrastructure such as roads, accommodation, and other facilities, as well as improving the quality of service at hotels, restaurants, and tourist agencies. Various new kinds of accommodation have been built in many tourist towns. Public transportation services such as buses and trains linking major cities and tourist destinations have also improved in frequency, quantity and quality. The cyclos seen on the streets today are in part the result of this policy of improving the quality of service. The old "ugly" cyclos have faded out and a new form of cyclos has emerged. This change was also due to the initiative of the drivers themselves. The drivers grouped themselves and established a company operating cyclos for service to tourists. The old rusted cyclos were changed to aluminized cyclos and the seats covered with white or red cloth which looked clean and neat. Many cyclos were decorated with brightly colored tassels and neat fringes, bells were added and the wheel hubs, frames and spokes were polished until they gleamed. The drivers also wore a uniform: a white polo shirt with a white hat both sporting the company logo and dark pants. The previous image of dangerous, drunk drivers, speaking coarse language were gone. Many of the drivers nowadays can communicate in basic English, which they learn and practice at home. The main customers are tourists or foreigners. A new image has been created for the cyclos and local people called them *xich lo cao cap* which means "elite" or "aristocratic cyclos". These vehicles are not used for local people's transport anymore.

Furthermore, in order to increase the visitors in Vietnam, the government recently announced that November 23rd every year would become Vietnam Cultural Heritage Day. The main aim of the declaration is to encourage local people's awareness for preserving and promoting the cultural values (*gia tri van hoa*) and historical relics (*di tich lich su*) located in their communities. The government also makes use of cultural
heritage to promote the Vietnamese tourism industry as well. Currently, Vietnam has many famous world heritage sites that attract the tourists from over the world. For example Ha Long Bay in Quang Ninh Province, Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park in Quang Binh Province, Hoi An and My Son in Quang Nam Province, and several important cultural and historical cities such as Hanoi and Hue. These provide opportunities to present Vietnam’s cultural heritage to the world. Many tour agencies take this chance to operate tour programs in Cultural Heritage Cities as well as visiting many craft villages on the way. And cyclos are chosen as vehicles for sightseeing in these ancient towns.

Tourists find it interesting to ride by cyclo in Hanoi to view the city's architecturally-distinct buildings from the French colonial period, old Vietnamese houses, old Chinese merchant houses ancient temples, landscaped lakes and many cultural relics. Over time cyclo drivers have responded to tourists' tastes to develop a rich and interesting itinerary. A highlight of the Hanoi city tour is to take the visitors through the old quarter to view the bustling activities of this still important commercial area. One sees long convoys of tourists being driven through its streets every day.

As historical cities such as Hanoi with many old buildings and narrow streets are unsuitable for big vehicles, cyclos seem to be particularly suitable for sightseeing. Indeed, the increasing numbers of trucks and other large passenger vehicles found in newly developed roads of the city are unsuited to the narrow streets of the old quarter. The heavy modern vehicles create vibrations that cause damage to the old buildings. Taking light vehicles such as cyclos on tour to view the old buildings seems to be an appropriate solution for both cyclo drivers and old architectural buildings. Since cyclos are facing difficulties from high competition with other public transport in the city and from the prohibition of their use in other areas, this change of function into a vehicle for tourists appears to the drivers as a timely alternative. The government
has accepted the new image of cyclos, which is suitable to its image of Hanoi as both a modern and historical city. The drivers are glad to have the regular customers with less competition, a higher income and good tips from foreigners. Some tourists also seem impressed with the colonial-style vehicle used for their city tour. Therefore, many five star hotels such as the Hilton Hotel, Sofitel Metropole, Hanoi Daewoo and Hanoi Tower have their own sightseeing cyclos to serve their guests.

Cyclos have thus experienced yet another change. The government's endeavor to boost economic growth by promoting heritage tourism has increased the number of tourists visiting Vietnam. The shift in perspective has been advantageous for cyclo drivers in Hanoi, who have responded readily to the new opportunity to make a living by offering their services in the new industry. The more tourists arrive, the better their business. It might now be said that as long as the city still has visitors, cyclos will not disappear from the city. Nowadays, following the Hanoi model, many tourist towns have plans to introduce cyclos for tourists. For example, the Peoples Committee in Ho Chi Minh City has accepted a plan to operate cyclo tours in the city (Vietnam News: 17 September 2003). This plan seems to recognize the importance of cyclos as an aspect of the heritage of Vietnam. There are parallels with Thailand, where the national tourism authority runs many tour programs presenting Thai culture to the world that aim to increase the number of visitors. One strategy that the tourism authority uses is presenting the tuk tuk (a three wheeled motor taxi) as an image of Thailand, with the aim to attract foreigners to come to Thailand. Today a ride by cyclo has become for many tourists a memorable part of their visit to Hanoi. One can even say that the cyclo has become a new symbol of Hanoi. In this respect, the fates of the cyclo and of Hanoi itself have converged.
Chapter 8

