Social Networks along the Migration Cycle between Vietnam and Korea: Opportunities or Obstacles for Temporary Labour Migrants?

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DECLARATION

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes. All the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

Nu Nguyet Anh Nguyen
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### ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3D</td>
<td>dirty, dangerous and difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMC</td>
<td>Ansan Multicultural Centre in Ansan city, Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMCSC</td>
<td>Ansan Migrant Community Service Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOLAB</td>
<td>Department of Overseas Labour, Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOLISA</td>
<td>Department of Labour - Invalids and Social Affairs, Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPP</td>
<td>Employment Permit Program, Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPS</td>
<td>Employment Permit System, Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITTP</td>
<td>Industrial and Technical Training Program, Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KF SB</td>
<td>Korea Federation of Small and Medium Business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KITCO</td>
<td>Korea International Training Cooperation Corps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KOLAF</td>
<td>Korean Labour Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KRW</td>
<td>Korean Won</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOLISA</td>
<td>Ministry of Labour - Invalids and Social Affairs, Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOU</td>
<td>Memorandum of Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non-government Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMBs</td>
<td>Korean Small- and Medium-Sized Businesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOLISA</td>
<td>Service of Labour - Invalids and Social Affairs, Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UFC</td>
<td>Uijeongbu Support Centre for Foreign Workers, Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USD</td>
<td>United States Dollars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VND</td>
<td>Vietnam Dong</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE OF CONTENT

DECLARATION .......................................................................................................................... I

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ......................................................................................................... II

ACRONYMS ............................................................................................................................ III

TABLE OF CONTENTS ........................................................................................................... IV

LIST OF TABLES .................................................................................................................... V

LIST OF FIGURES ................................................................................................................... VI

ABSTRACT .............................................................................................................................. VII

Chapter 1: Temporary labour migration ................................................................................. 1

1.1 Introduction ...................................................................................................................... 1
    1.1.1 Aims of the Research ............................................................................................... 1
    1.1.2 Research Gap .......................................................................................................... 2
1.2 Evolution of Intra-Asian Migration .................................................................................. 8
    1.2.1 Intra-Asian Temporary Labour Migration ............................................................... 10
    1.2.2 Setting the Scene: The Vietnam-Korea Link ......................................................... 21
1.3 This Thesis’ Contributions: Its Aims and Objectives .................................................... 35
1.4 Research Questions ....................................................................................................... 39
1.5 Theoretical framework ................................................................................................. 40
1.6 Methodological approach ........................................................................................................... 41
1.7 Structure of the Thesis ............................................................................................................... 42

Chapter 2: Temporary Contract Migration and Network-Based Theory of Social Capital:
Review of the Literature ............................................................................................................... 44

2.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................................... 44
2.2 The Study of Temporary Labour Migration, Social Capital, and Social Network ............... 46
2.3 Theory of Social Capital .......................................................................................................... 49
   2.3.1 The Concept of Social Capital .......................................................................................... 50
   2.3.2 Effects of Trust and Norms of Reciprocity on the Formation of Social Capital in Vietnamese Society ............................................................... 56
2.4 Network-Based Theory of Social Capital ............................................................................. 60
   2.4.1 The Concept of Social Networks ...................................................................................... 61
   2.4.2 Studying and Analysing the Social Networks in the Context of Temporary Contract Migration ............................................................................. 63
2.5 Concluding Remarks .............................................................................................................. 78

Chapter 3: Research Methodology and Methods ........................................................................ 82

3.1 Methodological Approach ...................................................................................................... 83
   3.1.1 Rationale for Conducting Qualitative Research ............................................................. 83
   3.1.2 Methodology of Migration and Social Network Research .............................................. 84
3.2 Primary Data Collection Methods ......................................................................................... 88
   3.2.1 Participant Observations .................................................................................................. 88
   3.2.2 In-Depth Interviews ......................................................................................................... 91
3.3 Sampling and Recruiting ....................................................................................................... 95
   3.3.1 Target Population ............................................................................................................ 95
   3.3.2 Sampling Strategy ............................................................................................................ 97
Chapter 4: Networks for Preparation to Migrate in the Pre-Departure Phase .............. 123

4.1 Job Search, Recruitment and Migration .......................................................... 126
   4.1.1 The Role of Relatives and Neighbours ..................................................... 128
   4.1.2 The Role of Commercial Brokers ............................................................ 130
   4.1.3 The Role of Recruiters ............................................................................ 142
   4.1.4 The Role of Central and Local Authorities .............................................. 151
4.2 Arrangement of Migration Fees ......................................................................... 157
   4.2.1 Bonding Ties ......................................................................................... 159
   4.2.2 Bridging Ties ......................................................................................... 164
4.3 Concluding Remarks ......................................................................................... 168
Chapter 5: Networks for “Making Money” and Management of Remittances while Working Abroad

5.1 Networks in the Search of Jobs
   5.1.1. Networks for Documented Migrant Workers
   5.1.2. Networks for Undocumented Migrant Workers

5.2 Networks for Managing Remittances
   5.2.1 Transferring Remittances (Chuyen tien tay ba)
   5.2.2 Managing Remittances

5.3 Concluding Remarks

Chapter 6: Networks for Establishing Sustainable Livelihoods upon Return to the Home Community

6.1 Networks and Setting up a Self-Owned Business
   6.1 Cases of success
   6.2 Cases of Failure

6.2 Networks and Finding Waged Employment

6.3 Networks and Re-Migrating Overseas or to the South of Vietnam for Employment

6.4 Networks and Being Unemployment

6.5 Concluding Remarks

Chapter 7: Conclusions

7.1. Introduction

7.2. Key Findings and Discussions about Social Networks and Temporary Labour Migration
   7.2.1 Effects of Changes of the Regulatory Framework on Social Networks for Migration to Korea
7.2.2 The Spatial and Temporal Complexity

7.2.3 Advantageous and Downside Facets of Social Networks

7.2.4 Gendered Networks

7.3. Recommendations

7.3.1 Recommendations for the MOEL, Korea

7.3.2 Recommendations for the Vietnam MOLISA, SOLISAs and the Embassy of Vietnam in Korea

7.3.3 Recommendations for the Community of Origin

7.4. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

7.4.1 Building up Criteria for Measuring Social Networks

7.4.2 Data

7.5. Summing up

BIBLIOGRAPHY

APPENDICES
TABLES

Table 1.1: The distribution of Vietnamese migrant workers under contract-based migration by major destination in the period of 1992 to 2015 .................................................................25

Table 3.1: Participants of the study ...........................................................................................................100
FIGURES

Figure 1.1: The number of Vietnamese workers migrating to Korea, 2000-2015

Figure 2.1: Theories for analytical framework

Figure 2.2: Social capital of Vietnamese migrants

Figure 2.3: Social networks of Vietnamese migrant workers

Figure 2.4: Analytical framework of the study

Figure 3.1: The field sites in Vietnam

Figure 3.2: Workers in Nghe An province migrating overseas for employment in the period of 2003 - 2014

Figure 3.3: Workers in Ha Tinh province migrating overseas for employment in the period of 2005 - 2014

Figure 3.4: The field sites in Korea
ABSTRACT

This thesis offers a comprehensive analysis of social networks applied to the specific case of temporary contract migration in an intra-regional (here, Asian) context. Although intra-Asian labour migration has been of increasing scholarly concern, the majority of such studies have focused on the economic and political aspects of migration, often in relation to development, to the exclusion of social networks for migrant workers. Given the significant impact of networks on the success of temporary migration for the individual migrants and their families, this thesis addresses important gaps in the study of international labour migration as well as the study of social networks.

This thesis’ specific contribution is the provision of a comprehensive analysis of the roles and characteristics of social networks in relation to their spatiality and temporality, conceptually explored via social capital theory and network-based theory of social capital, and empirically informed via the case of temporary labour migration from Vietnam to South Korea. It approaches this topic by examining (1) how changes to the regulatory framework of contract labour migration between Vietnam and South Korea have resulted in the transformation of migrants’ agency, reflected in the forming and joining of different kinds of networks; (2) the advantages and downsides of the various types of networks involved at different stages of the ‘migration project’; (3) the complexity and changeability of networks engaged in assisting migrants along the entire migration cycle; and (4) the gendered aspects involved in these processes and dynamics.
The study relies on a mix of qualitative methodologies in which individual migrant workers are the key units of analysis. The methods for data generation are in-depth interviews and participant observation from fieldwork conducted in Vietnam and South Korea in 2013 and 2015.

The findings show that social networks of and for Vietnamese migrant workers, including interpersonal and institutional, are complex and varied. The fundamental purpose of migrant workers generally is to maximise their earnings during a short period of time; they attempt to seek support from different social networks during different phases of their migration. However, not all social networks are supportive and beneficial to the migrants. Some social networks provide opportunities for migrant workers to achieve their goals, while others might aim at exploiting these workers. In other words, assistance can be given free or bought at high costs. Trust and norms of reciprocity exist only among bonding ties, not on a larger scale such as among an entire co-ethnic migrant community.

The study also points out that, due to gender segregation of the Korean labour market, men have more opportunities to find a job in this country by contract-based visas, while jobs for women are more limited than their male counterparts. This results in less access to institutional networks for female migrant workers. Since South Korea temporarily suspended contract-based migration from Vietnam, Vietnamese workers have moved to South Korea through other types of visas. The existence of alternative channels for migration to South Korea has gender implications with regard to the type of networks used: male prospective migrants tend to migrate to South Korea through overseas study or trading, whilst their female counterparts find it is easier to enter South Korea through sham marriages or cosmetic surgery.
Finally, the study demonstrates the dynamism and the changing nature of social networks that migrants use throughout the migration cycle. Over time, migrants expand their networks locally and transnationally. In addition, the roles of the same networks and the position of migrant workers in these networks may change during different phases of migration. In the case of policies on recruitment of Vietnamese workers for the Korean labour market are often changed, the changing nature of networks also performs in the flexibility of formation of new networks serving for different channels of migration. This unique change of networks reflects is specific policy context of migration between Vietnam and South Korea for making money.
Chapter 1

Temporary Labour Migration in Asia

1.1 Introduction

Out-migration for employment, as it has been occurring in many parts of the world, is considered as a strategic livelihood for the whole family. The ability of workers to migrate and find well-paid jobs crucially depends on various factors, such as their economic condition and the policy frameworks of the countries of origin and destination. While migration for work from different regions to the Global North has for long been about making a better life (economically and socially by settling and acquiring citizenship), this is not common in Asia, where labour migration is based on a strictly temporary basis with contracts valid for up to a few years, and the inevitable return to the migrants’ home countries. This fundamentally different pattern has resulted in different strategies deployed by migrants and their families. Furthermore, this is also reflected in the complex networks established by migrants and the migration industry to maximise gains from migration. This distinctive feature underpins the topic of this thesis.

1.1.1 Aims of the Research

The relationship between the structure of intra-Asian temporary labour migration and the agency of migrant workers in relation to a changing landscape of social networks and migrants’ changing ‘network behaviour’ is at the core of this study. In addition, this study examines the formation and roles of networks formed by not only migrant workers themselves to facilitate the
‘migration project’ but also by other individuals and institutions involved in the migration industry on the basis of gender, legal status and visa types for entrance. Moreover, the study investigates opportunities and/or obstacles these networks provide migrant workers.

1.1.2 Research Gap

The literature on intra-Asian temporary labour migration is dominated by discussions on workable policy frameworks related to controlling migrant workers. According to Manning and Bhatnagar (2006), most of the receiving countries in Asia find it difficult to control increasing flows of low-skilled migrant workers. Except for Korea and Japan, which have received migrant workers through bilateral agreements with specific sending countries, the regulatory framework of many other countries was introduced unilaterally. Therefore, some receiving governments have partnered with employers to manage this foreign labour force, such as Taiwan, which gives native employers a direct role in handling migrant workers (Lan, 2003).

Managing migrant workers in Asian receiving countries has been widely researched since these countries have encountered dilemmas of socio-economic development and border control. Some studies have highlighted the utilitarianism of receiving countries (Lee & Kim, 2011) in employing low-skilled migrant workers whilst having restrictions in the temporary labour migration policies towards these workers (Castles et al., 2014; Cho, 2011). Kaur and Metcalfe (2006) argue that Asian receiving countries have attempted to avoid the experience of Europe with ‘guest workers’ who eventually became long-term residents by investing into border control system and imposing ‘temporary’ status on work contracts in order to prohibit settlement (Chung, 2010; Seol, 2012; Seol & Skrentny, 2009; Tseng & Wang, 2011; Tsuda & Cornelius, 2004). Indeed, as the International Organization for Migration (2003) has claimed, there is no dream of being granted citizenship in Asian labour-receiving countries. These migrant workers
migrated alone and were eventually forced to go home (Seol & Skrentny, 2009).

Although foreign workers have made a great contribution to the development of host countries, they are not yet regarded as a part of these societies. Cho (2011) shows that Singapore allows high-skilled workers to obtain citizenship, whilst Korea is more circumspect in hosting new citizens from other ethnic groups. Lim (2012) focused on Korean policies that led to the extreme difficulty for low-skilled workers to become Korean citizens. Since the migratory process has been rapidly commercialised, receiving governments have realised that the existing framework (which may give the ‘green light’ for unauthorised migration) is no longer appropriate, and a more restrictive migration control system has been implemented (Athukorala, 1993) which limits labour migration, the duration of migration, and integration (Battistella, 2002a; Piper, 2004b).

The literature on intra-Asian contract migration has by tendency topicalised ‘temporariness’ in terms of contracts’ restricted time-frame (a few years) and the inevitability of migrants’ return upon the completion of their contracts. However, little attention has been paid to other, often negative, aspects of ‘temporariness’ of labour migration; for example, the fact that repaying the heavy migration debts and the desire to accumulate some savings for a stable life upon their return has motivated migrant workers to find the best solution for their migratory success, and that social networks play a vital role in realising or hampering migrants’ aspirations. This aspect still remains under-researched.

Since migrant workers are merely regarded as a temporary “rescue force” to fill up the severe shortage of receiving countries, protection of their rights as workers while staying abroad is limited. Dang (2007) shows that in fact national laws are more protective of workers in their home countries but less effective while they are overseas. Piper and Rother (2012) have suggested that temporary migrants have received little or even no support from their home countries and are exploited by both recruitment agencies and brokerage networks.
Wickramasekera (2002, p. V) pointed out the dilemma between ‘promotion’ and ‘protection’: namely, sending governments have to invest much effort to send as many workers overseas as possible while trying to protect their overseas citizens, which is difficult to achieve. A possible way for sending countries to protect their workers is to rely on international human rights law; for example, the 1990 United Nations International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (Piper, 2004b).

The scholarship on temporary labour migration in Asia is also concerned with gender aspects of low-wage labour and the implementation of typically gender-blind migration policies by countries of origin and destination. Some sending countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka have sent women to foreign labour markets, particularly for domestic work. Hence, in these countries female migrant workers outnumber males. However, the study of Silvey (2004) on the state power of Indonesia and its migrant women in Saudi Arabia highlighted limitations of the Indonesian policy in the protection their female migrants while living overseas, particularly in strict Muslim countries. The findings of Gibson et al. (2001) illustrated that female migrant workers become ‘victims’ of the global capitalist economy when being given the role as ‘heroines’ of national development. The lack of regulations for domestic service has resulted in high levels of vulnerability for migrant women (Chin, 2003; Hoang, 2015; Piper, 2006, 2011, 2013; Piper & Amber, 2011; Vu, 2013). Dannecker (2005, 2009) also gave the example of Bangladesh, where instead of being supported by their own government, women’s migration has been hindered by the fear of the ‘loose’ lifestyle that migrant women might adopt from their cross-border experiences. It is likely that migrant workers, especially female ones, cannot expect much support from the states involved and that may lead to their exploitation.

Illegality is also examined by some scholars (Bélanger et al., 2011; Hoang, 2017; Lan, 2007;
Seol & Skrentny, 2004b). Hoang (2017) highlights the high rates of Vietnamese migrants workers in Korea and Taiwan and argues that illegality is used as a political tool by the receiving states to control migrant workers. Due to the “structural vulnerability” of low-waged contract labour, Hoang (2017) argues that migrant workers have built “technologies of the self” in response to such instruments. To gain the best outcomes of migration in a short time, migrant workers have no choice other than being subordinate to a variety of networks established by and for migrant workers to facilitate migration and maximise earnings at each migration stage. This is especially the case in a context where formal (government-provided) channels for recourse and access to justice are absent (Piper, 2004a; Seol, 2000; Seol & Skrentny, 2004b).

The scholarship has documented the roles of various kinds of networks providing different kinds of support to migrant workers. Many NGOs, particularly in host countries, have been established to support migrant workers in gaining their human rights and welfare. Piper (2010) argues that civil society organisations and trade unions have played an important role in providing essential services to migrant workers, which has eventually led to social development. Gray (2007) and Shipper (2006) also agree that migrant workers have heavily relied on these organisations. NGOs and community-based service groups, according to Shipper (2012), not only support migrant workers to solve specific problems, especially fighting for the protection of human rights (Choo, 2013; Gray, 2007; Gurowitz, 2000; Kim, 2005; Koo et al., 2012; Lim, 2003), but are also influential in the public sphere. NGOs are expected to play a pivotal role in lobbying nationally and transnationally for both national and global citizens (Ball & Piper, 2002; Caraway, 2009; Piper & Rother, 2012). For instance, while policy makers of Korea may observe international norms and standards only as long as they do not threaten the state’s sovereignty (Lee & Park, 2005; Seol & Skrentny, 2001), activists suggest adopting international norms to demonstrate the true democracy of the nation and gain more rights for migrant workers (Kim,
2009; Lee & Park, 2005) as these workers could be protected at three levels: national, regional and international (Böhning, 1999). Although their voices are still marginal, NGOs have advocated and supported migrant workers, particularly undocumented ones (Seol & Han, 2004).

Together with NGOs, other organisations also have significant roles on supporting migrant workers. Trades unions in receiving countries have had significant influence in advocating for migrant workers. Lee (2009) has observed that, compared to Taiwanese unions, Korean unions have been more successful in company-level bargaining of wages and other material benefits, but less successful in national policy reforms. Religious-based organisations can also support migrant workers. Gurowitz (2000) found that help desks attached to churches and temples were more important than government offices in directly supporting Sri Lankan migrant workers to overcome difficulties in language, work, accommodation, culture and personal affairs. Churches also are crucially helpful for undocumented workers as these people are vulnerable and have limited access to support from formal networks (Nguyen & Piper, 2013).

The scholarship on networks for intra-Asian labour migration had highlighted the role of brokerage networks, which are often categorised as informal, are well-organised and aim at exploiting migrant workers (Goss & Lindquist, 1995; Hoang, 2015; Lindquist et al., 2012; Spaan, 1994). Brokers provide job information for potential migrant workers and connect them to employment recruitment agencies in the origin and the host countries. However, there is much evidence that shows cheating and abusive practices of brokers towards migrant workers, taking advantage of their vulnerable situations, especially undocumented ones. For instance, black brokers in Taiwan are described as ‘queen mosquitoes’ who always want to “suck the blood” of Vietnamese undocumented workers (Bon Phuong Journal, cited in Hoang, 2017, p.4). This study seeks to find an answer to the question whether brokerage networks are composed of interpersonal relations only and always are of exploitative nature.
Migrant workers have also formed their own networks for self-protection. Gray (2007) pinpointed that migrant workers have started shifting from a passive situation as “victims” to establishing their own voice and own discourse. Hoang (2015, 2017) discussed how social networks of Vietnamese migrant workers in Taiwan were formed in order to cope with structural barriers of the host country, whilst Nguyen and Piper (2013) revealed purposes and operation of various social networks for or Vietnamese migrant workers in Korea. In most receiving countries, migrants have developed their own associations, which help migrant workers adapt to the new socio-cultural milieu of the host countries as well as providing important information related to jobs. Similarly, Siddiqui (2005) explains how Bangladeshi migrants organised their own association as Bangladeshi migrants were restricted from joining trade unions in their receiving countries.

The relationship between structure and agency has been discussed in a number of studies; however, those that analyse how structural barriers imposed by the existing regulatory framework of temporary labour migration in both sending and receiving countries influence migrant workers’ agency (by establishing or joining networks of or for them) are few. These studies mostly focus on networks of migrant workers at a definite stage of migration and are conducted in either the sending or receiving country. In fact, migration is a transnational movement of people who are interconnected with others in the country of origin and destination. Far different from Europe and North America’s models, return is the usual outcome of the regulatory framework of temporary contract migration in Asia. Therefore, investigating both ends is necessary to render the study of migration more holistic.

In addition, it is noteworthy that not only migrant workers and their family make great efforts to earn money in their migration project but others such as brokers and recruiters also intend to engage deeply in this project for their own benefits. However, little attention has been paid to
studying the “money making” aspects of migration from a perspective which combines migrant workers and their family with agents and brokers who are joined in the lucrative aspirations involved in the project of temporary labour migration. Moreover, previous studies on social networks of or for migrant workers mostly investigate impacts of external factors (for example the exploitative manner of brokers and recruiters), whilst neglecting internal factors (such as changing of trust among migrant workers in highly competitive context) which also affect the formation of networks and their participation in networks.

1.2 Evolution of Intra-Asian Migration

International migration is said to benefit not only individual migrants, but also to contribute to the development of the economy of the origin as well as the destination countries (Dang, 2007). Flows of international migrants have continued to grow, particularly in the ‘age of migration’ (Castles et al., 2014), due to enhanced economic globalisation and rapid regional integration among countries. Parallel to economic globalisation, according to the (United Nations, 2016), the number of international migrants worldwide has continued to increase over the past fifteen years: from 173 million in 2000, up to 222 million in 2010, and reaching 244 million in 2015. Of those, 104 million (43 per cent) hail from Asia. Between 2000 and 2015, the stock of migrants from Asia grew faster than from all other major regions, namely by 2.8 per cent per year. Migration within Asian countries (or intra-Asian migration) has also increased, growing from 49.9 million migrants in 1990 to 50.4 million in 2000, 67.8 million in 2010, and 70.8 million migrants in 2013 (United Nations, 2013). This is also a reflection of the large population of Asia since it hosts three of the four most populous countries in the world (China with 1,378 billion
people, India with 1,327 billion people, and Indonesia with 259 million people in 2016).\(^1\)

Intra-Asian migration has a long history, starting with the colonisation of Europeans between the 17th and 20th century (Kaur, 2009; Manning & Bhatnagar, 2006). Under the British colonial power, two major migrant receiving countries – the Malay Peninsula (governed in the period between 1874 and 1914) and Burma (conquered in 1824 and independent in 1948) – were subject to indentured labour (contract-based) flows from India and China. After World War II, workers, mostly from China, migrated to Hong Kong and Singapore (Martin, 1991). Japan recruited a large number of workers from Korea, its then colony, between 1921 and 1941 (Castles et al., 2014). After 1973, due to the oil boom and the huge demand for workers in construction and service sectors, the oil-rich countries in the Gulf were the main hosts of labour influxes from many Asian countries (such as Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia and South Asia) through fixed-term work contracts (Abella, 1995). By the early 1980s, Southeast and South Asian workers had shifted destinations from the Gulf states to wealthy Southeast and East Asian countries (Athukorala, 2006; International Organization for Migration, 2003; Wickramasekera, 2002). Recently, besides large numbers of marriage migrants and lower but rising numbers of overseas students (Collyer, 2004; Kessler, 2009; Liu-Farrer, 2009; Louka et al., 2006; Roman & Voicu, 2010), Asia has primarily witnessed labour migration flows from less developed to more economically developed countries in the region (at times neighbouring ones).

At present, according to Battistella (2002a), there are five major migration systems operating in the Asia region: 1) the Gulf Cooperation Council system with the oil-rich Gulf states hosting South and Southeast Asian migrants; 2) the Indian subcontinent system with out-migration to the

\(^1\) In other world regions, in 2015, among the top twenty countries or areas of origin of international migrants, 11 were in Asia, 6 in Europe, and each in Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean, and Northern America.
Gulf states as major destinations; 3) the Southeast Asia system with Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand as major receiving countries, while the rest are countries of origin; 4) the Hong Kong-Taiwan system with both as host countries; and 5) the Northeast Asia system with Japan and Korea as major receiving countries.

In an era of enhanced globalisation, international labour migration in Asia (primarily employer-tied) shares common features with other regions, but its patterns and dynamics are unique. The origin of global migration streams to the North can be explained by the colonial historical linkages of migration between certain countries located in the Global South to the Global North. Migration within the South, or intra-regional migration, however, is not typically justified by this reason (Castles et al., 2014).

1.2.1 Intra-Asian Temporary Labour Migration

Intra-Asian temporary labour migration constitutes a unique feature when compared to other regions in the world such as Western Europe where migration is less regulated and occurs more on an ad-hoc basis (Battistella, 2002a). High levels of unemployment prompted Western European governments to terminate the hiring of guest workers. The governments then encouraged the repatriation of migrants. However, only a small number of migrants agreed to leave the host countries voluntarily by using support package provided by government-sponsored repatriation programs. Since migrants attempted to extend their staying in the destination countries, the governments allowed family reunification because of the region’s human rights tradition and help them to integrate into the societies of host countries which gave migrants opportunities to transform their migration from temporary to permanent. In contrast, strict policies on low-skilled workers of labour receiving countries in Asia have implemented to govern and control the settlement of migrants by limiting labour migration, limiting the duration
of migration and limiting integration. Low-skilled migrant workers are not allowed to bring their families with them in the countries of destination. In some countries such as Singapore and Malaysia, low-skilled migrant workers are even discouraged to marry local people (Battistella, 2002a).

Wickramasekera (2002) has suggested some noticeable features of international labour migration in Asia. Firstly, the receiving countries tend to focus on recruiting low-skilled migrant workers. Migrant workers are mostly found in construction (Singapore), plantation work (Malaysia), the fishing industry (Thailand), and small- or medium-scale manufacturing (Malaysia, Korea, Taiwan and Japan). Skilled and professional migrants occupy a small proportion of total labour migrants within this region. Secondly, all of the receiving countries impose strict controls on foreign workers by fixing the period of the work contracts, keeping them ‘temporary’ and prohibiting settlement and family reunion for them. With the exception of Singapore and Hong Kong, whose policies encourage skilled and professional workers to obtain settlement and citizenship, but excluding low-skilled migrant workers; other countries avoid repeating the European experience of welcoming temporary guest workers who might then find a way to settle permanently and establish new ethnic minorities (Asis & Piper, 2008; Athukorala, 2006). The cooperation between governments of the origin and destination countries through memorandums of understanding (MOUs) is vital for the effective protection of the rights of migrant workers (Huguet, 2010); however, there is a need for a region-wide mechanism to protect the rights of all migrant workers. Asis et al. (2010) and Piper (2004b) show that, in contrast to European countries that share economic, political and immigration policies, Asia does not have regional governing bodies and any specific regional human rights instrument. In Asia, labour migration is fundamentally based on work contracts limited to a short period of time. Thirdly, the migration industry in the region is well developed with a recruitment system relying heavily on a vast web
of private agencies and brokers, a system replete with abusive and exploitative practices toward workers (e.g. Lindquist, 2010 and Hoang, 2017). Fourthly, high numbers of irregular migrant workers remain in the host countries, disregarding heavy penalties and vulnerable conditions (Battistella, 2002b). Finally, since the late 1970s, female migrant workers have made up a large share of the migrant labour force, especially from the Philippines, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka where women have outnumbered men employed overseas (Asis & Piper, 2008). Most of these women work in informal sectors; mainly in service industries such as domestic work and caregiving in Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong (Bell & Piper, 2005; Chang & Ling, 2000; Cheng, 1996; Loveband, 2004; Wee & Sim, 2005; Yeoh et al., 1999) and entertainment in Japan (Fuwa, 1999; Parreñas, 2010; Tyner, 1996).

Uneven development among Asian countries is the key driver of migration in the region. Castles et al. (2014) note that most Asian governments focus on the economic basis of temporary contract migration. Receiving countries are interested in cheap foreign labour sources, while sending countries emphasise the potential benefits of remittances and migrants looking for a chance to earn and learn some new professional skills. Indeed, temporary labour migration in Asia is expected to function as the infamous ‘triple win’ solution whereby sending countries, receiving countries and migrant workers are all to benefit from the relocation of global labour based on fluctuating supply and demand dynamics (Castles, 1987; Markova, 2010; Wickramasekara, 2002, 2011). Policy makers have raised a dominant discourse in migration discourse that the proper migration management can: 1) meet the labour needs of receiving countries, 2) contribute to the development of the sending countries’, and 3) enhance the living conditions of migrants and their families. This paradigm presents an ideal outcome of labour migration (triple win solution) that is to benefit all involved: individual migrants, COO and COD states (Global Commission on International Migration, 2005).
However, as research on temporary labour migration in Asia has shown, it has rarely resulted in the ‘triple win’ scenario: involved states and particularly migrant workers also encounter losses caused by negative effects of this type of migration (Piper & Withers, 2018; Piper et al., 2017; Withers & Piper, 2018).