Conclusion: The Future of Cyclos in Hanoi

For many rural migrants to Hanoi the cyclo has been a source of livelihood, a way to gain access to the city and a kind of readily available work that has helped them support their families back home. Yet if the experience of other cities in Southeast Asia can be taken as a guide, it might seem that it will not stay this way for long. Throughout the region, the once ubiquitous three wheeled vehicles that provided work for migrants and transport for urban people have been eliminated, driven out by changes in technology, by economic development and also by cultural aspirations to create more orderly or technologically efficient modern cities. Cyclo drivers in Hanoi are keenly aware of the many difficulties they face. These include competition for road space with growing numbers of motor vehicles and economic competition with cheaper and more efficient forms of public transport. Economic and administrative
Conclusion: The Future of Cyclos in Hanoi

barriers continue to make migration to the city difficult. The work is hard and drivers face many difficulties earning a stable living and making a home for themselves in the city. They encounter negative attitudes among more established urban residents and are the target of state policies that aim to make Hanoi into a modern city.

My first encounter with cyclo drivers in Hanoi was as a tourist. In the course of my subsequent ethnographic research on cyclos in the capital city I delved much more deeply into this way of making a living. I made many acquaintances who are cyclo drivers and got an insight into the hardships that they face in a city full of the restless aspiration to trade an old way of life for the new. I found myself sometimes wondering if the cyclo would disappear from Hanoi, whether this mode of transport was destined to become a historical vestige, or just a nostalgic memory held by residents of Hanoi and visitors to the city of a way of life that has been abandoned as the capital has moved on and developed. Certainly this kind of attitude is already evident in the tourist souvenirs available in downtown Hanoi and its international hotels and airport, of small reproductions of cyclos: a symbol of a way of life not found in other countries, and some may assume, that has all-but disappeared in Hanoi. And yet many people who spend time in Hanoi see cyclos as a symbol of the city precisely because they have seen them on the streets, taken a ride or struck up friendships with the drivers. Indeed, the convoys of newly-refurbished vehicles that peddle tour groups through the downtown tourist quarter are one striking piece of evidence that the cyclo has not disappeared but has adapted and changed. Migrants continue to arrive in the city and find work as a cyclo driver, perhaps working for a tourist company or developing long-term relationships with new clients such as resident foreign workers. This suggests that in the face of major changes to urban life and the modernization of the city, the cyclo has stayed relevant, cyclo drivers have continued to find a way to make a living and have adjusted to the times. This thesis has investigated their

212
achievements in doing so, who the drivers are, what obstacles they face and how they have adapted their livelihood to the changing economic and cultural landscape of Hanoi.

In the past, Hanoi, like other cities in Southeast Asia, was small. The streets and alleyways were narrow. The main forms of transportation were walking, animal-drawn vehicles, watercraft and human powered vehicles such as rickshaws, bicycles and cyclos. Traveling by these means, people could reach all destinations in the city within a short time. This is no longer possible as the land area occupied by the city has expanded dramatically. New residential areas continue to be built on the outskirts of the ever-growing city. This has increased demand for kinds of commuter transportation that are able to quickly cover long distances. Motorized vehicles have become the increasingly dominant form of public and private urban transportation. Older forms such as cyclos seem ill-suited to contemporary urban conditions. People prefer to travel by much faster and often cheaper motorcycle taxis or bus. The previous status of cyclos as one of the cheapest and most effective forms of urban transport is being supplanted by other kinds of vehicles. And indeed many of the people who used to work as cyclo drivers now prefer to work as a motorcycle taxi driver, using a second-hand motorcycle or a cheap Chinese motorbike.

The cyclo drivers who work in this low-paid job mostly are immigrants from the countryside. These people come to large cities to earn money to support their family. Many of them come alone. Sometimes husbands and wives who go to the city leave their children with their grandparents at home in the village. Studies on migration issues in Southeast Asia, particularly in Vietnam, have noted that economic reasons were the main factor pushing the exodus of migrants from rural to urban areas. In this research, I found that some Vietnamese cultural values also encourage a large number of people to quit their villages. For young single people, the reasons for moving include the fear
of lagging behind their peers and the desire to explore new experiences in the city as well as accumulating money to fulfill their dreams. Married migrants move to work in the city for the sake of their children’s education. They invest in their children’s future with the hope that the children will study as much as possible. They do not want their children to face hardships like them. Furthermore, many are motivated by the obligation to return filial piety to their aging parents who can no longer work, as a duty that is expected of both sons and daughters. Many laborers decide to leave the countryside for a combination of these reasons: to support their household’s economy and their parents as well as to invest in their children’s education.

The patterns of rural-urban migration in Vietnam are the same as other countries in Southeast Asia. The migrants make use of networks of relatives and friends for assistance or are persuaded by their kin to move and work in the city. Kinsfolk play an important role in supporting the newcomers during their stay in the city. Whenever the workers need help, their kinsmen or women are the first people that they will ask for support. Kin also provide the migrants information about available jobs in the city. It is often the case that kinsfolk can serve as a personal reference for the immigrants to apply for jobs. Moreover, kin often act as recruiters: when they visit home they might look for relatives or friends who can serve as workers in urban businesses and households.

A common way for migrants to contact people in their home village is to pass messages through those who visit home or are temporarily visiting the city. As mentioned in Chapter 3 and 5, cyclo drivers usually stay close together in the same area so when one returns home for a visit, the others will know. They might take this opportunity to send messages to their family. When they return to Hanoi, their neighbors and friends might use the same method to contact their loved ones in the city. For married migrants, it is not often that husbands and wives can visit home at the same time. However, on special events such as the
Conclusion: The Future of Cyclos in Hanoi

Vietnamese New Year and funerals of close relatives, both single and married workers will take a day off and return home. While many migrants still consider themselves as members in of their native village and often make temporary visits home, some of them prefer to stay permanently in the city. Some entertain ideas of raising a family in the city. In reality, they cannot. Residential laws allow them to stay and work only for a short period.

Quitting jobs in the city and returning home also seems to be impossible for them. When migrant workers get older, they usually try to change their job. For example, many cyclo drivers have become xe om drivers or do other jobs in the city that are less demanding. They will return home only when they feel too old to work in the city. This floating pattern of migration and return has no end. Even though individuals quit jobs in the city because of their old age, the next generation still follows in their footsteps. The cycle of rural-urban migrations will continue as long as an imbalance between rural and urban areas still exists.

To become a cyclo driver in Hanoi sometimes is not easy for the migrants. Although this job does not require a high level of knowledge, it needs some initial savings. As discussed in Chapter 4, the novice drivers who have enough funding prefer to work with the tourist cyclo companies. They need to follow the company rules, and then they get their share of the divided income. But those who do not have enough money to work for these companies need to work as private cyclo drivers. These drivers need to learn many new things such as traffic regulations, how to deal with the policemen, how to get customers.

Earning money as a cyclo driver is not as simple as one might think. Their customers, nowadays, are very limited and belong to particular groups. Some days, the drivers might not get any fares at all. On an unlucky day, they might need to bribe a policeman as well. Furthermore, competition among the drivers is an everyday problem. If they employ “tricks,” they might become “losers” and be unable to
Conclusion: The Future of Cyclos in Hanoi

compete any longer. To succeed, the drivers must have strategies and the strategies of each driver group are different. Many private cyclo drivers get together into informal groups in order to help their members. These drivers usually work in the same areas. Sometimes, it looks like they work alone. However, informal groups are formed whenever there is a demand from customers for more than one cyclo. The drivers who are not in that group cannot join the team.

Some drivers employ the tactic of building relationships between themselves and an employer in order to get regular work. They know that peddling cyclos is an insecure job. The way to make their income more secure is to get repeat passengers. Many drivers are employed as personal cyclo drivers, doing regular jobs for an employer such as taking their children to school. Likewise, many xich lo cho hang nowadays do not seek new customers. Rather, they attempt to maintain good relationships with their regular customers so that they will continue to get more work in the future. Similarly, some xich lo tu nhan drivers try to create long-term relationships with foreigners. The drivers know that unlike tourists, some foreigners spend a long time working in Hanoi. Hence, they try to create ongoing conversations and good friendships with the passengers during a trip as well as offer them other services on the following days. If they are lucky, the good relationship improves. Tomorrow they will get more work and money.