- **Roles and Functions of Temporary Labour Migration: Receiving Country Perspective**

Unlike guest worker programs in Europe through which migrant workers were eligible to permanent residence if they legally and continuously resided for a period of five years and possessed sufficient financial resources, host countries in Asia use contract-based migrant workers in a rigid manner on a strictly temporary basis as an instrument for their economic development (Groenendijk et al., 2001). Receiving foreign workers helps host countries to solve the problem of the scarcity of low-skilled and low-wage labour due to their socio-economic and demographic changes. The decline of fertility and the increase of post-working age people in medium and high income countries in the region have resulted in a great demand for foreign labour (Athukorala, 2006; Castles, 1998; Oh et al., 2011; Tullao & Cortez, 2004). In addition, employing low-skilled migrant workers helped labour-receiving countries to facilitate structural adjustment in a less costly way (Manning, 2002). The continuing economic growth of receiving countries leads to native workers’ refusal to perform low-wage jobs. Consequently, there has been a severe labour shortage, especially in dirty, dangerous, and difficult (3D) job sectors, which are shunned even by unemployed native workers. Therefore migrant workers have played an important role in filling these vacancies (Athukorala & Wickramasekara, 2006; Battistella, 2002a; Chia, 2006; Debrah, 2002; Seol, 2000, 2005a, 2009; Seol & Skrentny, 2004b; Wickramasekera, 2002). While the study of Lee and Park (2009) shows that the availability of jobs for Korean workers and the Korean economy is somehow affected by migrant workers, Park’s 2002 study presents an alternative scenario. In fact, migrant workers are not substitutable,
but rather complementary to local workers who decline to engage in some types of jobs, particularly 3D ones. Thus, hiring these workers would help to develop the economy of receiving countries in general, and save their small businesses in particular. As Wickramasekera (2002) asserts, the myth of migrant workers ‘stealing’ jobs from local population should be reconsidered. Some researchers have calculated that foreign workers have become indispensable in some countries such as Malaysia, Japan, and Korea (Athukorala, 2006; Chia, 2006; International Organization for Migration, 2003; Manning, 2002; Wickramasekera, 2002). Kim (2004) calls for the recognition of the position of foreign workers in the development of host countries such as Korea since this country has deeply engaged in the global labour market and is in need of a great number of low-skilled workers. However, due to the ‘temporariness’ in hiring migrant workers, receiving countries can only deal with low-wage labour shortage within a defined period, not in the long-term. To protect sovereignty when allowing in-migration, these countries have to invest heavily in systems for controlling contract-based migrant workers.

- **Roles and Functions of Temporary Labour Migration: Sending Country Perspective**

In sending countries, labour export is considered as an important strategy to solve problems of poor employment opportunities and have a steady flow of remittances from repeated waves of migrants, which are associated with the increase of business and enterprise creation by returnees (Athukorala, 1993; Wickramasekara, 2011). Wickramasekara (2011) shows that sending countries have privileged access to employment and labour markets in destination countries because of bilateral agreements drawn up between them. A great amount of money earned while working overseas was sent to home countries by migrants. In 2009, the total remittance inflow of migrants who stayed within Asia was USD 162.5 billion, accounting for 39 per cent of total global remittances. According to Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (2016) and the World Bank (2016), in 2015, India was the largest remittance-receiving country,
with an estimated USD 69 billion, followed by China (USD 64 billion) and the Philippines (USD 28 billion). Other countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Vietnam are often included in the world’s top remittance recipients. Remittances have crucially contributed to the development of many Asian countries. Labour sending governments are keen on remittances for the improvement of the economy at the macro-level such as increasing national average income (Kannan & Hari, 2002), increasing domestic saving and foreign currency (Chia, 2006) and providing a source of external funds (Ratha, 2005), reducing poverty (United Nations, 2016), and redistributing wealth (Hugo, 2003). Therefore, sending workers overseas for employment is attached to the national development strategy agenda of many developing countries. For instance, as the development aim of the Philippines is to increase gross domestic product (GDP), it actively established well-organised system to send their workers abroad. Currently the Philippines has become the most important labour exporter in the region and the second largest in the world. Rodriguez (2002) strongly argues that Filipino migrants are regarded on one hand as cheap and flexible labourers who can be exported and treated as commodities for foreign labour markets, and on the other hand as ‘new national heroes’.

However, high competition with other sending countries in obtaining job quotas from receiving countries results in sending countries having a lower position and a weaker negotiating power as regards achieving benefits, rights and protection for their workers in parleys on labour exchange, which are often more profitable to receiving countries (Ball & Piper, 2002; Castles, 1998).

- **Roles of Temporary Labour Migration: Perspective of Individual Migrant Workers and Their Families**

The key driver motivation of migrant workers and their families when taking part into temporary labour migration is to find well-paid jobs and gain professional skills. As Lindquist (2009)
analysed *merantau*, the phenomenon of rising numbers of pan-Indonesians transforming to migrants in order to seek a new form of livelihood before returning home successfully. The success of migration is often presented by the amount of remittance sent, the effectiveness of remittance investments, and the sustainable means of living. Remittances have been observed to positively impact the development of recipient households and origin countries (Barai, 2012; De & Ratha, 2012; Dey, 2015; Eversole & Johnson, 2014; Gabbarot & Clarke, 2010; Gupta et al., 2009; Gyimah-Brempong & Asiedu, 2014; Koc & Onan, 2004; Page & Plaza, 2006; Pfau & Giang, 2009; Sander & Maimbo, 2005). Remittances have been used to repay debts, buy land, build houses, invest into small businesses (Bélanger et al., 2010; Binci, 2012; Binci & Giannelli, 2012; Chia, 2006; De & Ratha, 2012; Dimzon, 2006; Nguyen et al., 2006) and support the migration of siblings (Piotrowski, 2008). Socially, sending remittances back home helps migrant workers to fulfil their obligations as breadwinners in their families (Batnitzky et al., 2012; Gibson et al., 2001; Rodriguez, 2002), helping the latter shift to a higher level in the social strata (Dimzon, 2006) by improving households’ economic conditions (Pfau & Giang, 2009; Stahl & Arnold, 1986). However, successful migration is not merely to make material life better. The success also hinges on the gender and moral reputations of migrants who are regarded as “foreign exchange heroes” (Chan, 2016).

In theory, migrant workers have the opportunities to make gains from working overseas for a period of time; in practice, however, they might encounter numerous obstacles. Migrant workers may incur heavy debts for paying for their migration (Afsar, 2005; L. A. Hoang & B. S. A. Yeoh, 2015; Hugo, 2005). This might cause more pressure for them, as they attempt to repay debts in a short time while their wages are low compared to native workers. In addition, language and skill barriers may hamper their earning capacity. This study illustrates another factor that might hinder migrant workers’ capacity of earning sufficient levels of income:
namely, the high competition between migrant workers of different nationalities and among co-ethnic ones, particularly in the context of the limited jobs available versus the great number of applicants (see chapter 4 and 5). The unbalanced demand and supply gives rise to high competition in host countries. At the beginning, new migrant workers might receive support from their co-ethnic workers; ‘trust’, however, may decrease when these newcomers join the large group of their community in order obtain jobs more easily, or when their skills increase and might be a threat to other co-ethnic colleagues. Migrant workers and their families may also incur significant social costs due to the prolonged geographic separation from their family (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009; Hugo, 1995, 2002; Kim, 1986; Parreñas, 2002, 2005; Parreñas, 2003; Parreñas et al., 2016). Studies by Toyota et al. (2007) and Binci and Giannelli (2012) show that in situations where kinship networks were loose, families were small in size and children of migrants were left with their relatives, remittances could not compensate for children’s lack of care from their parents. Moreover, women migrants might encounter their villagers’ distrust about their moral reputation. If these women do not bring money home, villagers can then accuse them of immoral behaviour overseas, while their male counterparts are not blamed if the same thing happens (Chan, 2016). Similarly, many women migrants were cursed by their villagers upon their return about the ‘loose lifestyle’ adopted overseas, and they tended to migrate again because of the disdainful attitude of their neighbours (Dannecker, 2005). These ‘losses’ may outweigh the ‘gains’ and directly impact the life of migrant workers and their families, leading to failure of migration.

In short, the roles and functions of temporary contract migration are to serve the economic development of involved states and migrant workers. It is obvious that sending and receiving countries as well as migrant workers and their family reap benefits from temporary labour migration. However, receiving countries often have the upper hand in shaping the regulatory
framework for this ‘temporariness’ to use foreign labour in a certain period of time. Sending countries remain weaker when bargaining clauses in agreements for their workers. Additionally, many sending countries are interested in remittances sent by their workers overseas, but have not attempted to establish an effective system and regulatory framework to support their migration process and protect them, especially while working abroad, and to effectively use returnees’ experience and skills. Therefore, migrant workers primarily have to mobilise resources through social networks to make their migration successful.

The scholarship on Vietnamese temporary labour migration to other Asian countries has been well researched from a variety of perspectives. Tran and Nguyen (2016) address major determinants influencing Vietnamese workers’ decisions of working in Taiwan, including capacity of individuals, impacts from family, and financial reasons. The process of Vietnamese temporary labour migration is structurally embedded in which Vietnamese labourers, who migrated to East Asia, are categorised “labour migrants” or “marriage migrants”. They lose autonomy and do not have chances to be self-selected prior to their migration (Bélanger & Wang, 2013). Lê (2010) provides evidence supporting the idea that Vietnamese migrants are precarious in the process of their pre-departure to Malaysia. The recruitment process in Vietnam and the deployment of foreign trainees/workers in the receiving countries have led to ‘run-away’ or overstaying of Vietnamese workers (Bélanger et al., 2011; Hoang, 2017; Phuong & Venkatesh, 2016; Wang et al., 2011). Migrant workers aspire to fruitful outcomes of their migration which is facilitated by local recruiters and brokers which in turn results in reciprocal obligations by migrants towards the recruiters, the bank, and the employers. This web of relationships results in severe restrictions for the migrants, particularly during their stay in the host countries. While staying aboard, Vietnamese migrant workers also encounter various difficulties since employers in receiving countries, for example Malaysia and Taiwan, take
advantage of having recourse to low cost and disposable sources of foreign workers, including Vietnamese (Crinis, 2013; Hoang, 2015). This situation can easily end in exploitation.

Among networks involving in Vietnamese temporary labour migration, brokers (the “black box of migration”) are emerged as a special concern in some studies. Phuong and Venkatesh (2016) identify four different forms of exploitation of migrant workers by brokers: expropriation of skill premium, risk shifting, over-charging, and non-refund of deposits. Indeed, the rapid development of the Vietnamese migration industry, in which brokers play a powerful role, has provided the opportunity to migrate out for employment to an increasing number of individuals. Therefore, networks for migration are affected by market relations which might not be advantageous to migrants (Bélanger & Wang, 2013). Prospective migrants have to pay extremely high pre-departure costs (Wang & Bélanger, 2011).

In short, studies on Vietnamese migrant workers have documented various aspects of Vietnamese migrant worker precarity mostly in the stages of pre-departure and staying in the host countries and the position of brokers in the process of migration. These studies particularly investigate migration of Vietnamese workers to some major destinations such as Malaysia, Taiwan, Japan that are useful references for exploring migration of Vietnamese to Korea.

As regards the literature on foreign workers in Korea, some studies explain why and how Korea is in need of foreign labour force for 3-D jobs (Kim, 2004). Although in two recent decades, Korea annually has imported foreign workers, even undocumented (Seol & Skrentny, 2004b), it in fact is unwilling to host these workers long term (Park, 2002). The Korean government designs labour import programs whose purpose is to utilise foreign workers temporarily. The major concerns of studies on migrant workers in Korea focus on the development or changes of Korean policies on foreign workers historically (Kee, 2009; Lee, 2009; Seol, 2004, 2009). Seol
(2005a) analysed and compared the system and the operation of policies on foreign workers in Germany, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan and Korea. According to Seol, the Korean model of foreign labour policy in 2005 (when he wrote this article) copied from the German and Japanese model. The Korean state attempts to take its active role in developing migration policies under the influence of international human rights norms (Kim, 2005; Lee & Park, 2005). Lee and Kim (2011) and Choi and Kim (2015) argue that Korea is now under the double pressure of liberal – democratic consolidation and economic growth. These scholars illustrate that Korea has received foreign workers, utilised this labour force to develop its economy by creating a harsh environment for foreign workers. However, exploitation of foreign labour force also hampers Korea to develop democracy’s liberal ideal. Kim (2008) addresses the contradictory directions of migrant workers policies of Korea which on one hand moves to a ‘liberal’ which attempts to consider more rights for foreign workers, and on other hand, presents ‘illiberal’ by which ethnic Korean workers have received more preferential treatment over other ethnic foreign workers. Seol and Skrentny (2004a) strengthen Kim’s argument by asserting that rights for ethnic Korean workers have been increased in recent over two decades (Seol & Skrentny, 2004a).

The Korean public opinion on foreign workers and the movement of foreign workers are also subjects of some studies. Koreans now are more open and tolerant towards foreigners than before because they believe that foreigners living in Korea occupy a small proportion of total population and they belong to a powerless minority group (Yoon et al., 2008). Seol (2005b) argue that general attitudes of Korean towards migrant workers, particularly undocumented are ‘immature hospitality’ because Korea was in the midst of reforming.

Since foreign workers have encountered social discrimination in Korea as shown in a study of Seol and Han (2004), some scholars have investigated the migrant worker advocacy movement
and accessed the effectiveness of support networks for migrant workers, particularly NGOs in Korea (Denis, 2011; Gray, 2007; Kim, 2012; Kim, 2009; Lim, 2006; Yoon et al., 2008). Studies of these scholars concern about substantive human and workers’ rights and operations of NGOs as well as support which NGOs provide to foreign workers. Lim (2003) concludes that civil society in Korea has promoting the rights of migrant workers.

1.2.2 Setting the Scene: The Vietnam-Korea Link

The literature relating to foreign workers in Korea has emphasised the “migration-development nexus” in choosing temporary labour migration as key policy, Korea’s responses to this phenomenon as well as experiences of migrant workers and the role of NGOs in improving the rights for foreign workers. Except NGOs and the Korea state, other kinds of networks for temporary foreign workers lack of concern.

This section explains how socio-economic changes shape sending and receiving countries and how the temporary labour migration framework at both ends (which crucially affects the establishment and operation of migration networks) operates, using the example of Vietnam as a country of origin and Korea as a country of destination.

- Vietnam

The transition from state socialism to market socialism (1986) and expanding social networks in major cities have resulted in unprecedented migration from rural to urban in Vietnam (N. A. Dang & K. S. Le, 2001; Nguyen & Locke, 2014) since most of economic growth is concentrated in the urban areas while a few employment opportunities are created in rural areas (Dang, 2001; Vietnam General Statistical Office, 2001). Big income gaps between urban and rural people
constitutes also an important aspect affecting internal migration (Vietnam General Statistical Office, 2004). A large proportion of rural-urban migrants are farmers who are unemployed or underemployed with poor living standards (Douglass et al., 2002). However, Dang’s study (2005) demonstrated that most of migrants having unstable jobs with low pay and being exploited in their work. It is proved that rural-urban movement have helped migrants’ household improve their economic conditions (Dang, 2005; Marx & Fleischer, 2010; Nguyen, 2008).

Alongside internal labour migration, an increasing number of Vietnamese have attempted to migrate to wealthier countries for seeking opportunities to ‘earn more’. In comparison with other countries in Southeast Asia, Vietnam joined international labour markets late, since it used to be closed to other parts of the world and was likely to maintain close relations with communist countries. Political regimes and socio-economic transformations have significantly affected out-migration of Vietnamese workers. In the period of the late 1970s and the early 1980s, the Vietnamese economy encountered many difficulties as a consequence of a centrally planned economy, which discouraged competition in production and distributed salary and necessities to people equally. The economy was characterised by subsidy of state-owned enterprises, decentralisation of administration, and diversification of production (N. A. Dang & B. D. Le, 2001). Debts with other countries for recovery after the war could not be paid. Additionally, the Sino-Vietnamese war (Feb 17 - Mar 16, 1979), a brief border war fought between the People’s Republic of China and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, drained the economy. Although the government made many efforts to boost economic and social development, unemployment rates in Vietnam were high. According to the General Statistics Office of Vietnam (2012), of the total population of over 88 million in 2012, there were 52.3 million working-age people, including 51.4 million employed people and approximately one million unemployed people. High rates of unemployment and poverty have motivated Vietnam to be a labour-sending country whose
workers are encouraged to find jobs in more economically developed countries to earn income and gain skills. The Vietnamese government recognised the significance of labour export as a strategy for poverty reduction; therefore, workers were sent to the Soviet bloc and Eastern European countries by mutual agreements among the governments, creating the first wave of outflow (Dang, 2007). From 1980 to 1989, 244,186 workers and 23,713 trainees (who learnt professional skills and worked at the same time) obtained jobs in Socialist countries. Remittances and goods received from overseas workers remarkably contributed to the improvement of the economic condition of many families, especially considering that Vietnam was economically embargoed by the United States and other countries. Although the number of Vietnamese workers who could find jobs overseas was limited to Socialist countries, this period marked the initiation of out-migration for making money, widening labour markets for Vietnamese workers and creating more opportunities for them to earn better wages.

The economic reform has promoted Vietnamese labour migration. After experiencing a difficult time of hyperinflation, food shortages and structural imbalance in the economy, a comprehensive economic reform program (Doi Moi in Vietnamese, or Renovation) was introduced at the Sixth National Congress in December 1986 (Harvie & Tran, 1997, pp. 48-49) with the goal of creating a socialist-oriented market economy. The economic situation at the beginning of the Renovation was not much different compared to pre-reform; hence, paid jobs were limited.

The collapse of communism in Eastern European countries by the late 1980s and in the Soviet Union by the early 1990s marked the end of the Vietnamese temporary labour migration wave to these socialist countries. In 1998, the Directive 41-CT/TW on labour export issued by the Politburo mentions that labour export is an important and long-term strategy for national development (Ishizuka, 2013). The destinations of Vietnamese workers are not limited to Socialist countries but have also expanded to other wealthy countries of the world. A significant
demand for foreign workers by the oil-rich countries in the Gulf and rapid-growth economies of East Asia countries led to a new direction for Vietnam’s labour sending strategy, which created the second wave of Vietnamese outflow between 1991 and 2001. In this period, approximately 160,000 Vietnamese workers moved to East Asian countries such as Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and some Middle East countries such as Iraq, United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait for employment. Table 1.1 shows that since 1999, the main labour markets for Vietnamese migrant workers were East Asian countries, with the three main host states of Taiwan, Korea, and Japan accounting for over 50 per cent of total Vietnamese migrant workers. With the exception of these countries, which were considered as traditional and important labour markets, other foreign labour markets were not widely open to Vietnamese workers during 1992 to 1999.
Table 1.1: The distribution of Vietnamese migrant workers under contract-based migration by major destination in the period of 1992 to 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Korea</th>
<th>Japan</th>
<th>Taiwan</th>
<th>Malaysia</th>
<th>Africa and the Middle East</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>1,352</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3,976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>4,378</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>9,234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>5,674</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
<td>723</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>0.87%</td>
<td>10,050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>6,275</td>
<td>49.6%</td>
<td>1,343</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>12,661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>4,880</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
<td>2,250</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>9,234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>1,322</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>1,926</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>12,661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>6,029</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
<td>2,530</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>3,969</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>21,810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>7,316</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td>1,497</td>
<td>4.75%</td>
<td>8,099</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td>3,910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>3,910</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>3,249</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>7,782</td>
<td>21.37%</td>
<td>20,110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>1,190</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>2,202</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>13,191</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>9,166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>4,336</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>2,256</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>29,069</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
<td>36,122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>4,779</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>2,752</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>37,144</td>
<td>55.1%</td>
<td>38,227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>12,102</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>2,955</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>22,784</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>67,447</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>10,577</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>5,360</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>14,127</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
<td>78,855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>12,187</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>5,517</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>23,640</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
<td>85,020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>18,141</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
<td>6,142</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>31,631</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>86,990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>7,578</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>5,456</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
<td>21,677</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
<td>73,028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>8,628</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>4,913</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
<td>28,499</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>85,546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>15,049</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>6,373</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>34,998</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>81,475</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>9,200</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>6,985</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>115,980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>5,446</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>9,886</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
<td>46,368</td>
<td>52.6%</td>
<td>88,155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>7,242</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>19,766</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>62,124</td>
<td>58.1%</td>
<td>106,840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>6,019</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>27,010</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
<td>67,121</td>
<td>57.9%</td>
<td>111,980</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Consular Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2012) and Annual statistics from Department of Overseas Labour
The period from 2001 up to now is documented as the third wave of Vietnamese international labour migration, when the labour markets of Vietnamese workers have broadened in terms of the number of destination countries and jobs. Taiwan hosted the highest number of Vietnamese migrant workers, followed by Korea, Malaysia, Korea, Japan, Africa and the Middle East countries (see Table 1.1). The social and economic transformation of Vietnam resulted in today’s form of temporary labour migration, which is quite different from previous eras; now, workers have more opportunities to migrate and find overseas jobs in various foreign destinations. Currently working overseas is quite common among Vietnamese people; even rural people, with the assistance of brokerage agents or individuals, can have the opportunity to migrate and make money. Obviously, structural amendments have generated more opportunities for Vietnamese to obtain employment overseas.

In order to manage workers’ out-migration, a controlling system was established with the primary aim to link workers with overseas jobs and protects them while abroad. At present, the majority of Vietnamese workers migrate to labour-receiving countries through licensed enterprises established in Vietnam, which explore foreign labour markets, set up labour supply nets, make contracts with foreign labour receivers and support workers to complete administrative procedures. Korea and Japan are exceptions, having received Vietnamese workers through Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) based on fixed working period contracts. The mechanism of labour export is led by the Vietnamese government, comprising the Department of Overseas Labour (DOLAB) and other subordinate institutions under the Ministry of Labour - Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA), licensed recruiting and sending agencies, and the Vietnam Association of Manpower Supply, established by the Minister of Internal Affairs in 2003. The policies and mechanisms related to labour export aim to expand the foreign labour markets, increase the number of workers migrating overseas, and protect the rights for these
workers in the pre- and post-migration in both sending and receiving countries. The whole system, however, shows the problematic consequences. The corruption in involved departments has been proven often (Bélanger et al., 2010; Dang, 2007; Ishizuka, 2013; Seol, 2000).

- **Korea**

Korea was, historically, one of the labour exporters. In 1963, 247 temporary workers moved abroad and the numbers increased in the 1970s and 1980s when construction workers migrated to the Middle East, primarily working in Korean companies (Kim, 1986; Lee, 2005; Seok, 1991). In the three decades of 1960-1980s, Korea remained a labour exporter when nearly two million Korean construction workers went to the Middle East after the first oil crisis in 1973 (Seol, 2000).

Economic, social, and demographic changes have shaped Korea as a labour-receiving country from around 1987 (Seol, 2000). The Korean door has been wide open since the 1990s, when the Korean government received a large number of foreign workers from China and some Southeast Asian countries through the Industrial and Technical Training Program (ITTP) to fill the labour scarcity of 3D jobs in small and medium-sized businesses (Seol, 2000, 2005a, 2012; Seol & Han, 2004). Korea is regarded as the most miraculous development story over the last half century (Oh et al., 2011) with an average annual GDP growth rate of 3 per cent (Statistics Korea, 2015). Along with the improvement of the economy, Korea has experienced significant demographic changes since the nation’s foundation in 1948. For example, the population has increased from 20 million people in 1949 to approximately 50 million people now, and it is estimated that it will start decreasing from 2018 (World Population Statistics, 2014). The fertility rate in the period of 2005-2010 was at 1.21 as the world’s lowest rate (United Nations, 2007). The demographic change caused an increase of post-working age people and a remarkable
decrease of the young working population, leading to increased costs for elderly care and scarcity of labour (Oh et al., 2011). In addition, Korea has a male-dominated labour force, with men accounting for 73 per cent of total employed people. Many working-aged women do not join the domestic labour market.

Due to increasing numbers of migrant workers moving to Korea annually, the Korean government has made a number of amendments to its policies on low-skilled migrant workers. After the establishment of the country, Korea made great efforts to ensure fast economic recovery and development, firstly by sending their workers overseas and later by importing foreign workers. In 1987, the total number of migrant workers was approximately 6,500; these workers would enter Korea mostly legally, but later would extended their residential time without permission, becoming undocumented. The number of unauthorised migrants increased rapidly from 4,217 in 1987 to 41,877 in 1991 (Seol & Skrentny, 2004a) and 214,168 in 2015 (Korean Immigration Service, 2015). Immigration law did not include any terms related to manual foreign migrant workers; the Korean government was uncertain about how to deal with this problem as it did not predict and plan for such a situation (Oh et al., 2011). At that time, to support Korean Small and Medium-Sized Businesses (SMBs), the Korean government did not investigate the employment or residence of these undocumented migrant workers. In other words, there was tacit approval on this issue on the part of the government.

In 1991, the Korean government proposed the ITTP, which allowed those Korean companies with overseas branches to recruit and train their foreign employees. In the beginning, trainees could stay six months in Korea and extend their residency for an additional six months. Other SMBs in Korea seriously suffered from labour shortage but could not engage in this program. In August 1992, with strong demand from the Korea Federation of Small and Medium Business (KFSB), the government allowed all SMBs operating in Korea to import foreign labourers. In
June 1993, the period of the ITTP’s contracts was extended to two years (Kim, 2011; Seol, 2012). The Korean government then amended the ITTP system by changing from “one-year work permit after two years of training” in 1994 to “two-year work permit after one year of training” implemented in 1997. The contract time remained the same.

The ITTP was criticised strongly because trainees were not regarded as workers and were paid less than native workers were. In addition, they could not learn any new useful skills. With the pressure of paying their debts to migrate to Korea, experiencing exploitative conditions, and receiving low wages, many trainees moved out of their contract companies and as a result became undocumented workers. In the new workplace, they often received higher wages and could extend their work period as long as possible until they were arrested. Under the ITTP, foreign trainees experienced significant hardship due to Korean attitudes towards foreign workers and the regulations of this regime. Traditionally, in Korean society, migrant workers were considered as ‘servants’, ‘farmhands’ or ‘maids’ and faced serious discrimination by native people. These workers were called ‘sojourners,’ which implies their short-term residency in Korea (Seol & Skrentny, 2004b). The ITTP made this worse by regarding foreign labourers as trainees who were not entitled to enjoy full rights as workers (Seol & Han, 2004), such as collective bargaining and participating in labour unions (Seol, 2012; Seol & Skrentny, 2004b). Indeed, since this program started, trainees had not received any vocational training at all. Their task simply was to fill the severe labour shortage for manual workers in 3D sectors, which native Koreans avoided.

Negative consequences of the ITTP were obviously revealed which, to some extent, affected Korea’s democracy. As a democratic country and keen to improve the nation’s image, the Korean government started focusing on human rights as indicators of a progressive society. The National Human Rights Commission was founded in 2001 as an independent organisation that
plays a role in safeguarding the human rights of migrant workers and supervising policy amendments. It works closely with NGOs to solve issues involving human rights violations. Based on the recommendations of this body, the ITTP was abolished and the Employment Permit Program (EPP) was implemented in 2003. In the new EPP system, migrant labourers were regarded as workers and had equal rights as indigenous workers (Kim, 2011). This partly reduced the number of migrant workers who would quit their job in their contract company as soon as they arrived in Korea. Then the government enacted the Labour Standard Law, which offered health insurance, industrial accident compensation insurance, employment insurance, and pensions for migrant workers (Oh et al., 2011). Since then, undocumented workers can report having an accident to the Immigration Service of the Ministry of Justice to receive compensation of accident insurance. However, as these workers have to leave Korea immediately after treatment, they refuse to obtain accident insurance from the Korea Workers’ Compensation and Welfare Service. The Labour Standard Law also mentions that migrant workers have rights to join trade unions, bargain collectively, and participate in strikes. In fact, undocumented workers are not the major subjects of this law and only have limited rights, except for industrial accident compensation.

The EPP later changed to the Employment Permit System (EPS) in 2004, which issues E-9 visas for foreign workers. The EPS still remains its system up to the present. Through this program, Korean businesses receive migrant workers from 15 Asian countries that have agreements on labour supply with the Korean government. A Korean business can recruit foreign labourers after its efforts to recruit native workers are unsuccessful. The work period is three years, but migrant workers later can extend another 22 months. Similar to Japanese people, Korean people consider themselves as mono-ethnic; therefore, the Korean government discourages settlement of foreign low-skilled workers in Korea by fixing a maximum period of 4 years and 10 months
on their work contracts. With this restriction, migrant workers are deprived of opportunities to change their visa status to permanent resident or apply for Korean citizenship, which is only possible if a migrant stays continuously for five years and achieves an intermediate level in the Korean language. However, low-skilled migrant workers can obtain a maximum of four years and ten months for each contract period. If they wish to work in Korea again, a new work visa is required after these migrant workers return to their home country. This resulted in their inability to have continuous residency in Korea for five years or longer, and as a consequence, do not meet the prerequisite to apply for permanent residence.

In summary, policies on low-skilled migrant workers have been amended several times during the last two decades, ranging from the model of the ITTP (1991), to the EPP (2003), and finally to the EPS (2004). The EPS is considered as a significant improvement in policies on low-wage/low-skilled migrant workers compared to former models. However, this model still displays conflicting primary objectives. On the one hand, it provides more rights and broadens support networks for migrant workers. On the other hand, it allows Korean employers to keep the upper hand over employer-employee relations. As Korea’s state-led economic strategy is more concerned with the development of the national economy than benefits to migrant workers, Korean policies on temporary contract migration have showed their failures in protecting migrant workers (see Lee & Kim, 2011; Kee, 2009; Park, 2008, 2002). However, changes in the EPS are an indication of the desire to establish a greater balance between native businesses and the interests of foreign workers (Kim, 2011) because of the double pressure of liberal democratic consolidation and economic growth (Lee & Kim, 2011). Although policies on low-wage foreign labour have been revised many times to become more progressive, Korea has not been the ideal liberal democracy as its policies still discriminate against migrant workers. Indeed, negative consequences have resulted not only from Korea’s restrictive migration control system, but also
from loopholes in migration policies and corruption caused by people who manage this system.

A remarkable point in low-skilled migrant worker policies is that there is no gender-specific policy. Although the 24,802 women only account for 9.5 per cent of total migrant workers in Korea (Korean Immigration Service, 2011), they are indispensible in some sectors. For instance, Nguyen and Piper (2013) illustrated that female migrant workers have encountered specific problems as they mostly work in the agricultural sector with longer work hours in harsh climate conditions and living in isolated areas, but without being paid extra wages.

- Development of Contract-Based Labour Migration between Vietnam and Korea

Korea and Vietnam established diplomatic relations on 22 December 1992 and since then the relationship between the two countries has developed remarkably. In October 2004, on a visit to Vietnam by Korean President Roh Moo-huyn, Korea and Vietnam announced a mutual declaration on a ‘comprehensive partnership in the 21st century’. Along with the development of commodity trading, Korea has opened the door for Vietnamese workers. Labour co-operation includes training and recruitment of Vietnamese high- and low-skilled workers to work in Korean companies in Vietnam and Korea. Among receiving countries, Korea is considered the best destination for Vietnamese workers due to the gap between its labour demand and Vietnam’s labour supply, their income disparities, its low recruitment standards, long work contracts (three years, but extendable by one year and ten months) and social and political security. Korea is also considered the safest destination in terms of living and working conditions. In addition, unlike Japan where migrant workers can receive similar wages or even higher but have to spend a significant amount for living expenses, workers in Korea are generally provided accommodation and meals, which helps them to ‘earn more’ and ‘save more’. Therefore, numerous Vietnamese people, particularly young ones, desire a job in Korea.
(as observed during my fieldwork in Vietnam in 2013 and 2015). In addition, mutual socio-cultural understanding activities have been promoted. The ‘Korean wave’ (Hallyu in Korean language) has strongly affected Vietnamese people, especially youngsters who believe that Korea is a ‘dream land’ for living and earning. Figure 1.1 presents the increasing trend of Vietnamese workers migrating to Korea through contract-based programs in the period of 2000 to 2015. Except for 1997-1998 and 2009-2010, when Korea was strongly affected by two global financial crises, and 2013 up to 2016 when it suspended receipt of new Vietnamese workers as a response to the high number of Vietnamese undocumented migrant workers remaining in the country, the numbers of Vietnamese workers migrated to Korea has increased.

**Figure 1.1: The number of Vietnamese workers migrating to Korea, 2000-2015**

![Graph showing the number of Vietnamese workers migrating to Korea, 2000-2015](image)

*Source: Consular Department (2012) and annual reports from DOLAB*

In the initial stage of temporary labour migration from Vietnam to Korea, small numbers of Vietnamese migrant workers migrated to Korea; thus, networks formed by Vietnamese migrants were limited in quantity and had limited capacity to provide support. However, when the
Vietnamese migrant community in Korea became more complex and could assist migrant workers in obtaining jobs, more prospective migrants started to aspire to make money in this host country, which is reflected in the increasing numbers of Vietnamese workers migrating to Korea annually.

As agreed between the two countries, the MOUs under the EPS should be signed every two years; however, the highest number of undocumented migrant workers among all 15 countries supplying labour to Korea (reported at 22,708 in 2012) led to a suspension in receiving new Vietnamese workers in the late 2012. Approximately 12,000 applicants who already passed the Korean language test were refused employment in Korea as expected. In fact, since September 2011, Korea stopped hosting Korean language examinations, which are compulsory procedures in the recruitment process. Thus, after a MOU signed on 29 October 2010 became invalid on 28 August 2012, Korea refused to hire new Vietnamese workers until 9 September 2013, on the visit to Vietnam of the Korean president Park Geun-hye. Only current Vietnamese workers who leave Korea immediately upon their contract completion can apply for a new contract. No new workers are granted visa for temporary labour migration. According to the announcement of MOLISA, a new MOU was signed on 17 May 2016 in which Korea agreed to receive new Vietnamese workers to be employed in Korea. However, current annual job quotas for Vietnamese are small, compared to the years before the suspension. Since Korea suspended temporary contract migration from Vietnam, the media revealed that many Vietnamese people, particularly young ones, had migrated to Korea through other types of visa such as overseas study, sham marriage, trading, or tourism.

Briefly, improvements in diplomatic and trading relations have consolidated temporary labour migration from Vietnam to Korea. However, more importantly, the needs of Korea to hire a great number of foreign workers and Vietnamese workers to be employed by Koreans have
motivated the temporary labour migration from Vietnam to Korea. Networks of Vietnamese migrants in Korea, which can provide financial assistance, also encourage Vietnamese workers to move to Korea. However, high rates of undocumented Vietnamese workers residing in Korea led to stricter regulations to obtain jobs in this host country. Hence, the competition for jobs has become increasingly fierce and as a result, Vietnamese workers depend more on migration networks. Prospective migrants cannot merely rely on the transparency of a formal recruitment system but must strategically search assistance from migration networks.

1.3 This Thesis’ Contributions: Its Aims and Objectives

This thesis is about temporary labour migration in the intra-regional context of migratory flows between the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (hereafter Vietnam) and the Republic of Korea (or South Korea, hereafter Korea). The predominant mode of regulating labour migration in Asia is through employer-tied temporary contracts. The workforce comprises largely low-skilled, low-wage sector workers. Since the average length of such contracts is about three years, gaining permanent residence status – let alone citizenship – is out of reach for those migrants. This means the key incentive for migrants to embark upon such form of migration is to provide an (additional or sole) income for their families. This phenomenon has been celebrated as an important contribution to the development of the country of origin (according to the “migration-development-nexus” debate), as expressed in the ‘triple win mantra’ which claims migration can benefit all: countries of origin and destination as well as migrants themselves (Castles & Ozkul, 2014; Ramasamy et al., 2008; Wickramasekara, 2011).

I have observed that the literature on migrant networks has also been equally framed in a positive manner by demonstrating the way in which migrants sustain migration between specific places and offer support to migrants not provided by government agencies. By contrast, this
thesis will shed a more comprehensive and nuanced light on the phenomenon of social networks by combining it with the issue of temporary contract migration, and by providing a conceptual and analytical approach that includes all sorts of networks involved in facilitating migration: those by and for migrants, formal and less formal, along the entire migration process.

Migration from Vietnam to Korea, the empirical context of this thesis, is one such example of strictly time-limited work contract migration. Such temporary contract migration is considered by migrants and their families as one of the few effective livelihood strategies available to a considerable number of un- or underemployed Vietnamese workers. This form of migration provides the possibility of escaping poverty and improving the economic conditions for these workers and their families. However, the structure designed by labour-sending and -receiving countries to control and manage this type of migration is primarily concerned with immediate economic benefits and the sovereignty of the states involved; this structure has hampered the ability of migrants to maximise the gains from their migration and turn it into a ‘success’ (De Haas et al., 2016, p. S98; Kneebone, 2010; Piper et al., 2017; Withers & Piper, 2018). Migrant workers have encountered numerous obstacles caused by structural barriers of both countries of origin and destination during the migration process and even upon their return (Chae, 2010). In order to enhance their capacity to migrate and secure a livelihood, these temporary migrant workers build up agencies, channelled through, and heavily relying upon, social networks formed by themselves or by others. Therefore, investigating the relationship between the regulatory structure of temporary labour migration from Vietnam to Korea and the agency of Vietnamese migrant workers to establish and join migration networks is necessary.

To fill the gap in the literature, this thesis researches social networks of and for Vietnamese migrant workers who move to Korea temporarily based on short-term contracts. Firstly, the study aims to contribute important insights to the scholarship of transnational labour migration
in the specific context of temporary labour migration in Asia by treating migration as a ‘money-making project’. This study suggests a definition of the “migration project” as follows:

To achieve sustainable livelihoods by first embarking upon temporary contract migration, during which the migrant tries to earn sufficient money in order to send remittances home for the sustenance of his or her family whilst recouping any initial investments made to make the migration happen in the first place.

Such investment may include broker fees, language training and orientation courses, or other qualifications paid for in pre-migration. To reap the best possible outcome from the temporary migration project and to find ways to ensure a livelihood upon returning home, remaining in employment throughout the relatively short period of time provided by available contracts and in the extremely competitive situation is paramount for migrants. This means that migrant workers not only try to make as much money as possible in the limited time available, but further aim to make their migration successful by strategically investing remittances in other livelihood methods so that upon return they can keep their life sustainable. Future reference to the ‘migration project’ throughout the thesis is meant as a shorthand for this definition. By treating migration as a “money making” project, this thesis can examine purposes of individuals and institutions involving in this project to reap benefits and the complexity of networks they form to cope with frequent changes of policies on low-skilled migrant workers of labour receiving countries in order to achieve their goals. Based on the opinion of migrants about the success of their move, this research can assess the outcomes of the project of each migrant and their family and investigate the role of networks involved in each step of doing this “money making” project.

Along with the specific conceptual contribution to the existing scholarship on transnational migration, this study sheds some light on the complexity of social networks, particularly in the context of temporary labour migration in Asia. As workers can only make money within a
restricted timeframe and are forced to return to their home country upon completion of their contract, they usually attempt to maximise the effective utility of networks for this use. Throughout this project, a certain network might play a different role in different stages of migration. Due to the high competition for placement or jobs in Korea, network behaviour (in terms of forming and using different types of networks) of migrant workers differs from that of another group of migrants.

In addition, structural shifts have an important implication for migration agencies that in turn will lead to changes of social networks over time. Korea’s limited quotas, or even it no longer receiving new Vietnamese low-skilled workers, cannot stop inflows of Vietnamese people migrating there. Vietnamese workers keep going to Korea for employment by other types of visa, such as those for high-skilled workers, spouses, students, tourists, and cosmetic surgery or medical treatment patients. Networks established to obtain these visas in pre-migration and maintain them after their arrival in Korea differ from networks for migrant workers moving to Korea through EPS. Since Korea has clamped down on low-skilled migrants from Vietnam, the two possible and common ways to migrate to Korea are through sham marriages\(^2\) and overseas study. Overseas student visas are granted to both Vietnamese males and females, whilst visas for spouses are mostly given to females. Before the suspension, Korea mostly granted visas for Vietnamese male workers to work in sectors of construction, manufacturing, agriculture, and fishing. A few jobs were available for female workers in agriculture and auto-manufacturing. However, at that time a small number of women endeavoured to find jobs in Korea by attempting to marry Korean men, because they could directly apply for a job through EPS

\(^2\) A sham marriage (fake marriage or marriage of convinience) is defined as one "entered into by the parties only for the purpose of obtaining immigration benefits without any intention to live together as husband and wife." (Gordon & Rosenfield, 1984 cited in Rae (1987). In this study, numerous Vietnamese women married to Korean men for obtaining legal entry to and residence in Korea for employment, not for being a wife of these Korean men.
(although replacement for women was limited). After the suspension, migration to Korea for employment through spouse visas has become common for Vietnamese women. This implies the adjustment of agency of Vietnamese workers in term of gender. In addition, recent Vietnamese migrants migrating to Korea are younger and have better education because they are structurally forced to gain qualifications to meet the requirements for student visa application. These aspects of networks have not been researched in existing labour migration studies on social networks.

1.4 Research Questions

Specific research questions concern the range of social networks formed or drawn upon by migrant workers in order to reap the best possible benefits from the migration experience. By adopting a multi-level analysis of the macro- (structure of temporary labour migration), meso- (social networks), and micro-levels (individual migrants and their families), the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1) How do changes in the regulatory framework of temporary labour migration cause changes to migrants’ agency and in turn what are the implications for migration networks?

2) What are the advantages and downsides of the various types of networks (for the migrants and their families, employers, governments, brokers, and recruiters) involved at different stages of the migration project?

3) How the complexity and changeability of networks are in terms of temporality and spatially?
4) What differences are there in terms of gender between male and female Vietnamese migrant workers in forming, accessing, mobilising, and benefiting from social networks?

In the context of the increasing migration in Asia, studying the positive and negative aspects of social networks of Vietnamese migrant workers migrating to Korea for employment is crucial. Based on the findings, the study hopes to provide some empirical insights about social networks of Vietnamese migrant workers in the context of intra-Asian temporary labour migration, contributing knowledge of social capital and social networks to migration research, particularly temporary labour migration.

1.5 Theoretical framework

The main pillars of the theoretical approach of this study are the theory of social capital and network-based theory of social capital. These theoretical approaches help to categorise different kinds of social capital and social networks generating a variety of source for the gathering of resources and support. This variation is partly due to differences on the basis of gender, legal status and non-citizen status of Vietnamese migrant workers. The choice of theoretical approaches are due to this study’s aims being to examine how social networks are formed and how Vietnamese migrant workers can approach and obtain resources from these networks. Based on the findings, this study contributes to social capital theory and network-based theory of social capital by illustrating the changeable nature of networks as well as the agency of not only migrants but also those engaging in migration networks since these theoretical approaches do not pay attention to issues raised in temporary labour migration circumstances. The theoretical framework of the study is based on the integration of the above theories which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.
1.6 Methodological approach

To comprehensively understand how and why social networks are formed, how these networks’ functions change throughout the entire migration cycle, how resources are generated, the accessibility of Vietnamese migrant workers to these resources and networks, and whether social networks always benefit or also cause problems for participants, the study relies on a qualitative methodology in which individual migrant workers are the units of analysis. Methodologically, this study develops a multi-scalar ethnography approach in researching migration by examining multi-layers of various kinds of migration networks, formed in multiple sites and at different stages of migration.

The key methods for data generation for this study are interviews and observations from fieldwork conducted in Nghe An and Ha Tinh provinces in Vietnam and Uijungbu, Ansan and Shihung cities in Korea between February and April 2013. The study adopts purposive and snowball sampling to recruit participants. Target groups, including migrant workers, returnees, family members, representatives of recruitment and training agency and NGOs senior staff, were selected to obtain detailed information on different aspects of social networks of temporary labour migration.

When analysing labour migration trends in Vietnam and Korea as well as the demographic features of Vietnamese workers, the study also incorporates secondary data from government statistics to make the data more representative. Quantitative data at the national and local level is analysed to provide a broader picture of Vietnamese temporary labour migration.

In brief, the integration of qualitative and quantitative data in this study provides a multi-level understanding of the complexity of Vietnam-Korea temporary labour migration and social
networks of Vietnamese migrant workers. The methodology for this research is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

The first three chapters provide background to the research in terms of the context of the study, literature, theoretical approaches, and methodology and methods applied to collect data. Chapter 2 outlines the relevant theoretical approaches, including social capital theory and its network-based developments. Firstly, the study explains why migration theories are inefficient in interpreting the relation between structure of temporary labour migration in Asia and migrants’ agency in order to deal with structural restrictions. Therefore, the study reviews and gives reasons for the adoption of social capital theory and network-based theory of social capital, and then based on these theories it suggests a theoretical analysis deemed the most appropriate for application to this topic. Chapter 3 presents the methodology adopted in the research, including reasons for employment of a qualitative methodology and strategies to recruit participants and analyse primary as well as secondary data.

The second part includes three chapters, which present the research results from the extensive fieldwork. Chapter 4 discusses the roles of social networks in preparing for migration in the pre-departure phase in Vietnam. Chapter 5 deals with the role of migration networks in realising Vietnamese migrants’ aspirations to ‘make money’ and managing money while they live in Korea. Chapter 6 analyses the effects of social networks in building sustainable livelihood strategies upon return to Vietnam.

The final chapter draws conclusions before pointing out the limitations of this research and suggesting useful recommendations for temporary labour migration policies applicable to the
sending and receiving countries.
Chapter 2

Temporary Contract Migration and Network-Based Theory of Social Capital: Review of the Literature

2.1 Introduction

This thesis establishes a link between migration studies to social capital and social networks, as applied to the specific case of temporary contracted labour migrants. Being subjected to strict regulatory frameworks, including mandatory return, has pushed migrant workers into a “perpetually liminal, disposable and transient position” (World Bank, 2016, p. 1). Therefore, migrant workers in Asia form their own social networks or join in networks established for migrants at various stages of their migration cycle as a means of asserting some form of control over the chances to succeed with their ‘migration project’. The core objective of this study is to investigate the role of migration networks under such restrictive migration policy frameworks as they relate to the full migration cycle in temporal and spatial terms, as well as in relation to the frequent changes of policies vis-à-vis low-skilled/low-wage contract migrants imposed by the Korean and Vietnamese governments. Thus, understanding the meaning of social capital, social networks, and how network-based theory of social capital can serve as theoretical framework in relation to the practice of temporary contract migration, is at the heart of this thesis is.

This chapter provides an overview and critiques of theories and concepts relevant for (1) the analysis of the temporal and spatial complexity of migration networks in different stages of the migration cycle of temporary contract migrants, to investigate such networks’ roles in assisting or hampering their “migration project” when policies on foreign workers are frequently revised;
and (2) the analysis of differences of gender, legal status, and types of visa of migrants involved in forming and joining migration networks, and obtaining resources through them. To explore these questions in depth, the study adopts a conceptual framework which draws on social capital theory and network-based theory of social capital to elucidate how migrant workers engage in different kinds of social networks to facilitate their migration, based on the characteristics of gender, legal status, and visa types of entry to Korea.

This chapter establishes the argument that social networks need to be conceptualised on the basis of a processual (i.e. in three stages) and transnational (i.e. linking country of origin and destination) understanding of migration in order to gain a holistic view of their role and function along the migration cycle. Those three main stages are: pre-departure (in the home country), stint abroad (temporary contract period in the destination country), and return (to the home country). Figure 2.1 maps out the theoretical approaches applied in this study.

**Figure 2.1: Theories for analytical framework**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus of the study</th>
<th>Social networks of temporary labour migration between Vietnam and Korea</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-departure</td>
<td>The origin country: Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stay abroad</td>
<td>The host country: Korea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return</td>
<td>The origin country: Vietnam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Analytical framework**

- Theory of social capital
- Network-based theory of social capital
This chapter firstly shows the limitation of migration theories, which are unable to explain social networks in the specific context of temporary labour migration in Asia. Next, this chapter focuses on reviewing social capital theory and network-based theory of social capital and addresses how these theories help to develop an appropriate theoretical framework for the analysis of social networks in relation to structural changes in intra-Asian temporary contract migration.

2.2 The Study of Temporary Labour Migration, Social Capital, and Social Network

The study of international labour migration is an interdisciplinary undertaking which has concerned scientists from not only sociology but also economics, anthropology, geography, and etc. The ‘interdisciplinary’ nature of migration studies implies that conceptualisations and objects of studies in different disciplines may overlap or interrelate (Favell, 2000). Each discipline might be interested in similar or divergent dimensions of international migration. Thus, there is no single theory developed in the field of international migration studies which can be applied as a standard model to analyse the complexities of this social phenomenon (Favell, 2000; Hear, 2010; Massey et al., 1993). Therefore, the combination of migration theories should be adopted in order to explain social and economic aspects of migration.

Since this study deals specifically with temporary labour migration, economic theories would be a first call for exploring migration theory because the primary aim of sending countries is to develop their economy through received remittances and resolve serious unemployment problems, while host countries can be relieved from the scarcity of labour in low-skilled and low-waged job sectors. Migrants also seek a positive economic outcome by searching for a job overseas. There are several schools of migration theory proposing economic explanations of various aspects of migration. Lee’s push-pull model (1966), based on neoclassical economics,
focuses on disparities in wages and employment conditions between sending and receiving countries to explain migration, while the new economics of migration theory focuses on income maximisation for the family at a micro-level (Carrillo, 2004; Massey et al., 1993). The dual labour market theory and the world system theory emphasise the macro-level of human mobility, with the former presenting migration as linked to the structural requirements of modern industrial economies (Piore, 1979), and the latter viewing such movements as a natural consequence of economic globalisation and market penetration across nations (Wallerstein, 1974). These economic theories of migration endeavour to conceptualise causal processes of migration at a macro-level and micro-level of analysis and explain labour migration in relation to economic development.

Since the above theories are concerned with economic aspects, they neglect to explain or probe into social aspects of migration such as the relationship between agency and social structure, for example in job searching in another country. This study calls for more attention to agency since it reflects the capability of an agent, such as a worker, to make the choice to migrate and, more importantly, to utilise resources gained from networks to make their migration successful under the restrictive regulatory framework of temporary labour migration. Migration studies have demonstrated the important role of social networks in understanding contemporary migration processes (Faist, 2004; Levitt & Schiller, 2004; Pries, 2013). Access to networks is essential to migrants as such networks can offer abundant social capital, required to enhance the capability of individual migrants to make migration possible, overcome difficulties during their migration and to maximise the outcome of their migration. In the circumstance of limited time of contract migration from Vietnam to Korea, networks are hypothesised to be more vital to the ‘making money project’ and preparation for a sustainable life upon the return of Vietnamese migrant workers.
This study adopts the argument made by Guarnizo and Smith (1998), Hear (2010), Carrillo Carrillo (2004), (Bakewell, 2010), and especially Goss and Lindquist (1995), for the need to undertake a study of social networks which integrates agency and structure. Goss and Lindquist (1995), in their study on migration from the Philippines, developed such an integrative approach for researching patterns of migration. This approach combines a functionalist perspective which focuses on micro-economic processes, particularly migration decision-making of individuals and households, and a structuralist approach, which explains migration resulting in the uneven or imbalanced political-economic relationship of sending and host countries. Moreover, Goss and Lindquist (1995, p. 318) point out that migrant networks have played crucial roles in international migration as “a means of articulating agency and structure and reconciling the functional and structural perspectives”. In contrast to these authors, who particularly focused on formal (bureaucratic institutions) and informal agencies (recruiters and brokers), which are negatively conceived as exploitative institutions seeking benefits from migration, this study discusses both the beneficial and damaging aspects of various types of interpersonal and institutional networks for migration, which provide financial, informational, and instrumental support for migrants. Given that cross-border movement is a complex process, there is a need to develop a holistic perspective across time and place by bringing macro and micro-determinants into the analysis. In addition, meso-determinants, which have been neglected in migration scholarship, are also crucial (Faist, 2000, 2010). A meso-level approach to the study of migration involves social relations and social capital, which assist migrants in the migration decision, integration into the new work environment, and migration sustainability.

This study wishes to enrich migration theories by interpreting the importance of the meso-level approach in researching social aspects of migration by examining what migration studies bring to social network theory, and vice-versa: what social networks theory adds to migration studies,
especially when approached through the lens of temporary contract migration. The study particularly focuses on how migrant workers use networks to apply for a job vacancy and finance migration in Vietnam before their departure, seek and maintain paid work, transfer and manage remittances while staying in Korea, and establish sustainable livelihood upon their return. Therefore, the theories of both social capital and network-based theory of social capital are applied to serve as theoretical framework for analysis.

In addition, this study examines transnational, processual, and gender aspects that affect migration and networks. The place-based approach helps to understand the connection and the differences between the origin and the destination. The spatial aspect is considered in this study since migration is a transnational movement and networks of migrants tend to be established transnationally, particularly in the case of temporary labour migration. This study also emphasises the processual aspect by investigating social networks which migrants get involved in at different stages of the migration cycle, comprising pre-migration, ongoing migration, and return. At each stage, networks are formed in order to serve different purposes and the same network functions differently at different stages. Gender is also a focal discussion throughout the thesis. Hondagneu-Sotelo (2003) and Hondagneu-Sotelo and Cranford (1999) illustrate how migration and networks are gendered. Piper (2005) and Carling (2005) also argue that gender is related to most, if not all, aspects of migration. Migration policies may affect men and women differently which lead to gendered patterns of migration (Piper, 2008). Therefore, networks formed to facilitate different patterns of migration are different.

2.3 Theory of Social Capital

In order to build up an appropriate theoretical approach as background for explanations about the relation between structure and agency and transnational, processual, and gender aspects of
temporary labour migration and social networks, the theory of social capital is applied in this study. This section seeks to develop an appropriate conceptualisation of social capital to use as a theoretical approach to explain social capital available to Vietnamese migrant workers, and their capacity to draw on various resources provided by networks and utilise them to achieve their livelihood goals. The section reviews the concept of social capital in general, and in relation to temporary labour migration in particular; it discusses how this concept is developed, particularly in the study of migration, and it ends with a proposal for a model of social network analysis appropriate for this study of temporary contract migration. In addition, this section points out how temporary, processual, and gender aspects are discussed or ignored in the migration and social capital scholarship.

2.3.1 The Concept of Social Capital

Among the most significant and influential thinkers for the concept of social capital are the social theorist Pierre Bourdieu, the political scientist Robert Putnam, the rational choice theorist James Coleman, and the sociologist Nan Lin. This sub-section discusses the definitions of social capital suggested by these scholars, showing similarities as well as differences among these definitions, and critiquing them with the view to developing an understanding of social capital useful for analysing social networks of temporary migrant workers.

When discussing the nature of capital, Bourdieu (1986, p. 243) argues that capital presents itself in the form of three main types:

as economic capital, which is immediately convertible into money and may be institutionalised in the form of property rights; as cultural capital, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be
institutionalised in the form of educational qualifications; and as social capital, made up of social obligations (‘connections’) which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital.

Bourdieu considers social capital from a sociological perspective as a crucial resource for individuals or groups for helping them to achieve their goals. The position of individuals in a group relies on accessibility to social capital and their ability to accumulate economic and cultural capital. This explains the engagement of temporary migrant workers in migration networks, as they might generate useful social capital important for getting good paid work, and consequently help them to make money.

Unlike Bourdieu, Putnam holds a political science view of social capital as concerned with civic engagement and trust at the level of communities and regions, and how these foster the development of civic trust in political institutions. According to Putnam (2000, p. 19):

whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals - social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them.

According to Putnam, community is social capital, which is built on inclusionary and exclusionary forces of social networks. Putnam built a highly positive image of community in which individuals are friendly and helpful in interacting with each other. Leonard (2004) disagrees with Putnam, arguing against the romanticisation of the community, and suggests for considering the downside of community life. In the context of transnational migration, especially temporary labour migration, communities of migrants in the origin and the destination are
important to migrants, as they often seek help to facilitate their migration and money-making goals.

Coleman (1988, p. S98) probes into other aspects of social capital by defining social capital by its functions. He understands social capital as a resource embedded in complex relationships between sources and recipients based on mutual trust and obligation. Coleman (1990) particularly focuses on local associations, communities, and neighbourhoods that are helpful in providing support to local people. Coleman, from the viewpoint of a ‘rational choice’ sociologist, presumes that the actions of individuals can be analysed and understood in terms of choices that maximise utility. This study examines how migrants, in the context of temporary labour migration, rationally calculate and make decision on their involvement in networks that can assist them to make money.