As positive relationships develop, the exchange relationship between the drivers and their regular customers gradually become closer. The employers act as patrons providing work and benefits to the drivers who reciprocate with honest labour and reliable assistance. This kind of working relationship follows the pattern of a patron-client relationship. By contrast, this pattern is less developed among the cyclo drivers who work as employees for one of the tourist cyclo companies or those who are based at one of Hanoi’s luxury hotels. One thing they share in common is that the work demands great physical energy; and the income is
generally low. That is why many drivers always say how difficult it is to be a cyclo driver. As one driver, Anh Bong told me, "Dap xich lo la kho khan lam," working as a cyclo driver is a very hard job.

"Living on the streets, it is very hard to earn money; living at home one has few physical or material comforts." This comment by another cyclo driver appears to vividly describe the drivers' lives in Hanoi. In the streets they face high competition among drivers and other road users. As for their accommodation, they need to live somewhere cheap in order to save money. The migrants who come to work alone tend to stay in a collective rented room (nha tro tap the) and share other facilities with their roommates. Life in rented accommodation is seen by many as impersonal. No one takes responsibility to clean the room and communal toilet. A husband and wife will prefer to rent a private room for themselves (nha tro phong rieng) which costs more than nha tro tap the. Tenants need to take care that their own property is secure as there is no redress for their losses.

Life in an nha tro, on the one hand, seems to benefit the cyclo drivers as a way to obtain support from fellow migrants. Whenever any of them experience difficulties in any matter, they may ask for assistance from their roommates and learn from others how to deal with problems. Every day after work the drivers usually get together and share experiences gained during the day. This is considered a valuable learning opportunity by the newcomers. On the other hand, staying for so long in such a small room can cause conflicts among roommates. To avoid conflicts, drivers tend to ignore some of those with whom they share their rooms and create their own support group. This in-group usually consists of a small number of people and plays an important role in helping the drivers resolve their problems and relieve their tension. They always share their free time with the same friends, eating out and spending their leisure time together.
Working seven-day weeks, as most cyclo drivers do, causes them much tension. They earn money on a job-by-job or day-to-day basis. If they take a break for a day, they will forgo income on that day. This regime allows them few chances to take a holiday and relax. Although most of the drivers know all the famous tourist attractions in the city, many of them would never think to visit those places for recreation. Instead they usually relieve their tension by hanging out with their close friends. Talking, sipping tea, and smoking tobacco are the most favorite activities because they cost them less money.

Residents of the xom bui the slum area of Hanoi where many cyclo drivers live lack the quality of life and infrastructure enjoyed by people in other parts of the city. They are also discriminated against by other city dwellers and the local authorities. Hanoians usually speak of this area in negative tones. They view this area as a nest of vice and outlawed activities like drug use, which they sometimes link to the poverty and low education of the migrants. In response, the migrants argue that drugs are found everywhere, even among wealthy or well-educated people such as university students. However, the migrant laborers who reside in the xom bui have no choice. They need to work and stay cheaply in the city and suffer the discrimination.

Hanoi people's attitude toward these laborers appears to be complex and depends upon the context. On the one hand, urban people view migrant laborers as a source of many social problems in the city, for example, overcrowding, poor hygiene, social disorder, and crimes such as prostitution, theft and other illegal activities. Some Hanoi residents consider the migrants as outsiders who are taking short-term advantage of the urban community and offer little to the city in return. On the other hand, many Hanoians view migrant workers as diligent and willing to do hard work or the kind of jobs that are abandoned by more established city dwellers. The migrants often do unskilled jobs such as day work at
Conclusion: The Future of Cyclos in Hanoi

Conclusion: The Future of Cyclos in Hanoi

construction sites, scavenging, household domestic labor, working as kitchen hands, porters in markets and other physical labor.

Many of these migrant workers feel that city people try to take advantage of them by giving them low fares and treating them as second-class citizens. Urban people yell or curse at them, or force them away from their storefronts. Some drivers hit cyclos with their cars. Sometimes there is a 'sweep' by local authorities that eliminates them from the cityscape like so much trash, as happened during the month-long ban that was imposed on street vendors before the SEA Games. It sometimes seems to the cyclo drivers like they have no rights, no power, no say, and no meaning in society. They have to conform to city people's demands. In reality, many Hanoi residents are themselves migrants from other provinces who have found a way to stay in the city. Although they too were once newcomers, now it seems they do not welcome the new arrivals.