Lin (1999a) argues that social capital is a resource embedded within a social structure. However, social resources obtained from social connections are temporary since the participants maintain good relations with others in their groups, until these resources are out of reach. This notion proposed by Lin involves three elements of analysing social capital, including structural (embeddedness), opportunities-related (accessibility), and action-oriented (use). This study investigates how the regulatory framework of temporary labour migration of the sending as well as receiving countries (structure) affects migrants’ access to migration and job opportunities, and their strategies to engage in networks that can provide them with useful resources for successful migration.

Along with the above theorists, other scholars also contribute their understanding of social capital. Portes (1998) suggests that social capital is broken down into three distinct dimensions: the recipients (those making claims), the sources (those agreeing to those demands), and the
resources. Garip (2008) advocates the distinction between these three dimensions because each of them may affect migration propensities in different ways. Endurance of social capital depends on the ability of individuals to mobilise their own cultural and economic capital as well as that of others (Leonard, 2004).

In sum, the above scholars have developed different definitions of social capital. These definitions share a common element, namely that social capital can be understood as resources embedded in social connections at an individual level (Lin, Bourdieu) and a collective or group level (Bourdieu, Coleman, Putnam). Resources such as job information and the ways to obtain a job can be the result of obligations among participants and a sense of solidarity, together with sharing information and provision of services. Trust is equated to a form of social capital (Coleman, 1988; Fukuyama, 1995c; Knoke, 1999; Putnam et al., 1993) or a collective asset generated from social capital (Lin, 1999a, 2001). This study aims to fill these conceptual gaps of the existing understanding of social capital in order to make this concept more comprehensive.

This study employs Lin’s concept of social capital, which helps to interpret how the structure of temporary labour migration of sending and receiving countries hinders or facilitates migrant workers in migrating, finding jobs in the pre-departure stage and during their overseas stint, and building sustainable livelihoods after returning. This study also borrows the notion of social capital to explain how trust and norms of reciprocity (discussed by Putnam) among individual migrants impact the generation of and the access to resources for migration. Since social capital can be converted to economic capital (proposed by Bourdieu), migrant workers wisely attempt to maximise the utility of social relations (offered by Coleman) and mobilise resources gained from these social relations to achieve their primary goal (suggested by Lin); that is to find a good job, make money, and use remittances in effective ways to make their lives sustainable upon their return. This study also builds on the idea of Portes (1998) regarding the three dimensions of
social capital to explain how migrant workers (recipients) obtain social capital (resources) from their social networks (sources). Since the out-migration period of Vietnamese migrant workers is generally limited to a few years, it is crucial for migrant workers to be involved in networks offering useful and immediate support. Under the pressure of having incurred substantial debts for exorbitant migration fees (Gamburd, 2000; L. A. Hoang & B. S. A. Yeoh, 2015; Hugo, 2005; Lindquist, 2010; Organisation, 2006) and a restricted time frame because of their limited time contracts, temporary migrant workers have only one exit: to earn the maximum amount of money in a short time. Thus, as per my hypothesis, under the extra pressure of limited contract periods and the investment made to make migration possible in the first place, migrant workers are expected to be proactive in mobilising their social capital by relying more on certain networks.

This study also borrows the concept of social capital as referring to resources possessed by people as a result of their relationships with others for mutual benefits (Lin, 1999a; Portes, 1998). These relationships are built on mutual trust and norms of reciprocity (Putnam, 2000). Social capital is generated differently between ‘bonding’ and ‘bridging’ ties (Putnam & Goss, 2002). ‘Bonding capital’ offers to “bring together people who are like one another” in important respects such as ethnicity, age, gender and social class, while ‘bridging capital’ works to “bring together people who are unlike one another”. Bonding capital refers to close and firm ties among family members, kin, and friends whilst bridging capital includes less dense ties such as acquaintances. Norms of reciprocity and mutual help tend to be stronger among bonding ties, but decline among members of civic organisations (Gittell & Vidal, 1998) and in a larger society. Bonding social capital may provide immediate practical support and an informal safety net (Narayan, 2002; Narayan & Pritchett, 2000). Blau (1977) suggests that the principle of homophily is at play, i.e. that people who are similar are more likely to interact than those who
are dissimilar. This viewpoint is advocated by Marsden (1988) and McPherson et al. (1992) that bonding capital occurs among homogenous populations. Benefits received from bonding capital are limited, though it is an effective resource for particular groups such as ethnic minorities (Putnam, 2000). For example, closed bonding networks might result in negative social capital through ethnic enclaves and ghettoisation, which restrains social cohesion (Crowley & Hickman, 2008). On the other hand, bridging capital refers to weak ties, as Nannestad et al. (2008) noted, and it tends to bring positive social capital in integration and social mobility. Both forms of social capital are documented to be vitally important for the poor (Kozel & Parker, 1998) because they might generate opportunities to enhance their living conditions. Some scholars have suggested considering different kinds of support obtained from social capital that bonding or bridging capital gives. Bonding capital often provides emotional and psychological support and is good for undergirding specific reciprocity (Putnam, 2000), whereas bridging relations are more instrumental (Burt, 1992). However, in some cases, bridging ties provide emotional or social support (see Avenarius, 2002 and Wong & Salaff, 1998). Marsden and Gorman (2001) show the overlap of support provided by the same network. For instance, Marsden and Gorman illustrated that recruitment agents may offer not only informational and instrumental support but also emotional support, which is often provided by bonding networks such as family and close friends.

Adopting the notion of bonding and bridging social capital helps this study analyse why and how temporary Vietnamese migrant workers form their networks and/or join existing ones; how they can access, mobilise, obtain resources and then transform them into other kinds of capital; and which resources they might gain from their bonding or bridging ties. This study examines the concept of bonding and bridging capital in the context of temporary labour migration between Korea and Vietnam in order to recognise what kinds of support each capital might provide to
migrant workers at different stages or phase of the migration cycle. For instance, bonding ties might help potential migrants to access financial resources in their pre-departure stage and assist these workers to manage remittances while they are staying abroad. In contrast, bridging ties could connect migrant workers with information about recruitment before their departure, and with jobs after their arrival in Korea. Upon the return, bonding ties may help migrant workers to resettle socially, whilst bridging ties may be helpful in using remittances to build up a stable occupation or arranging another migration (if the first one is not successful or returnees cannot find a well-paid job in Vietnam). In addition, I suggest a consideration about the transnational aspect; namely, that bonding or bridging ties maintain migrants’ transnational relations. As Kelly and Lusis (2006) and Ryan et al. (2008) have given examples, transnational relations link migrants with people back home and may play a supportive role for migrants. Similarly, as per my hypothesis, in the pre-departure stage, transnational relations connect migrants in my study with people in the host country; additionally, while working overseas, migrants maintain their relation with people left behind in the home community. Upon their return, the linking with people in the labour-receiving countries might benefit returnees to remigrate or help them to develop their career in their home country.

2.3.2 Effects of Trust and Norms of Reciprocity on the Formation of Social Capital in Vietnamese Society

This study examines how Vietnamese migrants’ social capital, which consists of social networks as well as trust and obligations among network members, is generated and used in the context of temporary labour migration. Therefore, discussion about trust, norms of reciprocity, and how socio-cultural traditions affect the degree of trust among individuals or communities (and in turn, how trust impacts the creation of social capital) is necessary because migrant workers always seek support from their co-ethnic networks in order to make their “money making project”
successful. I primarily rely on the view of trust presented in the works of (Fukuyama, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c, 2001, 2002) to analyse the level of trust and norms of reciprocity among Vietnamese migrant workers. I start with discussion of Fukuyama’s viewpoint on trust and his explanation that familistic traditions cause a low level of trust towards outsiders in some parts of the world. Then, I point out the theoretical consideration that the cultural tradition of familism is at the root of trust and of norms of reciprocity (constituent of social capital) between Vietnamese migrants with other individuals in various types of networks they join. I do not intend to employ Fukuyama’s view of trust to explain the prosperity of the Vietnamese economy. Instead, I borrow his explanation of trust, which lies at the core of the problem, to interpret how social capital is created and provided among Vietnamese in the context of contract labour migration between Vietnam and Korea based on closeness of their relationship (bonding or bridging), which is associated with the level of trust.

Fukuyama (1995c) devotes much effort in his book entitled *Trust: The social virtues and the creation of prosperity* to show the effect of trust on the creation of wealth in different societies across the world. He gives examples of high-trust societies such as Japan, Germany and the United States which enjoyed prosperity, while China, Southern Italy, France and South Korea, categorised as low-trust and family-oriented, could not be as successful in forming large privately owned corporations. He argues that it is culture (familistic traditions) that serves as a determinant of the level of trust, and trust, accumulated in social capital, consequently leads to the success of national economies. Trust, as Fukuyama proposed, is built on a set of ethical habits and reciprocal moral obligations built by people in a community. To illustrate this point, Fukuyama gives evidence that members of low-trust societies such as China and France usually operate small businesses based on family or kinship because they distrust people who are unrelated to them, while people in high-trust societies like Japan and Germany can cooperate.
easily and are confronted with less difficulties in forming large and efficient economic organisations. Therefore, low-trust societies may benefit from bonding social capital but have little opportunities to make ‘spontaneous sociability’ - the capacity to form a new association and to cooperate with the terms of reference they establish (Fukuyama, 1995c, p. 27). Hence, in these societies, social capital resides largely with family and kinship, but reduces the ability of individuals to co-operate with outside people (Fukuyama, 2001). High competition creates distrust among people who are not closely related. Fukuyama also notes that kinship ties like lineages of China and Korea can expand the radius of trust (Fukuyama, 1995b). The Vietnamese, whose culture is strongly influenced by Chinese Confucianism, also emphasises the moral obligations towards their family. The organisation of family and state in Vietnam is similar to China. The bonds within the immediate family have priority over other social obligations. The heart of ethical regulations is the apotheosis of the family. In the Vietnamese family, obedience to paternal authority is taken to a high level. Grown children, especially sons, should fulfil their obligations to live up to their parents’ wishes and support them economically. In low-trust societies, nationalism and national identity have been shown to be weak (Fukuyama, 2002), and people do not show much concern about the larger society where they live. To be kind and to do right with strangers do not seem to be generalised moral obligations among low-trust communities (Fukuyama, 1995a, 1995c). People in low-trust societies are likely to think that the state is arbitrary and rapacious and has left them alone; familism, then, can be regarded as a rational response to overcome difficulties in life (Fukuyama, 2002). In low-trust societies, high competition occurs among people who are unrelated but there is no competition among family members. Each member in a family has obligations to support other members for the sake of the whole family.

Confucianism has dominated and strongly influenced the sets of rules and moral obligations in
Vietnamese society, particularly in the Northern Vietnam. My field sites are located in the North Central Coast of Vietnam, which is categorised as the Centre geographically, but as the North culturally. Hickey (1964) notices that Confucianism influences family and kinship in the North more strongly, compared to the South of Vietnam. Confucian ideology strongly counteracts individualistic thought and behaviours and stresses collectivism and norms of reciprocity among family, as well as neighbourhood ties (Vandermeersch 1986, cited in Hoang, 2015). Popkin (1979, p. 97) has observed that a typical rural village in Northern Vietnam is “close-knit and homogeneous for endurance of traditions of patrilocality, endogamy, and ancestor worship”. The practice of ancestor worship unites people with the same “blood ties” into an “assembled faith” (Pham, 1999, p. 234) which, on the one hand, makes people with the same blood have a strong sense of belonging and solidarity and on the other hand, creates an identity distinct from other family groups. People in Northern Vietnam tend to have their strong relationships with family, and a close circle of kinship and village-based ties with high distrust and suspicion towards strangers (Dalton et al., 2002, p. 375). Bonding capital among strong ties dominates the social life of people in this region (Hoang, 2015). The radius of trust is narrowed to kinship and village ties, leading to a low sense of trust towards outsiders and capacity to cooperate with them.

In short, the familistic tradition has affected the generation of trust among individuals, and in turn, social capital in Vietnamese society. Figure 2.2 presents the conceptual framework to explain the factors contained in social capital and through networks, and how social capital can provide or not provide support to migrant workers. This framework also serves as a theoretical tool to interpret the way migration networks, based on trust and reciprocity, are formed and operated to cope with structural hurdles.
2.4 Network-Based Theory of Social Capital

As discussed above, social networks are indispensable components of social capital. Haug (2008) argues that the concept of social capital provides an important tool for understanding how networks affect migration. Social capital and social networks are conceived by Lin (2008) as interlinked, but they are not interchangeable. Migration scholarship has contributed to the study...
of social networks by recognising the significance of social networks in supporting migrants to migrate in the pre-migration stage, integrate in the host society, find jobs, maintain transnational families during their overseas stint, and resettle upon their return.

To shed some light on social networks of temporary labour migration, this section discusses network-based theory of social capital, which is used as a theoretical approach for the explanation on how migration networks of/for Vietnamese temporary migrant workers are formed and work at different stages of migration. This study develops a social networks analysis to gain a deeper understanding of the complexity of social networks of Vietnamese migrants who migrate to Korea on time-limited work contracts. Based on this theory, my study wishes to contribute some theoretical and empirical understanding of the network-based theory of social capital in the context of temporary labour migration. I suggest that social networks analysis should consider the diversity of migration networks, including interpersonal and institutional ones across time and space. Furthermore, when analysing the formation and operation of these networks, the socio-cultural foundation of migrant workers should not be neglected. I also place a great emphasis on the temporary nature of labour migration from Vietnam to Korea to demonstrate the differentiation of social networks of this kind of migration compared to migration networks for permanent settlement. This section begins with a discussion of the concept of social networks, then reviews the literature on how network-based theory of social capital has been employed in migration studies, and ends up with a suggestion for an appropriate theoretical framework for the social network analysis used in this study.

2.4.1 The Concept of Social Networks

The notion of social networks has been discussed within the migration scholarship drawing on conceptualisations from non-migration contexts. Networks are generally regarded as essential to
our understanding of what sustains migration over time, and also the social interlinkages between the origin and the host countries (Castles et al., 2014). Wellman and Berkowitz (1988) define social networks as models of social structures and systems that the analyst operates in order to uncover patterns of social relations and positions in real life. Network analysis enquires into the modes and content of exchanges, including symbols (concepts, values, and norms), emotions (love, respect, or hostility), goods or services (especially financial subsidies and gifts) among people (Bögenhold, 2013, p. 294).

Network-based theory of social capital, built on the seminal work by Bourdieu, Coleman, Putnam, and Lin and further developed by other scholars such as Burt (1992) and Portes (1998), focuses on important patterns of social relations which vary in terms of the intensity and reciprocity among ties. Huffman and Torres (2002) show three different layers of social relations whose intensity and reciprocity differ from each other. The innermost layer contains intimate and confiding relations; so-called strong ties (e.g. family, kin, and close friend ties) in which people provide mutual support and are obligated to reciprocate exchanges and services to one another. The intermediary layer is characterised by a mixture of strong and weak ties, where members share certain resources but not all of them have interactions or maintain equally strong and reciprocal relations with one another. The outer layer is formed by shared membership and identity, although members may or may not interact with one another. These relations, based on the backdrop of the collectivity, provide members with a sense of belongingness to groups of strong or weak connections. In the case of Vietnamese temporary migrants, distinguishing layers of social relations as above helps to examine what, how and why relations of each layer provide specific assistance for migrants at different stages of migration. Social networks provide the necessary conditions as well as obstacles for recipients to access and use the embedded resources for their migration, and then achieve their goal of making money. On the one hand, closure of
networks may increase the likelihood of sharing information among participants (Bourdieu, 1986). On the other hand, sparse or open networks may assist participants to approach better or more varied resources, such as information, control, and influence (Burt, 2001b; Lin, 1999b). There are four different processes which reinforce the operation of social capital through social networks: assistance based simply on ‘values’; reciprocity; ‘bounded solidarity’ through which members of a particular group support each other; and ‘enforceable trust’ backed up by certain sanctions (Portes, 1998). In fact, many scholars have observed that social networks are not always operated as means of providing support. Many networks are formed for the purpose of giving services and receiving benefits in return (Cranford, 2005; Fazito & Soares, 2013; Martes & Fazito, 2010; Padilla, 2006).

2.4.2 Studying and Analysing the Social Networks in the Context of Temporary Contract Migration

- Social Networks: Opportunities or Obstacles for Temporary Labour Migrants?
  - Beneficial Aspects

The supportive roles of social networks in providing assistance have been illustrated in many empirical studies on migration. Rindoks et al. (2006, p. 18) have noted that social networks have various functions in economic activities such as provide financial resources, lower costs of business operation, facilitate cooperation, disseminate information and make hiring of employees more effective. To utilise networks, people must be active to get the ‘right’ connections that would help involved individuals to achieve their goals. For example, being connected with the ‘right’ person helps migrants to get good jobs (Castilla, 2005; Castilla et al., 2013; Trimble & Kmec, 2011).
Migration scholarship has documented that different kinds of social ties can bring about different kinds of support. Social networks have been conceptualised predominantly as kinship and community relations. These are based on so-called strong ties of close relationships (Boyd, 1989; Massey et al., 1993), which do not only supply information and encouragement but also provide credit to pay for migration (Christinawati et al., 2013; Hugo, 1995). Family networks tend to increase the probability of migration, as the case of Mexican migrants (Dolfin & Genicot, 2010). Family and close friends play an important role in connecting job seekers to jobs (Aguilera, 2002, 2003; Aguilera & Massey, 2003; Bélanger & Pendakis, 2009; Hoang, 2011).

The traditional conception of migration based on kinship and friendship (strong ties) is not enough to make migration successful under the increasingly strict migration control enforced by host countries. Hence, social networks can be extended to a larger scale of ethnic community. Many empirical studies on migration have found that the migrant ethnic community tend to assist migrants who hail from the same region (Bélanger & Pendakis, 2009; Christinawati et al., 2013; Elmhirst, 2002; Wu, 2012). In ethnic communities, brokers appear as helpful sources to link migrants with employers and deal with problems of life and work. According to Burt (1992, 1997, 2001a), brokers, with a foot in two worlds, have diverse sources of information and resources and an ability to control flows of resources across that network. They stand in an intermediate position which may confer superior information, trust, and control relative to others (Castilla et al., 2013); thus, they build bridges between groups where it is valuable to do so. Brokers can be returned migrants who are more trustworthy in the eyes of the communities and might hold trustworthy contacts (Singhanetra-Renard, 1992; Spaan, 1994) or labour recruiters (Christinawati et al., 2013; Raharto, 2011). Numerous studies have demonstrated that in the circumstances of complicated bureaucratic procedures and high level of corruption that may be decisive factors to the speed of the process, the roles of specialised brokers become extremely
important in providing information and assistance for prospective migrants to deal with the administration process (Christinawati et al., 2013; Fazito & Soares, 2013; Krissman, 2005; Lindquist, 2010; Lindquist et al., 2012; Peeples & Haas, 2013; Raharto, 2011; Shah & Menon, 1999). In Vietnamese communities of origin, where significant corruption is likely to occur in recruitment, migrants tend to rely heavily on brokers for assistance, especially for matters related to obtaining a job. In Korea, networks established by Vietnamese migrants, as I hypothesise, are mostly temporary, small in size, and limited in providing efficient and speedy support for participants because of the lack of time, social relations, and economic investment.

Alongside family, kinship, and broader ethnic communities, a number of NGOs have been established by local citizens in the host states to assist migrants. Migrants, particularly temporary migrant workers who fall within the strict control mechanism of the host country, strongly rely on these organisations (Gray, 2007; Shipper, 2006, 2012). Nguyen and Piper (2013) underline the importance of NGOs in helping Vietnamese migrant workers in Korea to solve problems involving negotiations with employers, consultations about labour law, translation, and provision of language training. Undocumented workers whose rights and social protection are more limited (Seol, 2000; Seol & Skrentny, 2004b) often seek support from religious-based organisations, as an observation of Nguyen and Piper (2013).

Empirical studies on migration have also shown how different types of social networks mentioned above generate and provide various types of support in different phases of migration. Social networks have evidenced their positive aspects in the migration process, such as reducing risks and costs of migration (Dalen & Henkens, 2012; Massey & García, 1987; Massey & Zenteno, 1999; Palloni et al., 2001). Another benefit of social networks is creating a sense of solidarity among participants. In the pre-departure stage, family provides financial support (Christinawati et al., 2013; Hugo, 1995), and friends might share helpful information about job
conditions (Bélanger & Pendakis, 2009). More importantly, brokers provide services to make migration happen (Fazito & Soares, 2013; Lindquist, 2010; Singer & Massey, 1998).

Landing in the host country and then encountering many barriers in terms of language, culture, and working conditions, migrants need assistance from natives and their fellow country people. The establishment of, or participation in, new networks, which help migrants to maximise their potential, is critical for their adaptation and job search. The common support, which migrants often receive from their social networks, could be for integration (Dalen & Henkens, 2012; Giulietti et al., 2013; Massey et al., 1994b; Palloni et al., 2001; Rainer & Siedler, 2009; Smith, 1976), the search for accommodation (Espinosa, 1997) and jobs (Aguilera, 1999, 2002, 2003; Aguilera & Massey, 2003; Battu et al., 2011; Beaman, 2012; Burns et al., 2010; Cheung & Phillimore, 2014; Dalen & Henkens, 2012; Fazito & Soares, 2013; Giulietti et al., 2013; Raghuram et al., 2010; Rainer & Siedler, 2009), introducing migrants to employers (Davern & Hachen, 2006), raising earnings (Aguilera, 2005; Aguilera & Massey, 2003; Amuedo-Dorantes & Munda, 2007; Emmerik, 2006), and remitting (Amuedo-Dorantes & Pozo, 2005; Chan & Shiroyama, 2009; Cheok et al., 2013; El Qorchi et al., 2003; Gallego & Mendola, 2013; Orozco, 2002; Puri & Ritzema, 1999; M. M. Rahman & B. S. A. Yeoh, 2008; Seddon, 2004; Seddon et al., 2002; Thieme, 2006; Wucker, 2004). In cases where migrants do not receive support from their kinship and friendship ties, they may have to use the services of paid agents, as in the case of Algerian asylum seekers migrating to the United Kingdom in a study of Collyer (2005).

After returning to their home country, migrants have to go through a process of reintegration into their own society. Although they are familiar with this environment, conditions may have changed after a period of absence. Particularly, their social connections with people in the home country have been interrupted. In addition, there may be a feeling of ‘betweenness’, as discussed by Bhabha (1994, 1996), namely that returnees’ thinking and behaviour are not like other
Vietnamese people who have not had any cross-cultural experiences. They are neither ‘pure’ Vietnamese nor Koreans. Upon their return, they do not want to take low-paid jobs in Vietnam but their limited professional skills as well as Korean language ability do not meet the requirements for well-paid positions that may enhance their social stratum (Chae, 2010). This significantly affects the decision to form and join returnee social networks. However, most of the studies about return migration have proved that returnees of temporary labour migration, either by force of voluntarily, have prepared for their return; hence, relationships with families are sustained firmly (Duval, 2004).

Hindrances Resulted by Social Networks

Social networks scholarship tends to focus on the beneficial aspects of networks rather than the obstacles that they might generate. However, the embeddedness of participants in networks does not always bring benefits. The dark side of social networks exists alongside the beneficial effects (Coleman, 1988; Portes, 1998; Putnam, 2000; Putnam et al., 1993). Kawachi et al. (1997, p. 1345) found that both positive and negative aspects of social capital can be produced within the same network, including those dominated by migrants. Migration studies have highlighted that the social capital produced by networks may also engender risks (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Portes, 1998). Portes (1998) has observed the negative results caused by the social networks by showing that they can limit opportunities for social mobility and can become suffocating to their members. Closed networks can entail constraints of some sorts, such as limiting their members’ connections with outsiders (Fukuyama, 1995c; Portes, 1998; Putnam & Goss, 2002; Trimble & Kmec, 2011). New migrants might face particular vulnerabilities upon arrival if they do not have well-maintained contacts at destination (Pathirage & Collyer, 2011). Outsiders such as refugee newcomers may be faced with a high level of discrimination in obtaining jobs and social positions, even when they are as well-qualified as native people (Hardwick, 2003). When social
capital is beneficial to someone, it might become harmful to others. Some migrants are constantly confronted with suspicion and as a result distance themselves from existing networks (Hellermann, 2006). This diminishes their opportunities to increase their social capital resources.

Putnam (2007) asserts that in the context of diversity, people tend to distrust others; not only those who are not like them but also those who are like them. Negative outcomes appear among people between, and even within, ethnic groups (cf. Cranford, 2005; Padilla, 2006). There is a high level of competition, rivalry, suspicion, pressure, or even danger (see Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2005; Roggeveen & Meeteren, 2013; Ryan et al., 2008; Williams, 2006). Newly arrived migrants who are limited in economic, social, and cultural resources may find only one source of support provided by their co-ethnic networks. Obviously, integration with a co-ethnic community may be the best strategy for newcomers to receive quick support and basic needs such as translation, finding jobs, housing, etc. Some studies have documented that new migrants may obtain help in job searching from a small group of migrants, but when the job market becomes saturated, high competition leads to the change of in-group relations (Grzymała-Kazłowska, 2005; Padilla, 2006). Other migrants, because of the fear of losing their jobs, become distrustful to these new migrants. The more diversity, even within an ethnic community, the more distrust appears among people. Ryan et al. (2008) show evidence that Polish migrant newcomers are involved widely in the long-established Polish community in London for instrumental support, but have to be selective in forming deeper connections. In a study by Hoang (2015), distrust of Vietnamese temporary migrant workers towards state authority resulted in the dependence of migrants from the co-ethnic community in the host country. However, networks of female migrants which were loose in the formation and weak in operation, compared to that of other ethnic groups such as their Filipina and Indonesian peers, have constrained Vietnamese migrants to access institutional support. Consequently, they had to
rely strongly on the broader co-ethnic community, which may be damaging.

In short, the one-sided viewpoint, which focuses solely on positive aspects of networks, paints a partial picture that does not provide a comprehensive understanding of networks in the context of temporary labour migration. In my study, the main aim of Vietnamese workers is to migrate to Korea in order to make money quickly within a limited period of time; therefore, urgent and effective support from social networks, particularly in obtaining good jobs, is extremely important to these workers in all phases of their migration and especially when abroad. However, given that they have little support from the state and only a few organisations are formed to provide assistance for them, Vietnamese migrant workers may find support from strangers in migration industry but with very high financial costs. This study considers both benefits and hindrances that social networks provide to migrant workers. Researching the social networks of migrant workers through the whole migration cycle provides detailed insights into the diversity of networks and their functions over time and space.

- **Sustainability and Adaptability of Social Networks Temporally and Spatially**

Other aspects of social networks which should be taken into consideration relate to duration and changeability of social networks across space and time. Generally, social networks are formed to benefit participants, but to make gains from these networks and maintain their durability, participants have to continuously engage with them in one form or another because the networking is “the product of endless effort” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 52). Portes (1998) points out that gains acquired from social networks are not automatically obtained. High-skilled migrants are found to have more opportunities in accessing networks than low-skilled ones (Choldin (Choldin, 1973; Harvey, 2008; Poros, 2001; Raghuram et al., 2010; Ryan & Mulholland, 2014; Somerville, 2011). Low-skilled migrant workers, who live close to the economic margin and/or
are lacking access to services typically provided by formal (state) institutions, have to make more efforts to access networks that would enrich their resources.

As regards the adaptability of social networks, little attention has been given to the analysis of the dynamism and the changing nature of social networks that migrants use throughout the migration cycle. Many studies focus on networks at a specific stage of migration; these studies do not consider the adaptability of networks over time. Klvaňová (2010) highlights the importance to study the changes of networks’ roles in migration and migrants’ position in these networks across time. My study aims to illustrate that networks that migrant workers are involved in differ in different stages of migration. In addition, in each stage of migration, networks of migrants are changed over the time. For instance, networks when they first arrive in their destination are unlikely to remain static. The longer they stay in Korea, the broader the networks in which they might engage. The expansion of social networks of migrant workers seems to be effective in the enhancement of their ability to maximise their earnings. Moreover, the same types of networks may function differently while migrants live in their home community or in the host country. Because of the changeability of social networks, I share the same viewpoint as Ryan (2011), who argues for the need to consider the spatial and temporary dynamism of social networks of migrants.

- Gender-Based Social Networks

Not only are spatial and temporal aspects neglected in the study on social networks of migration, but also gender. Gender is a central aspect of social capital and social networks attributable to differences between men’s and women’s socialisation and social positioning. The ways in which men and women create, access, and attain social capital through their social relationships vary. However, Lowndes (2004) and Molyneux (2002) have observed that there is very little
discussion of gender within social capital and social network scholarship. Even key social theorists such as Putnam and Coleman fail to fully acknowledge the distinctive contributing factor of gender to the conceptualisation of social capital.

Women’s formation of social networks and participation in them are distinct from men. Since women tend to establish networks that are less extensive and more homogeneous (Leeves & Herbert, 2014), they rely much on bonding social capital, which is associated with family and with femininity (Bezanson, 2006; Hoang, 2011). This restricts them from a number of job opportunities (Stoloff et al., 1999). The study by McDonald and Day (2010) showed that informal recruitment processes are more effective for white men than for minorities and women. This indicates how the ‘invisible hand’ of social capital helps to maintain gender and race inequality. Yancy et al. (2006) suggest that women could improve their social standing by developing more social ties across sexes and classes, which can help them obtain plentiful resources. Gender diversity could help to access more contacts than gender-segregated networks (Stoloff et al., 1999, p. 94). Men are commonly more powerful within the workforce than women; thus, it can be more helpful for women to join in networks that include men.

Given the feminisation of migration in Asia (Piper, 2013), networks for temporary labour migration are unsurprisingly also gendered. Hoang (2011), investigating migration of young people from a farming community to urban areas for employment, illustrates that migrant networks are not gender-neutral, as they are organised differently to make migration possible. For example, networks of Thai men were likely less curtailed by kinship networks, but more tied to patron-client relations promoting the capacity for mobility and access to resources (Curran & Saguy, 2001). Gender-specific networks of migrants tend to be more important for prospective same-sex migrants (Curran & Rivero-Fuentes, 2003). Most of origin countries do not restrict male migration, but have circumscribed female migration, as traditional patriarchal norms expect
men to migrate rather than women. Bangladesh became a “non-sending country” of migrant women (Dannecker, 2005; Oishi, 2002; Siddiqui, 2005) because the government believes that a ban or strict control of female migration for some occupations is an effective way to protect women and the country’s reputation. While restrictive policies cannot stop women from migrating, they can perhaps lead to more irregular migration or trafficking for them (International Organization for Migration, 2003). Female migrant workers are often channelled into informal sectors, such as domestic work, in which they are in highly personalised contact with employers and unable to negotiate for the basic social and medical welfare as regulated by migration policies (Piper, 2004a, 2005; Yamanaka & Piper, 2005); additionally, their wages very much depend on the ‘charity’ of their employers (Asis, 2003). There are only a few exceptions to the common findings in migration literature that female migrants are more likely to benefit from social capital in making money than men do. For instance, Aguilera (2005) found that female Puerto Rican migrants received substantial rewards for living with paisanos in the United States. The interactions with paisanos provided female migrants with increased labour market information that they utilised to find jobs offering higher wages.

Due to the male-dominated culture in Vietnam and strict gender segregation of the Korean labour market, there is a great gap between the available opportunities to migrate and find good jobs for men and women. In addition, the frequent changes in policies on temporary labour migration of involved states have resulted in various inflows of migration. This has important implications for gender differences because men and women tend to engage in different channels for their migration. This situation results in the need to differentiate the ways male and female migrants access the resources created and provided by social networks and benefit from them. With serious consideration of these matters, this present study examines the formation of social networks and their accessibility by migrants from a gender perspective. Understanding how
social networks are gendered augments this study’s analysis on the differences between male and female migrants in creating, accessing, and receiving support from their networks.

- **Effects of Legal Status and Types of Visa on Social Networks**

Alongside gender, legal status of migrant workers strongly affects their capacity to obtain social capital. Many Vietnamese migrant workers might become undocumented in Korea for several reasons, such as by spontaneously changing their workplace without permission from their Korean employer, or remaining in Korea after expiration of their original work contract (‘overstaying’). The Korean laws on foreign workers do not protect undocumented migrants. Therefore, these undocumented workers could be subjected to the exploitative work system or deported at any time. Aguilera and Massey (2003) has demonstrated that due to the lack of a legal status, most of the undocumented migrants are marginalised and very much dependent on their networks, particularly informal ones. Other studies found that undocumented migrants are often at risk of not getting a job and may lack support from networks at the destination (Garcia, 2005; Krissman, 2005; Yeffal & Lastra, 2011). In fortunate cases, migrants’ contacts help them to access jobs where employers turn a blind eye to their legal status and allow migrants to earn an income (Aguilera, 2003; Amuedo-Dorantes & Mundra, 2007). Undocumented migrants might not have chances to access better-paid jobs without the help from their networks (Massey & Espinosa, 1997; Yeffal & Lastra, 2011). This study analyses the difference between documented and undocumented migrants in encountering difficulties in accessing social capital provided by networks.

Holding different types of visas also leads to differences in Vietnamese migrant workers’ access to social capital. Sharing the same purpose of migrating to Korea for employment in a limited period of time, not all Vietnamese migrants enter the country with a work visa, particularly after
the Korean government’s decision to stop recruiting low-skilled migrant workers in late 2012. Because of such structural constraints, prospective migrants have to change their migration strategy by moving to Korea through visas for students, spouses, tourists, or traders. Depending on the specific channels of migration, migrant workers seek support from different networks created for migrants holding specific visas.

- **Conclusion: Social Networks for Temporary Labour Migrants**

Different types of ties are somewhat helpful because each of them provides different kind of support for migrants. Massey et al. (1994b) indicate that to help migrants integrate into a new society, strong ties are more important than weak ties. Having close friends and relatives with migratory experience effectively assisted male Mexican migrants to find jobs and obtain higher wages (Massey & Emilio, 1994). In contrast, Burt (1992) argues that a sparse network with few redundant ties often provides greater social capital benefits. Supporting Burt’s argument, Granovetter (1973) demonstrated the strength of weak ties that were more effective in job seeking and wage increase. Lin (2001) and Yakubovich (2005) also advocate the viewpoint that social relations with weak ties are critical in helping people secure information they do not know. In contrast, Wong and Salaff (1998) argue for the consideration of the importance of both strong and weak ties because after the British handover of Hong Kong to China, middle-class migrants relied more on their friends and colleagues in their field (weak ties) when resettling abroad, whilst working class ones mostly sought help from family members (strong ties). Similarly, Harvey (2008)’s findings show that highly skilled and specialised workers were unlikely to rely on social contacts from family and friends, because these people were less likely to work in the same field and hence did not hold useful job information.

The findings of this study point to Burt (2001b) being right about equating dense or closed
networks with better or greater amount of social capital as conceptually flawed. Harvey (2008) also notices that the use of closeness as a measurement of tie strength may lead to the underlying assumption that this characterisation of the social relationship determines the strength of the tie. However, the above mentioned studies proved that family members could be weak ties and colleagues may be strong ties in helping job seekers to obtain good jobs. In support of Yeffal and Lastra (2011)’s argument is that families, which have been classed as strong ties, do not always generate better or strong social capital compared to weak ties. Thus, the boundary between strong and weak ties is in reality quite blurred. The terms ‘strong ties’ and ‘weak ties’ seem to be problematic because they are not mutually exclusive (Harvey, 2008). Elrick and Lewandowska (2008) propose to extend the analysis beyond the dualism of strong versus weak ties to show that individuals use both types for the different kinds of information they are seeking. To avoid confusion and inappropriateness in using the terms strong or weak ties, I argue that the core concern of the study of social networks should be to highlight the importance of the support social ties offer throughout the entire migration process, rather than determining whether the ties are strong or weak.

This study also examines the factors which make networks of/for Vietnamese migrant workers formal or informal. In this study, formal networks can be composed of institutions which are licensed for their operations (such as labour export companies, local department of labour, vocational training colleges or centres for migrant workers, etc.) while informal networks include individuals or groups of people and their activities which are involved in facilitating temporary labour migration but are not officially licensed (e.g. brokers, relatives, friends). Due to restrictions placed on employment search by Vietnam’s policies, only job centres can function as bridges which connect job applicants to recruiters. Hence, other informal brokerage networks are not permitted to run this kind of business. Mass media has revealed the fact that a significant
number of individuals working in licensed organisations, for example the Vietnamese embassy in Korea, departments of labour in some provinces have workers as brokers. Therefore, the boundary between formal and informal becomes blurred.

To provide a nuanced understanding of migration networks, this study divides social relationships into two categories: interpersonal and institutional networks. While the former refers to social relationships between migrant workers with other individuals such as family members and friends, the latter comprises social connections between migrant workers with institutions such as recruit agencies, offices of labour management, NGOs or religious-based organisations for supporting migrants, etc.

Migrant networks, as defined by Massey et al. (1993, p. 448), “are sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship, and shared community of origin”. A series of collaborative studies (Massey et al. 1993, 1994, 1998, 2002; Massey and Espinosa, 1997, and Singer and Massey, 1998) also support the contention on migrant networks that ignored a variety of actors who shaped the historical and structural factors. In these studies, Massey and his colleagues focused on symmetrical relationships between people hailing from the same labour sending hometown, especially kinship, friendship, and voluntary organizations and heavily outweighed labour “supply-side” factors which is based upon a simple hierarchy of hometown groups presumed to engaged in symmetrical exchanges – it is a metaphorical network (Gurak & Caces, 1992, p. 161). According to Krissman (2005, p. 34), this “Massey model led to misguided, counterproductive, and even lethal immigration policies”. Based on fieldwork data and a review of immigration and networks analysis literature, particularly findings of the works of Griffith et al. (1995), Mahler (1995), Wilson (1998), Hondagneu-Sotelo (2001) and Spener (2001) which are most relevant to a critique of the migrant network concept suggested in Massey’s oeuvre,
Krissman (2005, p. 5) argued for a reconsideration this concept since “using this concept led immigration studies astray”. Krissman (2002) found important roles of a wide variety of non-hometown actors in the development of international migration networks. For example, Krissman used findings of studies conducted by Mahler (1995) and Menjívar (2000) to illustrate the shortcomings of the Massey’s model: namely that besides actors in the origin community, there are various actors such as employers and sundry recruitment agents who also deeply involved in migration process. Although in another publication, Massey et al. (1999a) mentioned the socioeconomic exchanges with non-hometown actors, Krissman observed that this did not lead to these scholars’ modifying the concept of migrant network.

In the context of contract-based labour migration, prospective migrants do not only rely on interpersonal networks, but also on institutional ones established by Vietnamese and foreigners in the labour sending as well as labour receiving countries because these networks provide helpful assistance for their migration and make it successful. These institutional networks, for example Offices of MOEL, located in all provinces of Korea, are subordinate organisations of MOEL which hand out job introduction to migrant workers. Vietnamese migrant workers participate in the Korean labour market under the EPS regulatory framework by which they are recruited through contract-based programs, and are in theory protected by the Korean Foreign Labour Law. However, it is still very important for these migrants to form migrant networks and access other support networks such as NGOs, religious-based organisations, country-fellow associations, etc., to get support for dealing with problems raised during their employment. Government officials and their agents, employers and their supervisors, moneylenders, and NGOs or religious-based institutions are exogenous to the definition of migrant networks as per Massey et al. (1993). Thus, this study proposes the term ‘migration networks’ as including interpersonal and institutional networks in the home and the host countries, which may be
supportive or unsupportive of migrant workers at different stages of migration, as shown in Figure 2.3.

**Figure 2.3: Social networks of Vietnamese migrant workers**

![Diagram of social networks of Vietnamese migrant workers](image)

### 2.5 Concluding Remarks

The scholarship on social capital and social networks in relation to migration has predominantly focused on the study of migration from the less-developed countries in many parts of the world to well-developed destinations in North America and Europe. Little attention has been paid to research on social networks in the context of intra-Asian temporary labour migration, which is distinctive in that it is primarily migration for low-skilled/low wage employment within Asia on an employer-tied contract basis. Due to the restricted time of the contracts (some years), migrant workers have to find their own ways to make as much money as possible by relying on migration networks, which provide useful resources.
Theory of social capital and the network-based theory of social capital serve as primary theoretical approaches to explain how social networks of or for temporary labour migrants differ from other types of migrant networks. Based on these theories, the chapter suggests a theoretical framework, applied to investigate how social capital is generated and provided through divergent social ties in the context of temporary contract migration between Vietnam and Korea. Trust, norms of reciprocity, and mutual assistance among various kinds of social relations in migration networks are analysed in terms of Vietnamese socio-cultural ideology and values.

In the context where people have a high degree of distrust towards state authority in governing temporary labour migration, individual migrants create their ‘technology of the self’ (Foucault et al., 1991) by establishing and engaging in networks that can support a positive outcome for their migration. Based on job quotas negotiated between the two states, jobs are given to applicants before their arrival in Korea. A great number of job applicants for limited vacancies results in an extremely competitive situation, as most applicants are burdened by significant debts. Therefore, this study hypothesises that in pre-departure, brokers play a crucial role in connecting prospective migrant workers with recruiters, whilst families are helpful in assisting them with financial preparation. In the overseas stint, the co-ethnic communities, including brokers, emerge as the best sources which may provide migrant workers, particularly the undocumented ones, with efficient and fast support to maximise opportunities to make money. However, broader co-ethnic networks have been documented to be beneficial as well as damaging to migrant workers, especially in competitive and distrustful circumstances. Alongside co-ethnic networks, migrant workers may seek help from other interpersonal networks such as close friends or relatives and institutional networks such as NGOs and religious-based organisations established by local people to support migrants. Meanwhile, migrants’ families attempt to assist them to manage remittances efficiently in the country of origin. Due to making money being the primary purpose
of migration, efficient remittance use is crucial. The prolonged absence causes interruption of social relations between migrants and networks in their community of origin; thus, after returning, in order to obtain a stable job, returnees tend to search support from their networks to build up a sustainable livelihood strategy.

Migration networks vary and do not remain static throughout the entire cycle of migration. The ability of migrant workers to access and gain social capital from these networks is considered on the grounds of gender (male or female), legal status (documented and undocumented), and visa type (for workers, students, or spouses, etc.). The theoretical and analytical framework of the study is presented in Figure 2.4.
Figure 2.4: Analytical framework of the study

Structure of temporary labour migration of Vietnam and Korea

**Interpersonal**
- Family members
- Friends
- Money lenders
- Vietnamese marriage migrant women
- Vietnamese co-workers
- Korean co-workers
- Korean employers

**Migration networks of Vietnamese migrant workers**

**Institutional**
- Recruitment organisations in Vietnam
- Local departments of financial support
- Vietnamese embassy in Korea
- Vietnamese association in Korea
- Korean departments of foreign workers management
- Trade unions
- NGOs for migrant workers

**Social capital (Resources)**
Networks, trust, obligations, and reciprocity

**Support**
- Emotional
- Informal
- Instrumental
- Economic

**Constraints**
- Exclusive outsiders
- Exploitative

**Recipients**
Vietnamese migrant workers

**Gender**

**Legal status**

**Visa types for migration**

People act based on benefit of individuals, groups, and/or community

Supportive/Unsupportive

Mobilising
Chapter 3

Research Methodology and Methods

The study of social networks as applied to the specific case of temporary migrant workers, and thus to the entire migration cycle in temporal and spatial terms, is a complex undertaking. As outlined in the previous chapter, this study adopts a network-based concept of social capital in the exploration of this multi-layered phenomenon. In doing so, it expands this concept by investigating the involvement of temporary migrant workers in social networks formed for or by themselves as a sustainable livelihood strategy, which starts with recruitment for overseas employment, seeking the best possible economic gains within the limited time frame provided for working overseas, and by finding ways for a meaningful continuation of income-generating activities upon returning home. Researching this complex phenomenon, therefore, requires a multi-layered and multi-sited methodology based on an appropriate combination of methods. The key methodology is multi-scalar ethnography, as proposed by Xiang (2013) and Marcus (2007). This method allows one to engage with structural issues (states policies on regulating temporary labour migration) as well as agency-related aspects (the forming or joining of social networks by migrant workers in order to overcome structural barriers and achieve the best possible outcomes from migration).

The first section of this chapter presents the research methodological approach and is followed by the methods adopted to gather a multiple set of data. The issue of sampling is then discussed in more detail. The subsequent part of this chapter introduces the fieldwork sites in Vietnam and Korea and discusses my own fieldwork experience. This is followed by a discussion of the specific data sources and data analysis strategies to turn information into the generation of
knowledge. Attention is also paid to ethical issues that may arise when conducting this type of research, and a final section addresses the obstacles faced when conducting research on temporary labour migration.

3.1 Methodological Approach

3.1.1 Rationale for Conducting Qualitative Research

There are two major approaches to social science empirical research: quantitative and qualitative. Each approach has specific advantages and disadvantages or challenges.

This research explores (i) how social networks established by and for Vietnamese migrant workers in their country of origin (prior to migration and upon return) and in their receiving country (Korea) are organised and maintained, (ii) how these networks provide opportunities or obstacles for migrant workers, and (iii) gender differences in forming, accessing resources generated by such networks. The research investigates the complex web of relations within migration networks, an approach which places migrant workers at the centre of the analysis and connects them with non-migrants such as brokers, recruiters, family members, etc. who are also involved in the realisation of the “migration project”. Rather than resorting to quantitative measurements of the closeness of different ties in these networks (as most existing studies have done), a qualitative approach is employed because it helps to “provide understanding of social action at individual and community-level as well as the history and cultures of sending, transit and receiving countries”, as Castles (2012, p. 21) has argued. Qualitative research, as Baker (1999) and Silverman (2006) have observed, helps to explore not only the material life but also the spiritual life and everyday behaviours of participants. Through a qualitative methodology this study investigates migration networks formed to navigate the regulatory (and often
changing) framework of the specific context of intra-Asian temporary labour migration.

### 3.1.2 Methodology of Migration and Social Network Research

- **Researching Migration**

In migration studies, a wide range of methods, including quantitative and qualitative, have been used to collect primary and secondary data. Rahman and Fee (2012) have observed that migration studies have a long tradition of using census data and data from population registers. However, according to Rahman (2012), quantitative, macro-level data has limited analytic purposes, as it does not enable researchers to examine the interplay among individuals and between individuals and their socio-cultural environment. To overcome deficiencies of census data, Rahman and Fee (2012) suggested supplementing it with migration-related surveys. Yet, surveys also have limitations, since they often consider migration as an isolated phenomenon, while the broader social structure has significant effects on its outcome. Thus, as argued by Findlay and Li (1999), greater methodological diversity should be considered to investigate the multiple meanings of the complex social phenomenon of migration.

Furthermore, as observed by Castles (2012, p. 7), in many developing regions, censuses and official data collection on migration may be “absent, irregular or unreliable”. In the case of Vietnam, censuses have been conducted in 1979, 1989, 1999 and 2009. However, the coverage of these censuses was limited to internal movement rather than international migration. Thus, it is insufficient to rely solely on information from censuses for international migration studies in general, and the study of Vietnamese in particular. Population registers are not well recorded in Vietnam. It is hard to find accurate reports and statistics on people from specific localities who migrated to specific foreign countries. This leads to the inaccuracy of aggregate statistics on
migration at the national level. For instance, statistics on Vietnamese migrant workers migrating to Korea appear at different rates across different reports from DOLAB at the state and local level. Statistics from Korean Immigration Service on receiving Vietnamese migrant workers annually also do not match statistical sources from Vietnam. Therefore, this study does not draw on nation-wide surveys or national statistics on overseas migration, but predominantly depends on primary data collected from its qualitative research.

The dominant migration pattern of intra-Asia flows is in the form of temporary contracts, which allow migrant workers to stay in the host country for a fixed period only, not for settlement or long term residency as per the traditional migration models of North America, Oceania and Europe. Thus, this study understands migration as a cycle with three major stages: pre-departure, overseas stint, and return to the home community. This cycle commonly occurs within the frame of about three to four years on average. Treating migration as a cycle, this study places emphasis on the social networks of migrant workers in both the origin and the host countries as being used or established as part of those three different stages of temporary migration. Methodologically, this is reflected in using the multi-sited approach (to capture the spatial aspect) and by engaging in in-depth and open-ended interviewing with migrants at each stage (to capture the temporal aspect), rather than following the same migrant throughout (which would have required a long-term study). The interview questions designed for this study were subdivided into themes related to social networks at the three different stages of the migration cycle.

As transnational movements are constituted at different scales and numerous individuals as well as institutions engage in this migration project, a multi-scalar ethnographical approach as advanced by Marcus (2007) and Xiang (2013) is applied as a method of fieldwork and analysis. In the study of contemporary migration, two scales are of paramount importance, encompassing the ‘taxonomical’ and the ‘emergent’ dimensions. The former includes the building blocks of
“the nested hierarchy of bounded spaces of differing size”, such as local and national (Delaney & Leitner, 1997, p. 93), whilst the latter scale refers to “the scope of coordination and mobilization that arises from collective actions, which in turn generates new capacity for the actors” (Xiang, 2013, p. 284). By focusing on the intersection between these two scales, multi-scalar ethnography lends itself to a holistic analysis of observable phenomena that are linked to larger institutional setups and structural changes across time and place (Xiang, 2013, p. 295). Researching migration networks of temporary migrant workers in different phases of migration needs critical investigation of various layers of networks (for instance, brokerage networks at village, province, state, and cross-nation level), and these are studied in different sites of the origin and the destination. The way these networks are established and operated and how those networks intersect is analysed against the backdrop of changes in migration policies in the sending and receiving country. Therefore, multi-scalar ethnography is considered as a useful methodology for this study.

- *Researching Social Network*

When investigating social networks among individuals, a range of methods for data collecting has been used in existing studies. Generally, the study of social networks has been predominantly, but not solely, carried out using quantitative methods (see Cha et al., 2009; Ferligoj & Hlebec, 1999; Freeman et al., 1992; Gupte & Eliassi-Rad, 2012; Marsden & Campbell, 1984; Mislove et al., 2007; Petróczi et al., 2007; Sabatini, 2009). Furthermore, the bulk of studies on social networks has been on organisations and inter-organisational aspects or dynamics within and between organisations (for example Bitzer et al., 2012; Collet & Hedströmb, 2013; Tichy et al., 1979). These studies are interested in how social networks are organised and the impact of intra-organisational and inter-organisational networks on individuals and organisations.
Besides, many studies on social networks have been of mathematical nature. Montgomery (1992) used a mathematical model to test how workers located their jobs through personal contacts and impersonal (formal) methods. In discussing the pros and cons of mathematics, as this method is seen an extremely powerful aid to social network analysis, Scott (1988) found it was less helpful in making theoretical and empirical contributions and giving insight into the important social aspects of social networks. By contrast, Petróczi et al. (2007) applied a virtual tie-strength scale, which consists of questions to measure the strength of ties in virtual social networks. Battu et al. (2011) used a national survey in their study on job finding methods among different ethnic groups in the United Kingdom. These methods may be useful in studies to quantify weakness or strength and usefulness of ties. However, they also display drawbacks when the objective is the exploration of the innermost aspects of social networks of migrants. This viewpoint is supported by Yanacopulos (2007, p. 41), who argues that much research has used quantitative methods to look at networks, particularly how these networks are constructed and organised. Studying transnational networks with a variety of qualitative methods is, however, more appropriate for the investigation of relationships inside and outside them.

Multiple and mixed methods of gathering data have also been employed in previous studies. For example, Suzuki et al. (2009) used macro surveys to test how social networks impact the health status of employees, while Egbert (2009) applied combining surveys and in-depth interviews to study business success through social networks; McPherson et al. (1992) collected data from interviews using the life history calendar method to examine organisational dynamics, and Ruef (2002) deployed mathematical models to study structural and cultural embeddedness in organisation innovation. Lin (2008) developed two main methods in his work of measurement of social capital from the network perspective: (1) name generating (name-focused), which seeks to create a list of individuals in the actor’s networks; and (2) position generating (structured-
focused), which presents the access to structural hierarchy.

My study’s aim is to explore the complexity of social networks of/for temporary migrant workers in terms of their formation and operation, based on structural changes that deeply affect the migration process and the migrants’ ability to earn and save sufficient money. Participants of this research include groups of undocumented and documented. Networks organised for migrating overseas for employment are not only through labour migration but also through other channels such as sham marriage, overseas study, etc. Due to the sensitivity of information about these issues, that many of migrants do not migrate to Korea for the purpose as their visa permits them to do, data collected through name and position generating, mathematics, or surveys cannot be obtained. Hence, this study adopts a qualitative approach combining participant observation and in-depth interviews as the most adequate strategy for the exploration of the complex networks of temporary migrant workers.

3.2 Primary Data Collection Methods

This study employs qualitative methods, namely participant observation and in-depth interviews, in order to examine the social networks of Vietnamese migrant workers who have moved to Korea for work, as well as of those workers who have returned from Korea to their home communities in Vietnam. The information from in-depth interviews forms the frame of issues relevant to these workers’ social networks, whilst observations help the researcher to discover their real world and the way they interact with other people in their networks.

3.2.1 Participant Observations

Since the central aim of qualitative research is to gain information about social environments and
the world of the subjects who are being studied, participant observation is an important method for gathering data, along with verbal communication (interviews) and the analysis of textual materials (Baker, 1999). Schwandt (1997, p. 106) noted that “observation in qualitative research serves as direct first-hand eye-witness accounts of everyday social action”. This helps researchers to understand and interpret what is actually going on (Sánchez-Ayala, 2012). Schwandt (1997) identified five qualities of doing observation: 1) What happens is viewed in terms of people being observed in a social setting; 2) Great attention must be paid to detail; 3) What is observed must be placed in a historical and social context; 4) The processes and dynamic quality of social action needs to be recognised, not precise discrete events; and 5) researchers should not impose premature theoretical ideas on the actions of participants. The importance of generating theory from data (not vice versa), which is also referred to as Grounded Theory, should therefore also be recognised since it provides researchers with predictions, interpretations and applications. This, in turn, allows for the analysis of specific empirical situations (Glaser & Strauss, 2009). This theoretical background to the observation is crucially important when conducting research on social networks as part of the “migration project,” since networks connect individuals (migrant workers and their family members) and individuals to organisations (such as those involved in recruiting and training agencies) in a particular socio-cultural and political setting.

Participant observation is a form of observation in which the researcher is somewhat involved for a period of time in the daily lives of a group of people of which he/she should not be a member. Being Vietnamese benefited me in being able to easily approach informants and gain their acceptance, and to observe and talk with participants who are also Vietnamese. However, my position as a researcher whose educational background (and thus class) was different from my participants created a certain distance between them and me. This is akin to what Schwandt
(1997, p. 111) calls “dual citizenship”: acting double roles at the same time, both as a friend of participants and more importantly as a researcher. For this reason I was required to be close to the research subjects and establish a good rapport with them, whilst bearing in mind my position and role as an outside observer who was studying the complex migration networks of ‘my subjects’.

In this study, I observed the everyday life activities of Vietnamese migrant workers and their families in relation to the ways in which they built up, maintained and at times left their social networks or exchanged them for others. In my first fieldtrip to Vietnam from January to April 2013, I stayed with local families in rural and urban field sites. In this manner I was easily accepted by the community, so that I could gain deeper insights into their activities and observe their daily life; in this way, I could find out about the lives of migrants and non-migrants at an individual level, and of migrant’s and non-migrants’ families at the household level. In addition, I could see how the communities are organised and tied together at the ‘origin’ end of migration, and what this means in terms of social networks.

Moreover, speaking with the local authorities and local people provided me with ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ views about migration: I had the opportunity to talk not only to my research subjects but also with their neighbours about various aspects of migration, to gain broader insights into the meaning of migration for whole communities. This also allowed me to cross-evaluate information provided by people of different groups. In practice, I repeatedly travelled around the field sites to investigate the lives of local people, which helped me to interpret data gathered from interviews more accurately by comparing it to my ethnographic observations.

In Korea, during my first fieldwork in 2013, I stayed with two female Vietnamese migrant workers who lived in Shihung city. These roommates helped me access the Vietnamese migrant
community in Korea more easily than I could have done on my own. They took me to meetings organised by a local church set up for Vietnamese migrants who resided in Suwon city. I also shared meals with my roommates and their friends on weekends and on holidays. In addition, they supported me in obtaining their Korean employer’s permission to enter a factory and see the working conditions of migrant workers in the manufacturing industry. Manufacturing production is a representative sector in Korea, as it hires a great number of migrant workers, particularly those from Vietnam. These opportunities provided valuable information on the living and working conditions and daily activities of migrant workers as well as the way they established, accessed and maintained their networks.