Tourists often view these street venders as trying to take advantage of them by using all sorts of ruses to sell their products and services and frequently invading their personal space, as when venders try to put some souvenirs in the tourists' hand or the drivers follow alongside them on their cyclo or xe om trying to invite them to be their customers. It cannot be denied, however, that the workers view the tourists as a source of their income. They try every tactic to get money from them, for example, raising the fare, thrusting souvenirs in front of the tourists, and offering their services again and again. When they are not successful gaining business, they may speak rudely about the tourists. The consequence is that some tourists develop negative attitudes toward the street workers.

The implementation of government policies has also impacted on cyclo drivers. The decree No 21/2001 banned cyclos working in many areas in the inner city. Similar to the situation in many countries in Southeast Asia, the government sought to eliminate the use of these
small transport vehicles, even though the aim, to increase traffic flow in the city, appears to have failed as more and more new vehicles flood the streets and many of their drivers create even worse obstructions than the cyclo drivers. The majority of cyclo drivers in Hanoi quit their jobs. Those few workers who still wanted to pursue this job needed to work outside the prohibited areas, where formerly some of them earned their best business.

Like other capital cities in Southeast Asia, Hanoi is on an aspirational track to become a model modern city. One campaign that impacted on street users was the “city clean and green campaign.” The objective of this campaign was to create a new image of Hanoi as a modern and civil city in order to impress foreigners who participated in the 2003 SEA Games in Hanoi. Many activities on the streets that were seen as untidy or unruly were reorganized, for instance, re-arranging the parking places for motorcycles, prohibiting businesses on the footpaths, banning or re-organizing street vendors, and encouraging street users to follow the traffic rules. The traffic police strictly enforced the road rules, penalizing road users who broke the laws including cyclo drivers.

These regulations have created new difficulties for the people making a living in Hanoi as cyclo drivers. Nonetheless, one benefit of these policies has been to bring cyclos out of their previous function as an all-purpose form of local urban transport and to place them in a new role as vehicles for sightseeing. Many drivers decided to refurbish their vehicles and work with tourist cyclo companies. The policies forced them to change from their previous function as vehicles for local people to vehicles for tourists. Hanoi city has become home to a new kind of ‘high-class’ cyclo which serves the needs of its tourist economy. The drivers are also glad to have a new stable group of customers and less competition with other public transport.
Conclusion: The Future of Cyclos in Hanoi

In addition, the push to promote heritage tourism in Vietnam has had an indirect positive impact on the cyclo business. Many tourists who come to Vietnam want to take a cyclo on an urban sightseeing tour. Viewing the old architectural colonial buildings and old Vietnamese houses, visiting the ancient temples and other cultural relics in Hanoi as well as getting close to the life of people in Hanoi’s famous old quarter are the highlights of a tour of the city by cyclo. Whether working for a company that has a contract with tour groups or picking up tourists on an individual basis, cyclo drivers have quickly responded to this demand, decorating their vehicles, practicing a foreign language and sharing their knowledge with rural kin who come to the city to seek work as drivers. The innovations made by cyclo drivers in responding to and helping to open up this new economic niche have been accepted by the urban authorities and their success has reversed expectations among many residents of the city that the cyclo was on the way out. Nowadays, many tourist destinations in Vietnam have adopted plans to operate cyclo city tours similar to those in Hanoi. If this trend continues, it suggests that the more Vietnam opens to tourism, the more cyclos might be expected to increase. This implies that cyclos will remain for the foreseeable future a continuing source of livelihood for rural migrants to Vietnam’s cities.
Appendix

Unofficial translation

Hanoi City People’s Committee
Socialist Republic of Vietnam

Independence - Freedom – Happiness

INTERIM REGULATIONS ON RE-ARRANGING THE ORDER AND MANAGING PROVINCIAL WORKERS COMING TO HANOI FOR SEEKING JOB

(Enclosed with the Decision No. 3189 dated 26 August 1995 by Hanoi City People’s Committee)


To gradually dealing with the disorder caused by "labor markets" to the public security and city's landscape; practicing State administration on labor in Hanoi location and regulations specified in Labor Code, provincial workers coming to Hanoi for seeking Job and their employers have to comply adequately with labor legislation and the following regulations of HNCPC:

Article 1: As for the workers

1.1 Provincial workers must register for their provisional staying with ward police agent and comply with all necessary formalities to have the temporary labor card and pay a fee of 10,000 VND/ time, even in case of extending 3-month validity pursuant to regulations of People's Committee where they have registered for staying provisionally.
Appendix

The papers required for granting cards including:

- The introduction granted by local government where they reside to whom coming to Hanoi for seeking job.
- Identity card or certificate of personal identity
- The registry of provisional staying granted by the ward police agent
- Two photographs 3 x 4 size

1.2 The labor card signed and issued by DOLISA commonly in force with 3 months, when it expires, workers must hand in a request for extend its validity if they have demand for longer staying in Hanoi. Within 3 months, if any changes happen, the local police agent must be informed for its convenience in monitoring and managing.