Aside from assistance from my roommates, I obtained further support from the Korean Labour Foundation (hereafter KOLAF), Uijeongbu Support Centre for Foreign Workers (UFC), and Ansan Migrant Community Service Centre (AMCSC), which allowed me to observe activities they organised for migrants, including workers. I also accompanied some Vietnamese migrant workers, who were searching for a job, to the Offices of Employment and Labour in Korea in Shihung and Ansan cities and observed the operations of these organisations. These observations provided useful data on how these organisations support migrants.

3.2.2 In-Depth Interviews

In general, interviewing has a wide variety of forms and many uses. Common types of interviewing include individual or group, face-to-face, mailed or self-administered questionnaires, and telephone surveys (Fontana & Frey, 1994). Interviews in qualitative research should be similar to a conversation: semi-structured and open-ended, from which the interviewer can gather rich, deep, complex, and meaningful information (Kvale, 1996; Merriam et al., 2001). In-depth interviews can be structured, unstructured or semi-structured (Sánchez-Ayala, 2012).
Structured interviews must strictly follow a list of questions. Conversely, unstructured interviews allow interviewers to have flexible ‘conversations’ with interviewees. Semi-structured interviews consist of elements of both. They are based on a general direction but also allow interviewees some flexibility as to how they answer questions. These characteristics are particularly useful for qualitative research.

The modern interview, according to Gubrium and Holstein (2002, p. 4), has three attributes: 1) The democratisation of opinions, which implies that every respondent has the opportunity to express his/her views of the world, and incorporation of these opinions sketches a multi-dimensional picture of social reality; 2) Researcher-respondent duality, in which the interviewer decides the questions to ask and the interviewee provides responses to these questions; and 3) Respondents as vessels of knowledge, which suggests that the researcher should encourage respondents to play an active role in answering questions. Schwandt (1997) and Gubrium and Holstein (2002) emphasise the interaction between the researcher and the interviewee as an important issue in qualitative interviews. The interview between two or more people is not fully controlled by the interviewer’s questions; in fact, it is constructed by both the interviewer and the interviewee over the talk, and together they create social reality through their interaction. Potter and Hepburn (2005, p. 300) identified a dearth of systematic research on interview-as-interaction, which can ‘tease out’ the way social science agendas are established. The value of interview interaction is that it provides understanding of how what is said in interviews relates to what is said in other contexts (Schaeffer, 1991). This study attempts to fill this gap by carefully analysing data collected from informants and from what I observed in real situations and what I learnt from other studies.

There have been debates on the role of the interviewer in relation to the interviewee. Kvale (1996, 2006) points to the dominance of interviewers in the power asymmetry of hierarchical
interview relationships, in which researchers play the role of ‘miner metaphors’ who unearth valuable knowledge, or ‘traveller metaphors’ who journey with their interviewees. Similarly, in Bruner’s (1986) view, creative interviewing refers primarily to interviewers who are dealing with difficulties in the interview process, and where interviewees emerge as passive subjects. In contrast, Holstein and Gubrium (1997) emphasised the active role of both the interviewer and the interviewee. Although both the interviewer and the respondent are encouraged to be active in the interview, I agree with Agozino (2000) that interviewing is actually a process of data reception in which respondents decide to provide (or not provide) any kind of information. Furthermore, regardless of whether researchers agree or disagree with a view, the task of researchers is to find out what underpins this view rather than impose their own view on participants (Legard et al., 2003).

- **Analysis and Interpretation of Data**

The central method of gathering information for this research is using in-depth interviews. The primary advantage of in-depth interviewing is that it provides much more detailed information than other data collecting methods (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Knowledge or thoughts generated from in-depth interviews are likely to be created, not ‘given’ (Legard et al., 2003). In addition, curiosity is essential to in-depth interviews as it encourages the interviewers’ desire to know more about what they have been told. As a form of conversation, an in-depth interview makes respondents more comfortable and open to share their information in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997). However, this method also shows some limitations. Researchers might be prone to bias in asking questions and evaluating information provided by respondents. Another drawback of this method is that due to small samples, in-depth interviews cannot be used to generalise the results.
To investigate the complexity of migration networks, the in-depth interview and participant observation are among the most appropriate methods to gather these kinds of information from migrants (and not only about migrants). Data from in-depth interviews is rich, which reflects migrants’ deep thinking about certain aspects of migration, and is not limited to providing factual information that could be gathered by a survey. Since migrants move to new societies, they perceive themselves as disadvantaged and vulnerable, which might make them hesitant to share their life experiences. Valentine (1997) debated that in in-depth interviews, interviewees construct their own thinking and belief by describing their lives in their own words. This technique helps interviewees to open their consciousness and allows researchers to access the most complicated life experiences (Limb & Dwyer, 2001) such as identities, beliefs, their everyday activities and their connections (Levitt & Khagram, 2008).

Adapting Boccagni’s (2012) suggestion that in-depth narrative interviews are the most obvious option for starting and conducting an interview, I firstly asked respondents to introduce themselves and tell me their migration stories. As Eastmond (2007, p. 248) argued, narratives, which reflect a dynamic interplay between life, experience and story, can be responses to formal interview questions on a specific topic or informal conversations during fieldwork. Stories do not merely reflect life as lived, but they should be seen as creative interpretations of the past that are generated in particular contexts of the present (Bruner, 1986). I follow the advice of Garrick (1999, p. 152) and McCormack (2004, p. 234) that researchers need to be mindful that when they compose stories, they should not become a “coloniser of the subjects through re-telling their stories,” and re-write a participant's story in such a way that it becomes the researcher’s story only. It is also important that researchers do not write their experiences out of the story by including only their voice as a disembodied report of others’ experiences.

To collect data for this study, in-depth interviews were conducted with migrant workers,
returnees, their family members, Vietnamese officers working for labour recruitment and training, and staff working for Korean NGOs. All interviews were recorded with an audio recorder, which can capture data more faithfully than written notes (Hoepfl, 1997). In addition, I also took field notes to record what happened in the field.

In order to supplement information for interviews carried out in the first round, interviewing was expanded to phone and computer-mediated communication, by which I could, as Mann and Stewart Mann and Stewart (2002) observed, communicate with informants in an internet chat room. Usually, semi-structured interviews are conducted face-to-face, and because of the importance of personal contact in qualitative interviews, telephone interviews are often discounted (Vogl, 2013). Some methodological textbooks even suggest that the telephone mode is not well suited for qualitative interviewing (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The use of this method in my research was only for a supplementary to face-to-face interviews conducted with participants who were interviewed in the first round to gather more information on their social networks.

3.3 Sampling and Recruiting

3.3.1 Target Population

The target population included a wide range of participants to meet the objectives of this research project. The key informants of this research are Vietnamese migrant workers, including those who were working in Korea when the fieldwork was conducted and those who had already returned to Vietnam after working in Korea. These informants have gone through different stages of migration, comprising pre-departure, overseas stint, and return. Therefore, they can provide information related to the social networks they engaged in during each migration phase. However, in order to seek enriching data and cross-check findings, I also recruited participants
from groups of family members of migrants, officers working for governmental organisations involved in labour export, and local authorities in Vietnam, as well as senior staff working for non-governmental organisations in Korea (for a complete list see Table 3.1).

This research adopted Robinson’s (2014) four-point approach to sampling of migrants and other informants and their organisations: 1) setting a sample universe, 2) selecting a sample size, 3) devising a sample strategy and 4) sample sourcing. Firstly, a sample universe was defined by specifying criteria for potential participation of target populations. Secondly, a sample size that could provide enough data for analysis was selected which. Thirdly, purposive sampling and snowball sampling strategies were adopted to enlist participants. Finally, matters associated with advertising, bias avoidance and ethical concerns were considered.

Two ways of sampling were employed. Purposive sampling was chosen to locate target groups through authorities who assist with paperwork for migration, or organisations engaged in labour recruitment and training in Vietnam, and providing support for migrants in Korea. Korean NGOs were very helpful and willing to assist with the research activities. The UFC and the AMCSC helped me to advertise calls for participation in this project to Vietnamese migrant workers who visited these centres. In Vietnam, there is no NGO which effectively works for prospective and actual migrant workers, and the Department of Labour, Invalids, and Social Affairs (DOLISA) in Nghe An and Ha Tinh provinces (subordinate organisations of the MOLISA) declined to participate in the recruitment of interviewees. Therefore, I mostly relied on assistance from local authorities in the hamlets where I conducted my research to distribute announcements about recruitment for this study. I firstly employed purposive sampling to approach interviewees who came to my research through a public advertisement. Then, snowballing sampling was primarily applied through the networks of existing participants: they were asked to introduce the research to their friends or neighbours who are migrant workers, family members of migrants, or
returnees.

3.3.2 Sampling Strategy

- **Purposive Sampling**

Purposive sampling (or judgemental sampling) is a form of non-probability sample in which recruited participants carry features that the study wishes to explore (Baker, 1999; Mason, 2002). This form of sampling considers the most common features of subjects who have insights in specific aspects of this research project. Target populations were intentionally recruited through the UFC and the AMCSC in Korea, which provide support for migrants, particularly migrant workers, in dealing with problems related to their employment, work abuses, clashes with their employers or other groups of migrant workers, Korean language, culture and computer training. These centres are a ‘home’ for the migrants. Thus, potential participants are located there. These centres responded positively to my request to distribute the call for participant recruitment. Local authorities of Hung Tay commune (Hung Nguyen district, Nghe An province) and Cuong Gian commune (Nghi Xuan district, Ha Tinh province) were also helpful in circulating the call for participation in this project among their local residents. The fieldwork was not constrained by any ‘gate keeper,’ described by Devers and Frankel (2000) as a ‘watcher’ of the research activities. Local authorities and representatives of organisations, assisting the participant recruitment, were easy-going and open-minded. They helped me distribute the public call without intervening in the research activities per se. This channel also provided a good opportunity to seek the consent of the migrant workers to join the research. A friend’s family living in Hung Tay offered me accommodation in their house. Similarly, the head of Dong Tay hamlet, Cuong Gian commune also gave me a room to stay in his house. Being accepted by the community, I gained more of the local people’s trust and increased their willingness to
participate in the research. A mutual rapport between me, as a researcher, and participants was established so that participants could feel more comfortable when participating in the research and sharing their own feelings and deepest thoughts on issues associated with international temporary labour migration.

In addition, I also posted a public call for the recruitment of participants on the Facebook page maintained by the Vietnamese Community in Korea. As Robinson (2014) has observed, the traditional way of advertising is to use print and face-to-face methods, but online advertising is becoming more and more popular. In order to recruit migrants for migration research, Crush et al. (2012) recommend a multi-faceted e-recruitment strategy, using social media and diaspora websites to identify potential participants. The public call posted on the Facebook page generated potential participants and subsequent meetings were arranged with migrant workers who agreed to be part of this research project.

- **Snowball Sampling**

Snowball sampling, also known as networking, chain sampling, chain-referral sampling or referral sampling, is a non-probability sampling method. Snowball sampling is appropriate when it is difficult to locate the target population or the researcher does not have enough information to locate them. Current participants can suggest people who share similar characteristics with them as potential participants who, in turn, refer others and so on (Baker, 1999; Lee, 1999). This technique is perceived to be a flexible method to recruit participants; however, as Lee (1999) warned, the researcher should consider the danger of sample bias since the current participants tend to nominate their kin to be potential participants. Yet, snowball sampling has been widely employed in migration research reflecting the general difficulties in gaining access to labour migrants (Scheyvens & Storey, 2003), especially temporary low-skilled or undocumented ones.
Heckathorn (2002) has noted that this method of sampling may be particularly useful when the population being studied is unlikely to respond to recruitment calls due to their marginalisation, stigmatising or ‘illegal’ status of participants. Most of my informants were marginalised socially and economically and many of them were undocumented workers in Korea; thus, snowball sampling was considered as an appropriate method to attract participants among these people.

This study, alongside recruiting participants through public advertisement, employs snowball sampling to approach participants. To start with, my two migrant worker roommates in Korea introduced their migrant worker friends to me. Later, through existing participants, I expanded the participant network by asking these people to introduce their migrant worker friends to me. In Vietnam, especially in Vinh city, Nghe An province, I primarily depended on snowballing sampling to approach prospective participants because the local authorities and the DOLISA of the province, located in this city, could not introduce me to individual prospective migrant workers and returnees for various reasons, such as “not having accurate contact details of migrant workers” or “they [prospective migrant workers and returnees] do not know anything”. In this field site, I recruited participants by mutual introduction made by my connections, who were existing participants in this research.

3.3.3 Profiles of Participants

I intended to conduct individual in-depth interviews with all participants. However, some respondents lived in other regions of Korea and just visited the UFC and the AMCSC for consultations for a short time; in this case, they preferred to have an interview with their group of friends (3 to 5 persons) to shorten interview time. Therefore, although the majority were individual interviews, some group interviews were conducted. The main participant group of this study is a group of migrant workers, including those who were working in Korea or who were
visiting their home in Vietnam at the time of being interviewed. These migrants are close friends or relatives of each other. They already knew each other very well. There is no harm to them in sharing sensitive information among participants among these groups. To generate data for a multi-dimensional analysis, interviews with other groups of family members, NGOs staff in Korea, and Vietnamese labour-recruiting and -training department officers were also conducted. Table 3.1 presents the quantity of participants in different groups.

Table 3.1: Participants of the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group of participants</th>
<th>Quantity of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese migrant workers</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese returnees</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family members</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO staff in Korea</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese officers of recruitment and training centres</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 1 shows profiles of Vietnamese migrant workers. Data presented in the table in appendix 1 was collected from groups of migrant workers working in Korea and returnees who worked in Korea and had already returned to Vietnam.

- **Age**

Anyone between the ages of 18 and 39 can apply for a job in Korea. As shown in Appendix 1, the average age of migrant workers at migration time was approximately 25. This result is in line with a study of Nguyen et al. (2010), which indicates that Vietnamese migrants often departed at a young age. It should be noted that migrant workers in different job sectors have similar age patterns. Recently, the age at migration has become lower because Korean employers prefer
young workers. In addition, the Korean government’s suspension of recruitment of new workers from Vietnam since late 2008 has resulted in the use of alternative migration strategies by potential workers. The most common channel, which has recently begun to mushroom, is the overseas study visa. A student can only get a visa if his or her application for overseas study is submitted within three years from the date of his or her high school graduation. These factors explain the rejuvenation of Vietnamese labour force in the Korean labour market.

- **Sex**

In the context of this research project, males constitute a much larger proportion compared to females. Although some sectors have small shares of female workers such as agriculture and manufacturing, construction and fishing are not an option for them. Migration to Korea had witnessed an increasing number of Vietnamese female workers due to higher EPS job quotas awarded to them. Moreover, many young females have found other ways to travel to Korea on the basis of an overseas study visa, spousal visa or for the purpose of medical treatment and cosmetic surgery. Since there is no gender discrimination for migration on the part of their families or the community in the origin country, many female workers are eager to seek a chance to make money in Korea.

- **Marital status**

The number of unmarried people accounts for half of the total of migrant workers participating in the study. This can be explained by the fact that most of the migrant workers migrated at young ages and had been working continuously in Korea for the length of their work contracts (on average almost 5 years). During this period they did not have many chances to find a life partner in their hometown, as travel to visit home and gifts for family would have been too costly. Male workers have fewer opportunities to find a fellow-country partner in Korea.
compared to that of their female counterparts because the number of male workers far outweighs that of female workers.

- **Level of education**

From Appendix 1, it can be seen that the majority of Vietnamese migrant workers graduated high school. The remarkable point is that, in recent years, using the study visa is considered as one of the best strategies for young people in order to find employment in Korea. As a result, young people who plan to work in Korea try hard to obtain a high school level degree to meet the requirements for obtaining an overseas study visa. This also partly contributes to the improvement in the level of education of young people who intend to seek a job in Korea.

- **Professional skills, work experiences and jobs pre-migration**

Before migrating overseas, many migrant workers were unemployed or underemployed. This is illustrated in Appendix 1. Among them, some responded that they were university students or at vocational training colleges; thus, they had not yet participated in the labour market. Some had already graduated but did not work because they were preparing for migration abroad. Some had been unemployed for many years and became dependent on their family. Interestingly, some workers told me that they were unemployed although their families were in economic difficulties. They explained this in reference to their inability to find a well-paid job with good working conditions as they had expected in their localities, and therefore they opted to seek a job elsewhere. For instance, some young men in a fishing village in Ha Tinh province refused to follow in their father’s steps to engage in fishing as their main livelihood because it was very hard work and could only earn a small income.

For those who were employed, their occupations in the pre-departure phase varied. Many helped
their families in farming while some worked in small shops or factories in or near their hometowns. As a matter of fact, having low-skilled, low-positions in their workplace and not being descendants of an influential family, these people could merely receive temporary jobs and earn low wages. Their earnings were only just enough (and sometimes not even that) to cover their own daily expenses, but they could not earn enough for the upkeep of their whole families. Those obtaining a bachelor degree received better jobs with better salaries but still could not manage to put any savings aside.

3.4 Fieldwork

Two rounds of the fieldwork were conducted in both the origin country of Vietnam and the host country of Korea in 2013 and 2015. The fieldwork in Vietnam and Korea in 2013 on determinants of mobility and cross-cultural experiences of Vietnamese migrant workers could be considered as a pilot for this study on opportunities and obstacles generated by their social networks. Although the pilot research cannot be treated as a comprehensive study, it plays an important role in the whole research process, particularly qualitative and ethnographic studies (Sampson, 2004). The data collected raises critical questions on the complexity of social networks in terms of dichotomies of gender, legal status and type of visa to enter Korea. Additionally, experiences in the first round of fieldwork helped me to make amendments and develop appropriate strategies for dealing with problems in the second round. As a Vietnamese person, I understand the culture of the bureaucratic system and the sociocultural setting of Vietnam. I am also familiar with the Korean sociocultural context as I have spent time in Korea for previous research on Vietnamese-Korean marriage migration. These advantages provided me with opportunities to build networks with local people in Vietnam and the Vietnamese community in Korea, which helped to ensure efficient fieldwork.
3.4.1 In Vietnam

Before starting the fieldwork, Korean and Vietnamese national statistics on international labour migration by province and other textual materials were analysed to help me choose field sites and gain an overview of these places. Field sites were selected based on the high numbers of migrants and striking problems related to migrant workers. In addition, many newspaper articles have disclosed the complex illegal brokerage networks of these localities, which have taken advantage of workers looking for a job overseas.

- Hung Nguyen district and Vinh city, Nghe An province

The main field sites are Hung Nguyen district and Vinh city of Nghe An province, located in the North Central coastal region of Vietnam, from which great numbers of migrants have migrated to many other countries for employment. I selected Vinh city and Hung Nguyen district to compare differences of the accessibility to resources from social networks for migration of participants coming from urban and rural areas (see Figure 3.1).
Nghe An is the largest province in the area and one of the poorest provinces in Vietnam. Agriculture, the major income source of this locality, is not productive due to the harsh climate. The large population, with almost 3 million people (Vietnam General statistics office, 2015), leads to serious pressure on employment in the area. Therefore, on 10 February 2003, the People’s Committee of Nghe An province approved a scheme (“Promoting Labour Export in 2003-2005”) along with other policies in order to encourage labour export activities in this
locality (SOLISA Nghe An province, 2009). The province implemented a policy to give priority to applications for work in Korea to those who are children of wounded soldiers or martyrs, who are residing in very poor communes or near national borders, and who are ethnic minorities. People of these groups might receive subsidies for vocational and language training and even for travelling. This scheme has continued up to the present. In total, from 2000 to 2012, Nghe An province sent 102,600 workers to many countries, particularly in Southeast Asia, East Asia and oil-rich countries in the Gulf (see Figure 3.2).

**Figure 3.2: Workers in Nghe An province migrating overseas for employment in the period of 2003 - 2014**

![Graph showing workers migrating overseas](image)

Source: Annual reports on labour export of the DOLISA Nghe An province

In general, workers in Nghe An province have a low educational level and low professional skills and do not meet the requirements for higher-paying jobs. Most of these workers work in agriculture since the industry and service sectors are developing slowly. The connections of local people with the ‘outside world’ are very limited. These characteristics are constraints for
workers to access formal job information and obtain a ‘good’ job in foreign countries.

The Hung Nguyen district and Vinh city belong to Nghe An province. The fieldwork was conducted in Hung Tay, Hung Tien and Hung Phu communes of Hung Nguyen district where the majority of people are engaged in agriculture, and Ben Thuy ward of Vinh city in which a large proportion of the population works in services and small businesses. While young people in Hung Nguyen town might have seasonal work, such as helping their families with the harvest, many of their peers in Vinh city are un- or underemployed. In many years, the numbers of Nghe An people migrating overseas for employment have been the highest compared to that of other provinces. The main destinations of Nghe An migrant workers are Taiwan, Malaysia, oil-rich in Gulf countries, Japan, Korea, and Angola.

Before the MOEL of Korea and the MOLISA of Vietnam signed a MOU regarding the sending and receiving of labour, most Vietnamese workers migrated to Korea through labour export companies. Later, labour quotas were distributed to provinces and then each province distributed quotas to local vocational training colleges. There are two major vocational training colleges in Nghe An province receiving job quotas from Korea: Korea-Vietnam Industrial Technical Vocational College (Vietnam-Korea College), and Vocational College number IV of the Ministry of Defence (College IV). These colleges provide industrial and technical training and Korean language courses. Vietnam-Korea College was one of three Korean language examination locations in Vietnam. Prospective migrant workers residing in the centre of Vietnam had to pass a Korean Language Proficiency Test (KLPT) organised by this college.

In order to obtain a job in Korea, young people in the province were required to undertake a vocational training course in these two colleges. Due to high competition during the recruitment process, many workers were advised by brokers to take a vocational training course in colleges
in the South, where few local people were interested in obtaining a Korea job; as a result, there would be less competition. From 2008 onwards, high corruption rates of local authorities and staff engaging in training and recruitment for the Korean labour market led to a change in the government’s labour recruitment policy. Job quotas were given to provinces according to the rate of poor population and the need of local people to find work. After passing the KLPT, the profile of job applicants would be coded and posted on the website in Korean language so that Korean employers could make a selection. The result was then communicated to job applicants in Vietnamese.

- **Cuong Gian commune, Nghi Xuan district, Ha Tinh province**

A part of the fieldwork in Vietnam was also carried out in Ha Tinh province, which is next to Nghe An province. Figure 3.3 shows the total number of people from Ha Tinh province who migrated overseas in the period of 2005-2014 in general, and to Korea in particular. It is worth noting that the figure can merely show the numbers of people who underwent the process of formal recruitment established based on the cooperation between the Korean MOEL and the Vietnamese MOLISA.
In Ha Tinh province, Cuong Gian commune (also known as Xuan Song) was selected to be a field site. This commune is situated in the coastal area where the majority of income is derived from inshore fishery and agriculture. Local people often face precarious situations as incomes from fishing and cultivating may not help them to escape from poverty. However, in 2005, Cuong Gian was named “a hero commune in the reform era” due to receiving the highest amount of remittances from people working overseas compared to other localities.

In the early days of migrating to overseas destinations for income generation, many men in this commune worked as sailors on Korean fishing boats, while others had 3D jobs in Taiwan, Malaysia, or European countries. Those who worked for Korean fishing boats, after facing harsh working conditions, moved to the Korean mainland and found jobs in manufacturing factories.
These pioneers worked hard and sent remittances to support other members of their family to migrate out. After that, migratory movements to Korea have become widespread within the community. Pioneers have provided information and set up supportive networks to help their children, relatives, or even co-villagers to move to Korea by any means.

In contrast to Nghe An people, who mostly obtain a job in Korea through the EPS, those in Ha Tinh province (particularly in Cuong Gian commune) find opportunities for work in Korea through different types of visa, not only low-skilled labour ones. Vietnam-Korea College in Nghe An province hosted the KLPT for the whole Central region, including Ha Tinh province. Since passing the KLPT was an essential requirement but extremely competitive, prospective migrants in Nghe An had more opportunities to approach sources for labour migration in comparison with their counterparts in Ha Tinh. Therefore, some Ha Tinh workers took vocational training courses at colleges in their province or in Nghe An, while many of them changed their household registration to South of Vietnam provinces, hoping to obtain a job in Korea more easily as there was less competition for recruitment in these localities.

In short, despite sharing similar aims of migrating to Korea for poverty reduction and accumulate savings, migration networks in Nghe An and Ha Tinh provinces have been formed differently based on different structure and social conditions of these provinces. In comparison with Ha Tinh, it seemed that Nghe An possessed more useful resources for recruitment such as Vietnam-Korea College, which held the KLPT examination for neighbouring provinces and received high numbers of job vacancies.

### 3.4.2 In Korea

In Korea, large industrial zones in Gyeonggi and North Gyeongsang provinces provide the
workplace and residence for many migrant workers. In order to avoid obstacles in the field, advice was sought from some key informants who knew the social setting of the sites to develop an efficient field trip schedule. The first round of fieldwork in 2013 was carried out in Gyeonggi province, the most populous in Korea, and the field sites were extended to Deagu city, North Gyeongsang Province in the second round in 2015. Seoul, the biggest city and the capital of Korea, is located in the heart of Gyeonggi province, but has been separately administered as a provincial-level special city since 1946. Other cities, including Ansan, Shihung and Uijeongbu where the fieldwork was conducted, are located around Seoul (see Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4: The field sites in Korea

Source: http://www.freeworldmaps.net/asia/southkorea/

The fieldwork took place mostly in Ansan city, which is the largest industrial city in Korea with
huge concentrations of industrial zones. In 2012, there were 44,971 foreigners from 66 countries out of the total population of 759,756 (Center for Foreigner in Ansan, 2012). Migrant workers accounted for 69% of total migrants in Ansan. In 2012, the proportion of migrant workers there was 4.1%, much higher than the 2.9% for the whole of Korea (Korean Immigration Service, 2012). In other cities such as Shihung and Uijeongbu, the proportion of foreign workers is less than in Ansan. However, foreign workers also highly concentrated in these cities. Each of these cities has its own multicultural centre which provides support for migrants. In Ansan’s multicultural village special zone, nearly two-thirds of the population of 16,500 is non-Korean (Park & Lee, 2013). Ansan now actively promotes itself as a ‘home’ for foreign workers since hundreds of basic manufacturing companies are located there. With the slogan “Ansan is step by step developing a multi-cultural city of Korea, for a warm world across borders of nations, ethnicity, and language”, the Ansan government has offered foreigners a variety of services in order to improve their life (Center for Foreigner in Ansan, 2012). For example, it established the AMCSC, which has helped foreign workers and marriage migrants to deal with problems such as human rights protection and remittances transfer, and provided facilities for cultural, language and computer training. Due to the need for a foreign labour force, Koreans have no other choice than living together with migrant workers. However, reports on criminal activities such as sex trafficking and drug smuggling, in collusion with Korean gangs, have triggered negative perceptions of native people towards migrants.

Alongside conducting research in Gyeonggi province, in 2015, I also had interviews and observations in Daegu city (situated in the centre of Korea). In recent years, the number of undocumented workers has increased. The Ansan city government has become stringent in controlling unauthorised workers. Crackdown campaigns have pushed a large number of undocumented workers into hiding. These workers have moved to more isolated areas in the
centre and the south of Korea where more jobs are available, and they can avoid being arrested. The field notes indicate that it was easy for me to approach Vietnamese undocumented workers in 2013, but I had a very few chances to talk to workers of this group in 2015. Therefore, the field sites of the fieldwork in 2015 were broadened to Daegu city because of the limited number of undocumented workers that could be approached.

3.5 Data Analysis

According to Basit (2003), data analysis is the most difficult and crucial aspect of qualitative research. Analysing qualitative data is seen as more arduous compared to quantitative data. Qualitative data analysis is found to be difficult because it is not fundamentally a mechanical or technical exercise but a “dynamic, intuitive and creative process of inductive reasoning, thinking and theorising” (Basit, 2003, p. 143). The aim of qualitative data analysis is to present the viewpoint of informants about the world in general and issues of the topic researched in particular, based on their life experiences (Polkinghorne, 2005). Among methods of qualitative data analysis, narrative analysis is where researchers gather descriptions of actions and events as data that are then used to generate stories (Polkinghorne, 1995). This study analyses both primary data generated from the fieldwork and secondary data gathered from literature on previous studies, policy documents, statistics on migration from Vietnam and Korea, and Facebook pages of Vietnamese migrant workers which are set to public.

3.5.1 Primary Data Analysis

Primary data of the research includes field notes of observations as well as transcripts of interviews and conversations with selected individuals or groups. Coding or categorising the data to organise and make sense of it has an important role in analysis. This step involves
subdividing the data as well as specifying categories (Dey, 1993). Coffey and Atkinson (1996) point out that coding makes links between locations in the data and sets of concepts or ideas framed by the research. Miles et al. (2013) present two methods of creating codes. The first way is used by inductive researchers who may not want to pre-code any data until they collect it. Researchers then consider how to interpret the context studied and decide the number of varieties. The other method is to create a provisional list of codes prior to fieldwork based on the conceptual framework and research questions of the study. When coding, Gough and Scott (2000) recommend identifying two distinct, albeit linked, phases in which one phase considers meanings inside the research context and the other phase focuses on what may be meaningful to outside audiences.

The two methods of coding data introduced by Miles et al. (2013) were combined and applied in this research. First, a list of questions was prepared before doing fieldwork. The interview questions are semi-structured, which allowed the division of themes related to interviewees’ demographic information and migration networks, based on the theoretical framework and the practical context. Then, new information collected from the field, which generated new codes, was added to the existing code list.

3.5.2 Secondary Data Analysis

Secondary data analysis plays an important role in the whole research process. This type of analysis is regarded as the re-analysis of data of previous studies with an aim of answering the research questions (United Nations, 2005). These data sources are useful to build a theoretical framework and provide background information for a more accurate understanding of the research (Sánchez-Ayala, 2012). In this research, secondary analysis shows its significance at different stages of the research. At the early stage, secondary data were good sources to portray a
geographic, demographic and economic profile of participants as well as provide an overview of the sociocultural setting of the field sites. At later stages, secondary data enriches the research outcomes and helps to make comparisons on issues associated with temporary labour migration and networks of Vietnamese migrant workers with the findings of other studies.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The research involves Vietnamese people who have joined a growing pool of migrant workers who have gone abroad to alien social settings in order to secure livelihoods under highly restrictive migration policies and time-limited work visas. They are thus confronted with many obstacles and problems occurring through the migration process. This may raise a number of ethical issues that need to be considered throughout this research in terms of its design and conduct. An even more sensitive issue is that some of the participants are undocumented migrant workers. Although civil society tends to sympathise with the vulnerable situation of such migrants who at times slip into an illegal status, their ‘illegality’ is often strictly condemned by the host countries (Anderson et al., 2012; Anderson & Ruhs, 2010), as reflected in to government and media discourse. Given that the dominant migration policies in Asia are in the form of temporary employer-tied visa regimes, many migrant workers easily slip into an undocumented status at some point during their overseas stint and are often not even aware of this change. For example, legal workers can turn into an “illegal” migrant simply by changing employer, by engaging in work that their visa does not actually allow them to do, or by overstaying. As existing research has shown, slipping in and out of an undocumented status is widespread. In this sense, it is normal - and there is tacit approval of migrants being undocumented in destination countries such as Korea, as existing research has shown. Many of the participants in this study are bound to have been or are undocumented workers. Their participation in this research is, however, treated with utmost confidentiality and the identity of
participants will remain anonymous. Details on their information are coded during the processing of data and their names therefore do not appear in reporting of results.

Bose (2012) rightly argues that in migration studies, respectful, reciprocal and trust-based relationships with diaspora and migrants are the most important ethical issue. Similarly, Lee (1999) highlights the trust established between the researcher and participants. These participants only disclose sensitive or confidential information when the researchers are credible and responsible. Therefore, establishing and maintaining reliable relationships with participants is a very important consideration for the researcher. I was in fact able to develop close and trustworthy rapports with my participants. I always bore in mind the great contribution my participants might make to my research; hence, I attempted to build up and maintain good relationships with them and be respectful of their views and actions.

As I mentioned above, one of my participants, who is a Vietnamese migrant worker, introduced me to his Korean employer. After knowing the purpose of my research, this Korean employer permitted his worker to take me around the factory to have a look into the operations and working conditions there. I was afraid of the time lost by the worker who was my “tour guide”, and proposed to the Korean employer that I could wait until the worker finished his work. However, the Korean employer was generous that he did not curtail the wage of this worker and allow us (my “tour guide” and me) to have a short tour in the factory during its working time.

3.7 Obstacles in Conducting the Research

3.7.1 Methodological Problems

in which members would impact the way we understand the world”. When studying the world of a group, researchers tend to become insiders to have a closer look at its cultural and life (Merriam et al., 2001; Merton, 1972). However, being outsiders, researchers can maintain a neutral perspective to see things. This can gain them more trust in the relationship with participants and preserves anonymity. Therefore, participants might share information more freely. Mol et al. (2014, p. 69) argue that indeed “clear-cut insider and outsider statuses do not exist”. The continuum of the researcher’s position as insider or outsider is significant in qualitative methodology. Hence, I attempted to balance my positionality as both an ‘insider,’ who had more opportunities to approach participants and their stories, and an ‘outsider’ researcher, to avoid subjectivity in analysing data from interviews and observations.

Another problem concerning the researcher’s status in the context of the interview is the positionality as a female researcher. In the context of Vietnam, the women’s movement has emerged and been incorporated within the anticolonial struggle for national independence (Dang, 1997). Mai and Le (1978) noted that Marxist-oriented discussions on Vietnamese women have shaped the state feminism that the state should improve women’s social, economic and political status. According to Scott and Truong (2007), Vietnam has promoted the women’s emancipation for many decades and thus enhancing the status of women in the society. The proportion of women in Vietnam participating in the national workforce is maybe higher than in Korea and Japan (Scott & Truong, 2007). Kiẻu (2016) studied on the participation of female scholars and the result demonstrated that the number of female researchers has increased in recent years. In the modern Vietnam, when conducting interviews, we hardly confront with the problem of ‘low-status strangers’ as Daniels (1967)’s believed women interviewers often face. In addition, my status as an educated woman has given me agency to negotiate my position and received respect from male participants. Although Scott et al. (2006) are right to claim that
female researchers can easily build rapport with female than male participants, I in fact hardly encountered gender bias when conducting interviews with either male or female respondents. Thus, being female researcher does not seem to affect the data collection.

Silverman (2010) provides valuable advice in saying that data analysis should be started at an early stage rather than after accumulating all data. As the original topic of the research focused on the decisive factors for cross-border movement of Vietnamese migrant workers migrating to Korea for work and their cross-cultural experiences, the original interview questions were designed to obtain information on these issues. However, when transcribing interviews, I found many interesting issues on the complexity of social networks of migrant workers which were not covered in previous migration and social network studies. The research topic was then modified to focus on the social networks of migrant workers with the case study of temporary labour migration between Vietnam and Korea. The change meant that the data collected from the previous fieldwork was not rich enough to explore the social networks of Vietnamese migrant workers and more fieldwork in Vietnam and Korea was needed to supplement the research. By transcribing and analysing data soon after making interviews in the first round, I could change the focus of my research quickly. That was why the second round of fieldwork in 2015 was organised.

Finally, allowing participants to narrate their stories resulted in difficulties in coding data, as conversations were chaotic and disorderly. In some interviews, participants were encouraged to be active informants. They started telling their stories and the researcher attempted to direct these participants to answer the questions, but did not dominate interviews. This increased the participants’ willingness to share information, but caused difficulties in categorising information at the data analysis stage.


### 3.7.2 Practical Problems

Holding the status of a student trained abroad caused difficulties in accessing the field in a socialist country. The Vietnamese government has become more open with research activities related to ‘foreign factors’, including Vietnamese researchers affiliated with foreign institutes. However, a generation of young researchers trained overseas, specifically in Western countries, and absorbing Western culture, still face constraints when conducting social research in their home country. I spent much time on ‘green tea’ (negotiating) to get a ‘red stamp’ (official permit) before and when entering the field sites. Kurti (1999) highlights the importance of official seals of approval for conducting fieldwork in socialist countries. In the case of Vietnam, Scott et al. (2006) and Turner (2013) share their experiences of hardship in obtaining the ‘red stamp,’ which means their researches passed through the proper channels from the top-down. At first, the DOLISA in Nghe An province avoided answering whether they would allow their staff to be involved in the research or not. Following advice by a senior colleague who was confronted with a similar problem, I asked the University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Ho Chi Minh city, where I was a staff member, to connect me with this department. An introduction letter from the university indicating my position, research purposes and activities was sent to the DOLISA of Nghe An province. At the end, this organisation agreed to give me the ‘red stamp’ to be allowed to conduct fieldwork and ask their staff questions on international labour migration.

Another practical problem is the limitations in sharing information about policy and politics of migration by civil servants. The civil servants of the DOLISA of Nghe An and Ha Tinh provinces preferred to talk about what their organisations have achieved in sending workers abroad rather than information associated with policies or their perspective on political issues of migration, particularly migration to Korea. The reason was the closure of the Korean labour
market due to the high number of Vietnamese migrant workers still remaining in Korea, and the DOLAB (the head of labour export program at national level) as well as its subordinate provincial departments (such as the DOLISA of Nghe An and Ha Tinh provinces) were reprimanded regarding their effectiveness in managing and controlling Vietnamese labourers overseas. This limited access to deep information on problems of policy from the government officers’ viewpoint, but also indicates how the Vietnamese bureaucracy for migration works.

Being treated as a donor or policy-maker instead of a researcher in the field also made it difficult for me to maintain relationships with some of the participants. Even though before the conversation or interview started the participant information statement was clearly explained, participants still thought of me as a donor who can provide financial support to their community, because at the level of local government, it was common for civil servants who participated in studies or shared their organisational documents to receive some financial compensation. However, considering the ethics of conducting research, I avoided doing this. The thoughts of local people about my position went even further. Entering the Hung Tay community, I was regarded as a policy-maker who could change policy in favour of migrant workers. The local people asked me to consider making policy to provide more opportunities for their people to migrate overseas. I had to repeatedly explain my actual position.

In Korea, I encountered problems scheduling meetings. Since most Vietnamese migrant workers worked from early morning until late night (8 am to 9 pm) and sometimes overnight if required, I could only arrange meetings outside of these hours, or on weekends or holidays. However, on their days off, they used to have lunch or dinner together with their group, which made it difficult for me to organise one-to-one interviews. Therefore, I joined their meetings and asked their consent to record conversations or conducting group interviews during meals. An advantage of this was that I could collect information on what kinds of stories Vietnamese
migrant workers often share with each other whenever they gather. However, this restricted me from encouraging participants to respond to specific interview questions. This also happened whenever I visited the AMCSC and the UFC. On weekends, migrant workers from different areas often came to these centres with their groups to learn Korean or computer skills or to ask for support, and thus I sometimes had group conversations instead of one-to-one interviews with workers at these centres.

While approaching my participants, I sometimes encountered difficulties not in term of gender but class bias. Talking to male workers was not a problem for me because most male participants are young and quite open-minded. However, there was some distance between me as an educated researcher, and participants as working class people. Have (1998) insightfully argued that conversations brought researchers closer to the perspectives of participants and the research topic. I usually had informal conversations with participants to reassure them before the more formal interviews started.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the methodology used for studying the social networks of Vietnamese migrant workers who moved to Korea for work. The chapter has explained why qualitative methods are appropriate for this research: because these methods can collect rich data on the complexity of social networks in terms of their organisation and operation, as well as their temporality and spatiality. This chapter has also reviewed the multi-sited methodological approaches in order to effectively gather data in both countries of origin and destination, which help to interpret issues related to social networks for Vietnamese migrants in the context of transnational migration based on work contracts. This study aims to collect data from various groups of participants to have multi-dimensional analysis on certain social networks. The results
are presented in the following chapters.
Chapter 4

Networks for Preparation to Migrate in the Pre-Departure Phase

Massey et al. (1993) and Boyd (1989) observed and recognised that in the scholarship on social networks, many scholars have conceptualised social networks as kinship and community relations. Taken to the work context and the job-seeking stage in labour migration, Lin et al.’s (1981) study is relevant in which they argue that the stronger the tie to the actor, the more reliable and useful the information about jobs. This conception, as Wilson (1998) argues, however neglects the importance and effectiveness of other types of social relations, such as brokers (labelled as ‘bridging ties’). In the context of temporary labour migration between Vietnam and Korea, prospective migrants are primarily or predominantly interested in earning income in a relative short period of time, by entering immediately into the Korean labour market. To achieve this goal, they form or use certain networks to facilitate their migration as they prepare to realise their migration project. Interestingly, migrants are not the only ones who wish to make money from migration; other types of networks are also formed to reap benefits from it, such as brokers, recruiters, and authorities.

This chapter argues that both bonding and bridging ties (Putnam, 2000) have different degrees of importance and fulfil different functions to facilitate the process of accessing paid work and preparing to migrate in the pre-departure stage. While brokers (‘bridging ties’) play important roles in linking prospective migrants to paid work abroad and making their migration possible, family members or close relatives (‘bonding ties’) have a vital role in supporting them to arrange for migration fees. This chapter found that the role of bonding ties in helping prospective
migrants to obtain a job in the pre-migration is not as crucial as that of others types of ties.

In addition, this chapter provides insights into how structural changes (i.e. policies on temporary labour migration of Vietnam and Korea) have resulted in changes of methods to migrate and, in turn, changes in the formation and operation of networks. The regulatory framework of temporary labour migration between Vietnam and Korea requires prospective migrants to be recruited before their departure, based on a contract between these workers and a specific employer in Korea. However, the lack of transparency of the recruitment mechanism has hampered workers in gaining decisive information about the availability of jobs and the exact nature of the recruitment process. Therefore, these workers have no other option than to seek support from brokers in order to be guaranteed a job vacancy. A broker is understood as “an intermediary who links two otherwise unconnected actors” (Stovel & Shaw, 2012, p. 141). A broker bridges a gap in social structure and help goods, information, opportunities or knowledge flow across that gap. Brokerage is defined by Stovel and Shaw (2012, p. 141) as “the process of connecting actors in systems of social, economic, or political relations in order to facilitate access to valued resources”. This process occurs when two parties want to make a deal but do not know each other. In Vietnamese culture, ‘broker’ (cò or cò môi in Vietnamese language) has a negative meaning, which implies a person who turns a profit by cheating other people through brokerage operations. However, the results of this study (see empirical chapters) advocate Faist’s argument (2014) that migration brokerage’s characteristic should not be assumed a priori to be profit-orientation. Brokerage has shown its dual facets which, on one hand, has capacity to ease social interaction and enhance economic activity, and on the other hand, involves in exploitation, personal profit, corruption and the accumulation of power (Faist, 2014; Lindquist et al., 2012; Stovel & Shaw, 2012). In this study, brokers engaging in brokerage networks are not only those who are professional ones working in the migration industry but also
those whose job is not commercial brokerage but have connections with influential people making decisions in recruitment. Brokers also include some returnees who went through migration procedures, experienced working overseas, and had wide social networks with authorities engaging in labour selection. While commercial brokers are considered as those exploiting hard-earned money of their clients - potential migrants, other kinds of brokers such as teachers are given more trust and respect by these potential migrants because of their social position and lower charge for their service.

Because the visa for migration by low-skilled workers has become restrictive in Korea in recent years, prospective migrants who wish to earn an income in Korea have to move to this country by other ways such as sham marriage, overseas study, tourism and trading, or medical treatment. The tightening of migration policies could not prevent the movement of Vietnamese migrants to Korea because of the effective operations of brokerage networks in both the origin community and destination. The migration industry established transnational networks which, by any means, bring migrants to Korea. The ignorance of Vietnamese governors at different levels (local, provincial, national) towards illegal practices also contribute to the mushroom of these brokerage networks in facilitating Vietnamese workers to cross Korea’s border.

The existence of alternative channels for migration to Korea has gender implications with regard to the type of networks used, since male prospective migrants tend to migrate to Korea through overseas study and trading, while their female counterparts find it is easier to enter Korea through sham marriages or cosmetic surgery. In addition, migration to Korea by overseas study has mushroomed after the suspension of Korea’s recruitment of newly hired Vietnamese low-skilled workers. Young people, regardless of sex, are structurally forced to gain required qualifications, for example a high school degree, prior to their migration in order to apply for a visa to study in Korea.
This chapter aims to examine the roles of social networks of or for Vietnamese temporary migrant workers in preparation for migration, i.e. during the pre-departure phase. The chapter firstly discusses the important roles of different types of brokerage networks, both in supporting prospective migrants to obtain a job prior to departing Vietnam and in facilitating the migration process. In addition, separate networks, providing financial support for prospective migrants with migration fees, are also analysed in order to arrive at a holistic picture of the complex nature of networks at play during this phase of migration.

4.1 Job Search, Recruitment and Migration

“IT's not what you know, it's who you know.” This common aphorism shows the importance of being connected with the ‘right people’ who can provide prospective migrants with essential information about jobs and recruitment in the initial stage of the migration project. Labour economists have firmly established a view of networks as vehicles for effective information transmission about job opportunities (Calvo-Armengol & Jackson, 2004; Granovetter, 1995; Montgomery, 1991). As demonstrated by Weimann (1983), the likelihood of one accessing a wide variety of job opportunities is greater when job seekers rely on social networks than when they merely obtain job information through formal methods. The more diverse contacts people have, the more job opportunities they might have (Yakubovich, 2005). Findings of this study show that prospective migrants access general information about recruitment and migration through prior (returned) migrants, current migrants, or family members, but crucial information about the selection process to work in Korea is mostly provided by local authorities, recruiters, and brokers (categorised as ‘bridging ties’). Recruiters and authorities are not commercial brokers; they, however, do get significant benefits from this job. This study also reveals that the degree of importance of brokers in recruitment and migration depends remarkably on policy changes of the host country and the recruitment structure of the sending country. The brokerage
networks vertically established from the level of village to that of state are associated with migration fees spread across many layers, from commercial brokers to recruiters and authorities (of communal, provincial and state level).

In this study, I pay close attention to the impact of policy changes on the formation and operation of various kinds of networks. Therefore, it is necessary to remind the reader about changes of policy on temporary labour migration between Vietnam and Korea. In the beginning of migratory movement to Korea for employment since the early 1990s, legally licensed private and state-owned labour export companies in Vietnam could recruit workers based on orders from their Korean business partners. Business operations of these companies were reported to the Department of Overseas Labour (DOLAB) under the MOLISA. In this period, Vietnamese workers were recruited and worked in Korea as trainees under the ITTP. The EPS was implemented in 2004 with an aim to improve the existing program which was deemed to be exploitative. In the early days of EPS, there were some recruitment systems operating in parallel. Job quotas were distributed to labour export companies, professional colleges, and poor local communities. Later, jobs were shared to Northern, Central, and Southern regions based on the need for working overseas of residents in each region. The high rate of Vietnamese undocumented workers residing in Korea led to the temporary suspension of Korea’s granting of visas for newly hired low-skilled workers from Vietnam between the late 2012 and May 2016. During this period, only Vietnamese workers who passed the Korean Language Proficiency Test (KLPT) organised before the suspension and who voluntarily returned to Vietnam after the completion of their contract were granted a new working visa. Some Vietnamese, who could not obtain a visa for low-skilled workers, migrated to Korea by visa for tourism and trading, family reunion, family visiting, medical treatment, cosmetic surgery, study overseas, and even high-skilled labour. While females attempted to obtain a visa for spouses (by having a fake marriage
with a Korean man) or be patients of cosmetic surgery, males tended to apply for a visa for overseas study and high-skilled workers. Fake marriage and overseas study are the main alternative ways to go to Korea. On 17 May 2016, a new MOU between Korea and Vietnam was signed in which Korea agreed to recruit a limited number of new Vietnamese workers depending on the ability of the Vietnamese government to control the rate of undocumented workers. Changes in the migratory framework of the receiving country strongly affect the dependence of prospective migrants on various social networks in provision of job information.

While the labour recruitment systems for other labour market in Asia are still in hand of Vietnamese governmental, joint stock and private companies which facilitate deep intervention of informal networks (i.e. brokers); the current labour recruitment system in Vietnam for the Korean labour market are formed and monitored by the EPS in which Vietnamese workers are employed directly by Korean employers. The KLPT is also assessed by the EPS. The Vietnamese partners cooperate with the EPS in publicising recruitment advertisement, organising KLPT, and processing paperwork for migration of workers. The involvement of the Vietnamese partners in the process of labour selection has been reduced significantly due to disrepute of Vietnamese recruiters and authorities in the past such as bribery and corruption. The more the MOEL engages in the recruitment, the less prospective migrants dependence on brokers is. The context of Vietnam has resulted in the combination of use both formal and informal networks for migration to Korea of Vietnamese prospective migrants.

4.1.1 The Role of Relatives and Neighbours

According to my findings, relatives and neighbours do not typically play a decisive role in the recruitment process per se; however, over three fourths of migrant respondents in this study expressed their gratitude to these people who heard or knew about recruitment information and
introduced migrants to influential people who could intervene in the selection for overseas work placements. In early days of the migratory movement from Vietnam to Korea for employment, information about recruitment was not publicised nationwide. Limited jobs in Korea were available to Vietnamese workers, while their need for overseas employment was high due to persistent unemployment in their home country. Only people who were in charge of labour export programs or had connections with those, who worked in labour export companies or local departments of labours, would know about recruitment for the Korean labour market. Relatives could be “an uncle who had a friend working in Song Da labour export company” or “a sister who worked at the office of human resource of the SOLISA.” However, when migration to Korea was becoming more popular, the majority of respondents said that they received job information from more varied sources such as mass media, former migrants, actual migrants, or family members of migrants. Job informants who know about or have gone through the migration process, popularise information about recruitment and their migration experiences and advise prospective migrants to get involved in trustworthy brokerage networks.

These people transmit information about recruitment opportunities to their relatives who seem to have financial capacity and desire to work in Korea. No respondents reported their relatives asking them for money when sharing job information and introducing them to influential brokers or labour export companies. Relatives thus played a role as a bridge, linking job seekers with recruiters and might help prospective workers to prepare their job application. This is illustrated by the story of Kieu:

My neighbour was a migrant, moved to Korea in 2005 through the ITTP. He went back home after 6 years working in Korea. Therefore, he knew about labour migration from Vietnam to Korea. His father is a close friend of my father. He knew that my family was poor but respectable. That was why he wanted to help my family. He told my father that I looked smart, so he persuaded my father to let me study Korean and apply for a job in Korea. Then he introduced me to a local
authority who reviewed my application. At that time, I did not have an identification card. My middle name and my birthday in documents did not match. He helped me to prepare documents and the application. He did not take a coin from me (Kieu, migrant worker, personal communication, 27 February 2013).

Kieu lives in a remote rural area where she hardly had any access to recruitment for working in Korea. She was lucky because her neighbour was supportive and willing to help her migrate to Korea, and felt deep gratitude to this neighbour who changed her and her family’s life.

In recent years, recruitment to work in Korea has become widely known; relatives or neighbours are no longer the primary job informants in large cities or towns. Information about recruitment is popularised on mass media like television, radio, newspapers, and the internet. With the rapid development of the internet, prospective migrants living in large cities or town can easily access information about recruitment which is officially posted on the website of the DOLAB while people living in far and isolated rural areas hear about recruitment from radios, television, their close friends, relatives, or neighbours. The more job information is popularised, the role of relatives and neighbour in helping migrants to acquire a job in Korea is less important.

4.1.2 The Role of Commercial Brokers

The scholarship on social capital and social networks has shown concern about migration brokers described as having a negative reputation due to their common exploitative practices and fraud cases (Molland, 2012), but very active and playing a crucial role in smoothing migration for many prospective migrants (Alpes, 2013; Kern & Müller-Böker, 2015; Lindquist, 2010; Lindquist et al., 2012; Wang, 2014). Stovel and Shaw (2012, p. 139) conceptualise brokerage as “one of a small number of mechanisms by which disconnected or isolated individuals (or groups) can interact economically, politically, and socially”. Brokerage, on the one hand, enables easier social, economic, and political activities. However, the main aim of the formation
of brokerage networks is to make profit from the service they provide. Results of this study again confirm the two-sided reputation of networks. Most potential migrants in this study have a social background characterised by relative poverty, low-education and hailing from rural areas. It is hardly possible for them to have direct contact with people associated with formal recruitment. In this case, brokers play a bridging (or intermediary) role and thus serve to close what Burt (2001a, 2001b) calls “structure holes” by receiving vital information from their contacts. Although the recruitment system for the Korean labour market has been amended over time towards more transparency in providing information, organising the KLPT, and selecting workers, brokers have played influential roles in supporting prospective migrants to obtain a job vacancy. This section is concerned with the formation and operation of brokerage networks for labour migration between Vietnam and Korea, and how prospective migrants can use alternative networks for migration to Korea when migration policies are changed.

I argue that since commercial brokerage networks working in the field of temporary labour migration between Vietnam and Korea are highly organised and play a crucial role in the pre-migration stage, such networks need to be included in the analysis of social networks of migration. Because brokers are aware of the big benefits they can get from assisting prospective migrants to move to Korea, they actively appeal to people to be involved in recruitment and migration. Brokers gain their importance in the recruitment process when the mechanism of labour selection lacks transparency, and vice versa.

Commercial brokers function as an important link between labour supply companies and departments of labour management at provincial and national level, as well as between these companies and the Korean representative agency for foreign worker recruitment. When temporary labour migration between Vietnam and Korea started in 1992, the labour export industry began to flourish and complex brokerage networks have since established themselves.
Labour export companies have mushroomed in big cities across Vietnam, but are particularly concentrated on Ha Noi (the capital) and Ho Chi Minh city (the largest and wealthiest city). Many newspaper articles have revealed the operations of some labour export companies as exploitative, often selling jobs in Korea to Vietnamese workers at a very costly price. Brokers mostly worked for labour export companies. They had connections with Vietnamese governmental officers such as DOLAB, DOLISA, and MOLISA staff, who monitored and regulated labour export operations and processed paperwork for migration. Brokers used the money received from clients to pay bribes to these high-ranking officials. In addition, brokers, on behalf of labour export companies, shared their profits with Korean staff who dealt with job distribution and foreign labour management in Vietnam. Seol (2000) provides evidence on how staff of the Korea International Training Cooperation Corps (KITCO) in labour-sending countries in Asia, who were appointed to assist recruitment operations overseas, received bribes from local labour supply companies, including those in Vietnam. Although the DOLAB, the DOLISA, the MOLISA of Vietnam were responsible for managing labour export and the KITCO of Korea was established to look after labour import. Most of the participants in this study who migrated to Korea through labour export companies complained about the engagement of these organisations in bribery with the assistance of brokers. Therefore, it was not surprising when prospective migrant workers had to pay various kinds of fees for each operation associated with recruitment and their migration process. The actual fee prospective migrants need to pay is officially fixed at approximately 630 USD. However, it was common that potential migrants paid much more than that amount. Market fees for migration are far higher than regulated fees. Most of transnational migration in Asia is arranged by brokers who charge

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3 In November 1993, the Korean government increased the scale of foreign trainees through ITTP under the supervision of the KITCO, which was housed by the KFSB. KITCO was granted full rights to conduct and distribute trainees from labour supply agencies in 14 Asian countries, including Vietnam. Hence, it was not unexpected that Vietnamese labour export companies needed to ‘compensate’ this organisation for being selected as a source of labour supply (see Seol, 2000).
exorbitant fees (Bélanger & Tran, 2013; Dannecker & Spiegel, 2008; Freitag & Von Oppen, 2009; L. A. Hoang & B. S. Yeoh, 2015; Lindquist, 2010). Most of my migrant participants discontentedly told me about the unreasonable expenses they had to pay.

Along with linking labour supply companies to Korean and Vietnamese authorities who are in charge of managing labour export, brokers have made connections between Vietnamese job seekers and labour export companies. During the initial period of temporary labour migration from Vietnam to Korea, due to the unavailability of critical information about recruitment, the role of brokers who served as messengers distributing job information and connecting job seekers to labour export companies became extremely important. Since information about recruitment was not widely spread in the mass media as it is at present, job seekers, especially those residing in rural areas, could hardly access any information about recruitment. These job seekers had to pay a vast sum of money to brokers with widespread and close connections with labour export companies to access to the ‘right’ company that could provide jobs in Korea. The complex way in which prospective migrants can approach the ‘right place’ and ‘right people’ is described as follows:

Because of the recruitment mechanism in Vietnam, I paid a lot. The actual fee was not much. Labourers could not directly contact with recruiters, but went through many layers of brokers. I firstly informed a labour export company located in my area my wish to find a job in Korea. This company contacted another labour export in Ha Noi and then the company in Ha Noi sent me to a bigger company in Ha Noi named LOD. My migration to Korea cost VND 120 million (approximately over USD 7,500)4. My wages in the first year of working was approximately USD 400 - 500. Those wages were high because I included additional working hours. The wage of 8 working hours was KRW 326 which valued at USD 280. You can calculate, two years of working could not compensate the migration fees I spent

4 Migrants sometimes use USD, VND, or KRW when they mentioned sums of money. The rates which the writer used to covert other kinds of currency to USD depend on the time when migrants spent it, not the current currency exchange rate.
All thirteen respondents who were sent to Korea by labour export companies confirmed that their broker fees equalled the total amount of wage they received in Korea within one to two years of working. This has led many migrant workers to make the jump to a new, better paid job after working for the contract company for a short time.