1.3 During the time of waiting for job, workers must gather in the permitted places, they must not gather or wander in pavements, streets and public places. In night-time, they must go back to place where they have registered for staying provisionally. This regulation is applied to the provincial workers coming into city's inlaying areas for seeking Job.

1.4 For provincial workers who have found job, they must present at the People's Committee of ward where they have registered for staying provisionally to handle necessary procedures to get labor card. Once the new card granted could they go on working in Hanoi.

Article 2: As for the employers

2.1 Only employ provincial workers who have been granted with temporary labor card.

2.2 If they employ fewer than 10 workers, they can contact directly with workers in permitted places.

If they employ 10 workers and over they are required to register with Employment Promotion Centers of the city.

2.3 When employing workers, all employers must observe the regulations specified in Labour Code and other ones stipulated by the city related to labor relation.
Article 3: As for the branches

3.1 Department of Labor- Invalids and Social Affairs:

- Carrying out the administration of this labor force through registering and issuing the temporary labor card; introducing and providing appropriate conditions for employers when they have request for hiring provincial workers via Employment Promotion Centers.

- Formulating and submitting to HNCPC the interim regulations related to administrative sanctions applied for employers and workers who acting in breach of the provisions of Labor Code or city's regulations.

- Bearing responsibility to generalize reports and promote promptly solutions on removing obstacles during implementation process and make a proposal financial statement to HNCPC for getting approval.

- Directing Employment Promotion Centers under DOLISA to closely coordinate with wards to grasp the number of provincial workers to control and place employment.

3.2 The city police

- Being the main responsible agent for directing district to address basically the situation of disorder of transportation security in urban areas caused by the formation of labor market, with the coordination of DOLISA and relevant branches.

- Directing the district police agents and guiding local police in coordination with street defense boards to provide introduction and gather provincial workers in pubic places waiting for job to permitted places.

- Organizing the registry for provisional staying and managing provincial workers coming to the city for seeking job.

- Taking measures in time and dealing strictly with those who break the law and violate the Decree 36/CP of Government and city's regulations.

Every quarter, it bears responsibility of reporting HNCPC the number of provincial workers residing in Hanoi (DOLISA shall be the receiving place for reports).
3.3 Organization Board of City Government

- Bearing responsibility to supplement missions and set up norm on labor management by the current scheme and rearrange the personals in labor management division in wards.

**Article 4: As for Ward People's Committee**

- The chairperson of the district People's Committee holds the responsibility under HNCPC the rearrangement the order and management of provincial workers in the district location.

  - Making the specific plan to direct wards to implement, at the same time to define the places where provincial workers can wait for job, not to let them gather in utter disorder as pavements, streets or public places.

  - Making monthly reports to HNCPC about the implementing progress and emerging matters during its realization (DOLISA will be the receiver of reports, then synthesize and submit to the HNCPC).

**Article 5:** DOLISA will be main responsible agent with assistance of other relevant branches to help HNCPC to carry out inspecting and checking agencies, units, collectives and individuals who having hired and/or employed provincial workers; workers or employers will be liable to administrative sanctions if any violations related to Labor Code and/or city's regulations are found.

**Article 6:** This interim regulation will be taken into effect on the date of signing. Any obstacles faced during its implementation process will be presented by District People's Committee and relevant branches to HNCPC (through DOLISA) to amend and supplement.

FOR HANOI CITY PEOPLE'S COMMITTEE

Deputy Chairman

NGUYEN TRIEU HAI

(Signed)

(cited from Ha Thi Phong Tien and Ha Quang Ngoc 2001: 225-230)


Bibliography


Bibliography


Pannee Bualek, 1999. ทุกการเก็บประวัติศาสตร์แรงงานไทย (The Rickshaws Coolies and History of Thai laborers). กรุงเทพ (Bangkok): สำนักพิมพ์มั่นไผ่ ในนาม (Murn Boran Publisher).


Bibliography