Mass media in Vietnam has disclosed that corruption seemed endemic in the whole recruitment system in Vietnam. Details of recruitment information and process were kept secret so that brokers together with labour export companies could ‘pickpocket’ job applicants. Interestingly, these respondents thought that broker fees were inevitable because without the assistance of brokers, they had no way to access jobs and complete paperwork for migration.

The findings of this study show that there are remarkable difference between the influence of brokers in recruitment and migration in the North and the North-Centre (hereafter the North as migration networks and the bureaucracy were similar) and South and South-Centre (hereafter the South) of Vietnam. Due to extremely high need and competition among applicants in the North together with bureaucratic corruption in public services, prospective migrants in this region must work with brokers in order to obtain a job in Korea, while workers in the South can apply on their own and have equal opportunities to be selected. Far different from the North, the migration industry in the South has not developed as much. A small number of workers in the South were inspired to work overseas while job quotas allocated for this region were quite large. Young people could find a job at many factories located in large industrial zones in Ho Chi Minh city or in Dong Nai and Binh Duong provinces. An increasing number of industrial zones have been built in other provinces, providing abundant jobs for local people. Because of job availability in this region, young workers were not interested in finding jobs in foreign countries.
Given the low competition for employment in Korea, brokers assisted many job applicants who were residents of the North, fabricating new household registration books indicating their current residency as being in the South. This helped them to reduce the pressure of competition and increase the chances of migration. Recently, more young workers from the South have considered migration to Korea because they have found that earnings through work in factories in Vietnam do not result in sufficient savings. However, the competition among job applicants in the South has never been as severe as it is in the North.

Because of the limited number of people desiring to work in Korea, the role of brokers in the South in assisting job seekers in recruitment and the processing of paperwork has not actually been very important. Instead, some of them work as intermediaries, assisting brokers of the North to change household registration. Connections between brokers and the DOLISA of the provinces in the southern region are not as strong as those in the North. Except for recruitment operated by labour export companies, under the recruitment of vocational colleges or localities, Southern people could directly apply for and get a job in Korea easily if their KLPT scores met the requirements. In this region, brokers may receive just small sums of money or small gifts for helping job applicants to complete the administrative procedures.

In recent years, thanks to the mass media popularising information about recruitment, many new migrants have stopped paying brokerage fees because they are aware that they can apply for a job in Korea on their own. When they do so directly, they are required to pay approximately USD 630 before departure (including doing KLPT, visa application processing, one-way flight ticket, orientation courses, and health check). Because this amount of money does not include brokerage fees, it is rather small, compared to the USD 6,000 - 12,000 migrants used to have to pay previously. Although applicants who live in distant and isolated areas may not believe in the recruitment system, they still have to spend considerable sums of money on brokerage fees due
to their residential location.

Some prospective migrants feared losing their opportunities because they did not pay brokerage fees, even though their sibling were working in the Department of Labour (which deals with the labour export program). This ironic situation was cited by a staff of the DOLISA of Nghe An province:

It is obviously cheating. I have worked here [the DOLISA of Nghe An province] since 2003. Whenever workers come here to ask me about recruitment, I told them the truth that they have to pay USD 630 only. However, even my younger brother did not trust what I said because he studied in Viet-Korea College. He believed that he could be selected only if he paid brokerage fees. Workers are all credulous, relying on brokers who have no function in the entire recruitment process. He said that some students in his class, who paid USD 5,000 to 6,000, already migrated but he could not because he did not pay to brokers. He complained about that to me every day. Later, he could migrate with USD 630, excluding training fees (Vinh, staff of SOLISA Nghe An, personal communication, 08 May 2015).

However, when many people can migrate with a small amount of migration fee, other prospective migrants have become wiser in their job application:

Many people in Soc Son - my town, migrated out. In my village, every household has at least one migrant. When I applied for a job in Korea, I did not know anything. So, I paid approximately VND 200 million (approximately USD 10,000) to brokers. Recently, I heard that Mr Kien, my co-villager was the first person who did not pay brokerage fee, just paid the air flight ticket and other fees at USD 630. People in my village knew that and nobody stupidly pays money to brokers any more. How lucky they are. Otherwise, they have to work over a year just to payback migration fees (Dong, migrant worker, personal communication, 14 June 2015).

Dong informed me about the positive change in the ‘paying practice’ of prospective migrants in her town. Since one villager proved that he could migrate to Korea by spending only a small amount of migration fee and no extra brokerage fee, people in the town learned from this
experience and have stopped being dependent on commercial brokers ever since.

- **Sham marriage**

As indicated above, the sudden suspension of Korea receiving new Vietnamese workers in the late 2012 resulted in dramatic changes in the formation of new networks for migration to Korea. Hollifield (2000), Portes (1997), and Zell and Skop (2011) assert that migration is constrained by formal legal restrictions and the process of migration is conditioned by such restrictions. The formation of networks is to some degree conditioned by the formal legal constraints and the migration policies of the destination country (Tsuda et al., 2003). This suspension has resulted in the use of alternative channels to move to Korea. A broker explained how his job has been changed by amendments in Korean policy in receiving Vietnamese workers:

Previously, I was a broker, connecting people in this village to labour export companies and the DOLISA. Then, when EPS was initiated, I helped my villagers to negotiate with the DOLISA officials for the ease of paperwork process. However, in two recent years I have stopped doing this job because Korea no longer receives new Vietnamese workers. I heard that the Korean government has re-opened their door but in fact, people cannot migrate. Recently, many people here have migrated to Korea by tourism, studying abroad and fake marriage. Now I am helping my villagers to move to Korea through the overseas study channel. About 500 to 700 people in this commune have moved to Korea by this channel for making money (Minh, broker, personal communication, 25 April 2015).

Brokerage networks for sham marriage and overseas study have especially mushroomed after the cessation. Since Minh witnessed the collapse of brokerage networks for the former type of migration, he flexibly shifted his job as a commercial broker for low-skilled labour migration to assisting Vietnamese with overseas study migration to Korea. Minh, like other commercial brokers, becomes involved in or establishes new networks providing services for people wishing to move to Korea through alternative channels.
In recent years, marriage migration has become popular among communities many people migrated out of, such as Cuong Gian commune. Vietnamese brokerage networks are incorporated with brokers in Korea assisting sham marriages between Vietnamese women and Korean men. Firstly, a woman intending to migrate to Korea contacts a broker in her village. Brokers in Vietnam, in close contact with brokers in Korea, find a Korean man who agrees to act as guarantor, to be a guarantee as a sham husband and to work with Korean local authorities to smooth the bureaucratic process. Since this way of migration needs the involvement of brokers from both countries, fees oscillate between USD 10,000 to 15,000. The processes of marriage registration and visa application happen the same way as other legitimate marriages between Vietnamese women and Korean men. After landing in Korea, the ‘husband’ brings his Vietnamese ‘wife’ to the Office of Immigration Service to register her residence in Korea. In order to maintain this legal status, the woman has to pay about USD 500 to her ‘husband’ for each year that she lives in Korea.

Due to their inability to approach Korean men who are single and willing to engage in sham marriages directly, prospective Vietnamese female migrants rely deeply on brokers. However, many brokers are evaluated as irresponsible by their customers, particularly after migrants have left Vietnam:

I had a fake marriage so of course I had to work with a Vietnamese broker having connections with Vietnamese authorities and Korean brokers. I paid over 10,000 USD for the package. Migration through a sham marriage is more secured compared to other kinds of migration. Brokers got too much money because my sham husband received 2,000-3,000 USD only. He helped me to complete required paperwork in Korea. After I arrived in Korea, he brought me to the Office of Immigration Service and signed on some documents to be my guarantee for the first year. Brokers did nothing for me after I left Vietnam. They didn’t even try to ask my husband to extend my visa (Ha, migrant worker, personal communication, 25 April 2015).
Unlike real marriages between Korean men and Vietnamese women, these sham marriages merely serve as a means for Vietnamese women to enter and reside in Korea legally, with the view to finding work, which is their priority. Although many female prospective migrants are warned about this situation, they have to accept this fact since family reunion through marriage is one of the legal ways to enter Korea that young or middle-aged women can apply for. Korean men ‘sell’ their freedom by marrying Vietnamese women for a period of time between a few months to a few years at a price of USD 500 per year, depending on their own choice. In these cases, brokers are not responsible for finding a job. They only support Vietnamese women in finding a ‘husband’. After landing in Korea, these Vietnamese women have to find a job by themselves.

- **Study abroad**

The second most common way to move to Korea is through studying abroad. Young people, after graduating from high school within three years, can apply for a visa to study in Korea. These people actually do not intend to receive an education in Korea but to utilise this opportunity to stay and find a job. The formation of networks for this type of migration is different to networks supporting Vietnamese to engage in sham marriages. A potential migrant communicates with a broker in his/her village for assistance to procure a visa for overseas study. This broker sends a notification of the order from his client to a consulting and services company specialised in overseas education, which is often located in large cities. This company searches for a suitable college in Korea, attempts to get an offer for the student, helps this student to pass an interview organised by the Korean embassy, and completes the administrative procedures for processing the visa. The costs amount to between USD 10,000 and 15,000, including tuition fee and accommodation for the first semester studying in a Korean college. However, as many students moved out of colleges/universities shortly after their enrolment in order to find a job,
many companies for overseas education now have stricter regulations towards their clients and keep their household registration book for an agreed period of time. Families that have invested money in their children’s migration do not usually aim to support their children to study but in fact expect them to work in Korea.

Song, a mother whose son moved to Korea via an overseas student visa, shared their migration story. Her neighbour, a broker for labour migration to Korea, who had recently begun to work on overseas study migration, informed her about this available channel for migration and its success prospects. The broker helped her negotiate with an overseas education company that assisted her son with the admission process. Song said that her son tried to stay in a dormitory at his college, and had to complete one semester of learning Korean because the overseas study company would keep USD 2,000 as deposit and her land or house document (a certificate of land or/and house use permit) to prevent her son from quitting his study. He could not earn enough to make a living because he had to attend classes during the daytime and could not work in the evening for long since the dormitory would close after 10 pm. Song happily informed me that her son was soon to move out to take up a full-time job, as she had just received back her USD 2,000 deposit and her land document from the overseas study company. If her son had stayed in the dormitory, he would not have been able to earn enough money to cover his living expenses, and of course would not have been able to save any additional money.

- **Comparing broker networks in different localities**

I have noted a great difference in the ability of brokers to mobilise potential migrant workers and find alternative ways for migration to Korea between two field sites, particularly after the MOU regarding the receiving of new workers was not renewed. While the door to Korea is almost closed for people in Nghe An, people in Cuong Gian commune, Ha Tinh province can access
migration opportunities with the assistance from broker networks which immediately and flexibly formed to provide alternative channels of migration. Brokers in Cuong Gian have spread their networks widely to support any kind of migration channel. Since the movement to work in Korea was interrupted, the migration story of Song’s son has become common in Cuong Gian commune. However, this kind of migration rarely happened in Nghe An province. In response to the high demand for work migration to Korea by local people in Cuong Gian commune, in recent years some study abroad companies have established branches in Cuong Gian commune to be closer to their potential clients. Local brokers work for these companies by informing potential customers about the visa requirements for overseas study and guide them in preparing for application. Young people in the area who graduated high school within the previous three years are advised to prepare for migration by taking a course in Korea. Students are encouraged to complete high school to meet the prerequisites of visa application. With support from teachers and school administrators of a local high school, the school transcripts can be changed to better results in order to receive an offer from a Korean college more easily. This is a very likely way to migrate to Korea at the moment, disregarding sex. However, it is available to young people only. Brokers, who advise parents to invest into their children’s migration and encourage young people to meet the requirements for migration, are considered trustworthy people because they are co-villagers of the prospective migrants and are responsible for the outcome of the visa application. In fact, brokers only receive brokerage fees when their clients are granted their visa.

The ability to mobilise social capital for migration from social networks is extremely important in the context of frequently changing policies on labour migration. This is demonstrated by the case of Ha Tinh in which people adapted with structural changes by creating and engaging in newly-formed networks supporting their migration to Korea. Ha Tinh people had much experience to migrate out of the hometown by various ways, therefore, brokerage networks in
this locality could connect with networks which could make migration of people in this location possible. In addition, prospective migrants from Ha Tinh could easily access the supportive co-villager networks in the destination; hence, they were more confident to choose alternative methods for their movement. In contrast, due to the limited social capital which Nghe An people could approach from co-villagers who were more trustable than strangers in the origin as well as the destination, people from this locality could not have as many opportunities as Ha Tinh people had to work in Korea.

In general, the change from networks of temporary labour migration to networks of sham marriages or overseas study is a response to ‘demand’ and ‘supply’, which was affected by the regulatory framework in Korea and to a lesser extend in Vietnam. Since the occurrence of structure barriers of temporary labour migration between Vietnam and Korea, which have caused various problems for prospective migrants, brokers have become crucial in assisting these workers to acquire a job and initiate the process in the pre-migration stage, and prospective migrants often pay high costs for their migration. However, when the mechanism for this type of migration becomes more transparent, prospective migrants tend to rely less on brokers.

4.1.3 The Role of Recruiters

Recruiters are rarely documented as a chain of social networks in the scholarship on international labour migration. Findings of this study show that in some specific cases, the role of a person who engages in the labour selection process and the role of a broker who provides brokerage services can sometimes be carried out by one person - the recruiter. Respondents in this study often considered recruiters working for labour export companies as exploitative, while recruiters who provide vocational or language training courses and make decision on migrant selection are considered trustworthy and respectable, although both groups charge a considerable
amount of fees for their services to prospective migrants.

When labour export companies were permitted to recruit workers for the Korean labour market, they tried to exploit job applicants by any means. A returnee who was selected to work in Korea described the operations of a labour export company where he applied for a job in pre-migration:

A big company was distributed 100 job quotas. This meant Korean employers needed 100 Vietnamese workers. However, this Vietnamese labour export company [where he applied for a job] informed job seekers that they wanted to recruit 10,000 workers. One worker paid VND 50,000 to buy an application form, and then paid training fees and travelling during training period. The company got a lot of money. Just by selling job application forms, they collected VND 500 million. 10,000 workers had to compete with each other and tried to be included in the selected list of 100 people. How to win? It, actually, was not as difficult as a university entrance exam in which competitors needed to have knowledge. However, there was no fair play in this competition. Priorities were given to children or relatives of people engaging in recruitment and those who afforded to pay big money. If not, applicants would be kicked out immediately. In 2000, I paid VND 120 million. At that time, USD 1 equalled VND 15,000-16,000 (Thin, returnee, personal communication, 9 May 2015).

This comment on recruitment of labour export companies is typical among respondents who were sent to Korea by labour export companies. The non-transparency of information about recruitment, the high competition among job applicants and labour export companies’ power over the selection caused high migration fees and unfair distribution of slots. Recruiters, in this case, were labelled “heartless exploiters” by my respondents. However, job applicants could not fight for fairer recruitment and had to accept the fact that whoever paid the most could obtain a job, as some respondents told me.

The position of recruiters shifted to people who managed the recruitment process in Vietnam instead of people working for labour export companies. When exploitative activities of labour export companies in Vietnam towards job applicants were reported to the Korean Ministry of
Employment and Labour (MOEL), job vacancies were allocated to each commune of each province where people lived in poverty and displayed a high demand for jobs in Korea. Jobs were also distributed to industrial and technical vocational training colleges across Vietnam. DOLISAs, subordinates of the MOLISA at the provincial level, were appointed to watch and manage labour export activities in their province. Therefore, recruiters in this period of policy amendment include examiners of the KLPT, teachers and leaders of vocational training colleges, and local authorities.

Young people who knew about recruitment to work in Korea and still wanted to work in this host country tended to undertake a course in vocational training colleges so that they could be connected with teachers who were also brokers and could assist students in landing a vacancy. Teachers, assigned by college leaders, provided industrial, technical, or Korean language training and directly spread information about recruitment and selection fees set up by each college to the students. When a student agreed to pay the fee for the whole package (recruitment and paperwork) teachers and leaders of the college would assign the vacancy to this student. A family member of a migrant worker related:

My son had a vocational training at the Vietnam-Korea College. He told my husband and me that he wanted to work in Korea. I repeatedly asked him whether it was a joke. He insisted to me to prepare money because his teacher promised to help him get a job. VND 120 million in total to buy a job vacancy from his college. If he worked with other brokers, the price would be VND 140 - 150 million … Teachers also promised to help my son to pass the Korean language test. The cost we paid was lower [compared to the amount which others paid to commercial brokers]. The reliability was higher [compared to working with commercial brokers]. At that time, many colleges also interfered in training and recruitment but this college was more trustable because it was considered as a gift from Koreans, built by official development assistance from the Korean government. Therefore, this college received more job quotas and organised the KLPT for the whole Central region. But the big problem was that, many students enrolled in this college as a springboard to have a higher chance of being recruited while job quotas were
limited (Than, family member, personal communication, 24 February 2013).

Because the selection of granting a vacancy to a student was a process that only staff of colleges had full authority over, students had no other choice but to ‘buy’ jobs from these individuals. Jobs were, therefore, given to students who could afford the costs instead of those who excelled in their studies (i.e. not merit-based):

Fortunately, when I studied in Viet-Korea College, recruitment was handed over to my college first time. Many students registered for jobs in that year. They picked up students from top down. Of course, they did not just consider our study results but some other things such as our financial capacity to pay various kinds of fees (Tuan, migrant worker, personal communication. 13 June 2015).

Teachers regarded themselves as merely teachers and recruiters. They, in fact, also played roles as brokers. Meanwhile, students and their family thought of these teachers as ‘helpers’ who assisted them to obtain job, despite the costs for obtaining such help being very high (although lower than for other job applicants who were not students of vocational training colleges). Migration fees were divided and given to teachers, college leaders, and staff of the provincial DOLISA. Students and their families trusted teachers because they worked in educational institutions; trustworthiness rested on having a ‘respectable position,’ disregarding such individuals’ actual actions.

When discussing social capital, Putnam (2007, p. 137) emphasises trustworthiness in people as having symbolic capital, which Bourdieu (1986) calls having a “great name” or being influential people. Trimble and Kmec (2011) and Davern and Hachen (2006) suggest two mechanisms explaining how networks and the social capital embedded in them can bring about positive outcomes in the job attainment process: the information provision mechanism and the influence mechanism. Networks are crucial not only in enabling people to hear about new job vacancies,
but also in influencing recruiters who make the decision of hiring workers. Formal relations between teachers and students or actual relations between brokers and potential migrants based on trust were regarded as essential in guaranteeing selection. Such ‘broker teachers’ provided superior information and trust relative to the recruitment. This, as Burt (2004) and Manuel (2004) argue, provides a resource advantage for individual career mobility. Therefore, participants of this study, who were students and recruited by their vocational training colleges, asked their teacher to help them obtain a job vacancy.

Like other vocational training colleges, many teachers in the colleges of the Ministry of Defence (MOD) also worked as brokers, advising their students about recruitment, and personally worked with students intending to migrate to Korea. However, fees for a job vacancy in these colleges were much smaller compared to other vocational training colleges. Since 2005, the recruitment also prioritised former soldiers and students of vocational training colleges, which the MOD housed. Former soldiers were more likely to be recruited if they were students of military colleges because job quotas were directly allocated to them. Moreover, paperwork for the applications of these students could be approved more easily because they belonged to the army; their profiles were clean and trustworthy. However, these individuals still had to compete with their fellow students to obtain a job, because of the increasing number of people being admitted just for getting a job in Korea. A returnee who was recruited by a military vocational training college shared his experience:

After graduating from high school, I served in the military district IV. Then, I had three-year vocational training in College IV [belonging to the MOD]. In 2007, this college had 100 job quotas, but over 1,000 students registered for a Korea job. I had to beat 900 students. The migration price of the MOD was VND 28 million. This means that I did not pay an extra fee. I voluntarily donated some money to my college because I was lucky to be selected. It was not compulsory but all selected students presented some money to the college as a ‘unwritten policy’ because they designated and helped us ‘pass’ the intense competition and complete the required

Similar to the cases of other students at other vocational training colleges, Phu and his friends in military college relied strongly on ‘broker teachers’ who could connect students who could afford the fee with people making the selection. Phu paid VND 28 million (equalled to USD 1,732, according to the exchange rate of the State Bank of Vietnam in 2007). Yet, he was very happy with the price set by the college of the MOD where he received training, since the total fees were much smaller compared to those of commercial brokerage networks. Phu donated over USD 1,000 to the college, a significant sum for a poor farmer like him. When being asked whether he knew where his donation went, with a smile, Phu replied that “of course the money was directly sent to teachers and college administrators”. Indeed, assistance to migrate, as Mahler (1995) has observed, is often available at a very high price. Although the government promulgated special decrees for some priority groups, there were ‘brokers’ in the position of ‘teachers’, and ‘brokerage fees’ reframed as ‘donations’. Nevertheless, in comparison with other institutions, acquiring a job in Korea from military colleges was more desirable in terms of prices for migration and simplicity of paperwork. This resulted in a wave of young people enrolling in military vocational training colleges in order to easily access a job in Korea, rather than acquiring actual vocational training.

Far different from teachers of vocational training colleges in the North, I received no information from respondents about teachers of vocational training colleges in the South setting prices for job vacancies and inviting their students to buy them. Teachers in the Southern region were described as “helpful” and “even-minded,” and willing to disclose detailed recruitment information to their students. Some students, after acquiring a job, gave their teachers a small gift of gratitude. No respondents coming from the South said that they gave money to their teachers before and after being selected to work in Korea.
In addition to students of military colleges or people who served in the army, individuals of poor households residing in 62 of the poorest districts (majorly ethnic minorities) in 20 provinces are also treated as priority groups in recruitment. Decree 30/A/2008/NQ-CP in 2008, and its amended version, Decree 71/2009/QĐ-TTg in 2009, were introduced by the Vietnamese government to provide aid to 62 poor districts, with the goal to reduce poverty and give priority to residents of these poor districts in recruitment. The government paid the tuition fees, travelling cost, and stipends to allow vocational and language training (in state-owned colleges) for students of poor households. Data of this study show that people from poor households and ethnic minorities paid lower migration fees than groups of people engaged in military colleges because they are listed in the priority group mentioned in the MOU between Vietnam and Korea.

Among the various recruitment procedures, obtaining the required KPLT scores was decisive; therefore, backing from brokers was crucial. Job applicants migrated to Korea through labour export companies were required to pass a simple Korean language test after finishing their language training organised by these companies, while applicants under EPS must take the KLPT, a more difficult test, which was introduced in 2004. Although a vacancy could be bought from the localities or vocational training colleges, job applicants must firstly pass the KLPT. Depending upon which job sector the applicant wanted to work in, the test scores required were different. Scores for manufacturing ranked highest, followed by construction, agriculture, and fishing. The intense competition among applicants resulted in the establishment of a ‘busy market’ where brokers, on behalf of job applicants, could buy KLPT scores from exam invigilators and organisers. Many examinees paid for a package to get a job vacancy, including the guarantee to pass the KLPT. These applicants would give a bribe to exam invigilators before the exams started, as the unfair competition led to a fear of failure in the exam. Even returnees, who had worked in Korea for some years and could communicate in Korean well, were not
confident about their ability to pass the KLPT. Thus, most prospective migrants had to pay money to brokers to ensure their selection. A returnee, who has returned to Vietnam, shared his story of taking a KLPT exam:

I was a returnee. I paid USD 8,000 for my first migration to Korea. In 2007, I again applied for a job in Korea and had to pay USD 10,500. I would be eligible to return to Korea if I passed the KLPT. The MOLISA distributed 100 jobs to each province, but 150 vacancies to Nghe An province because it had a biggest number of applicants. I was afraid that I could not compete. Actually if it was a pure competition, who could beat me because I had returned from Korea after completing my contract of 4 years and 10 months. But if I just applied for a job without working with brokers, even I passed the KLPT, Vietnamese recruiters would not send my application to Korean employers. They [brokers and authorities] were closely linked to each other. Then, how I could migrate to Korea (The, returnee, personal communication, 27 March 2013).

The, like many returnees, passed the KLPT once and continued improving his Korean language during his stay in Korea. However, he did not trust the exam system in which the results were in the hands of examiners and exam organisers, and not in the skills of examinees. In fact, if they fail, they had to wait for another three to six months to take another exam, which meant their migration would be delayed.

Of the three exam points, two were in the Centre and one was in the North. These exam points were established based on the average number of job applicants in these regions. Job seekers residing in the South had to take a KLPT exam in Ha Noi in the North, because no exam point was organised in this region. The corruption of the KLPT organisers in Nghe An, one exam point for provinces located in central region, was well-known in the migration business community and in mass medias. In contrast with what I heard from my interviewees and read from the news, a staff member of the Nghe An DOLISA, who participated in holding the KLPT exam, protested himself and his institution and blamed examinees who, according to him, often
had fraudulent behaviour during exams:

Since 2006, the KLPT was held nationwide. In 2011, there were 13,100 applicants from Nghe An province. Three exam locations included Da Nang, Nghe An, and Ha Noi. Applicants hailing from Nghe An had to take the exam in Ha Noi to avoid corruption and cheating. It was crowded; the same as a national university entrance exam. Examinees were equipped with modern and sophisticated supportive technology. For example if I gave broker USD 2,000, they would equip me a set of cloths with a chip. Two question sheets were labelled even or odd. A person who was good in Korean language would read the answer and communicate with the examinee via wireless earphone attached in their hairs, the examinee just stuck answers on the answer sheet (Vinh, staff of recruitment organisation, personal communication, 8 May 2015).

This KLPT exam organiser accused brokers of having ‘dirty hands’ because they assisted examinees to engage in cheating in the exam. However, the reputation of his institute in organising the KLPT was seriously damaged by money-result exchange activities between examinees and exam organisers. Some staff of his institution were conducting brokerage activities, receiving money from commercial brokers and giving jobs to applicants. Before 2006, job applicants had to pass the Korean language test at the provincial level before taking another exam at the state level. Since 2006, nationwide exams have been held in which residents of different regions had to take exams at an exam point in another region to avoid cheating.

In contrast to the high competition for the KLPT in the North, examinees in the South felt much comfortable and confident when taking this exam. A migrant worker, coming from the South, commented on issues relating to do the KLPT:

I passed the test with 186 scores out of 200 because the required scores for working in manufacturing in the South were 160. I asked my friend from the North who was working in the same factories about his KLPT result. He told me that he got 200 scores. Oh my god, maximum. I asked him whether he learned Korean for a long time or was a translator, he said no he wasn’t. In the North, if the result was under 190 scores, this meant the examinee hardly had a chance to get a job in Korea,
particularly in manufacturing sector. How excellent he was, just learning Korean for three months but obtained the highest result. He confessed that money could buy anything and solve any problem. Fortunately, job quotas were given almost equally; for instance 2,000 to the North, 1,500 to the Centre, and 1,500 to the South. That’s why I could pass and got a job. If they selected from the top of the entire job applicants in Vietnam, then surely the Korean doors would not open to me (Hieu, migrant worker, personal communication, 28 May 2015).

Hieu, a migrant worker, was lucky as he was a resident of the South where there were few people who wanted to work in Korea. In the South, job applicants had to obtain lower scores compared to those in the North because there was an abundance of job vacancies. In the case that the number of selected people had not reached the job quotas distributed, recruiters would have given a chance to other applicants who obtained lower scores.

The fierce competition among job applicants has led to deep dependence of Northern workers who desired to have a job in Korea on networks which could help them to achieve their goal. Additionally, the lack of the involvement of the Vietnamese state in negotiating and monitoring job quotas for each region resulted in the inappropriateness of job distribution. These contextual specialities have significant implications to the role of migration networks which might be very important to prospective migrants of this locality but less to people from other areas.

4.1.4 The Role of Central and Local Authorities

Alongside commercial brokers and recruiters, staff working for the Department of Labour at the local to central level has also become deeply involved in migration projects. They support each other in reaping benefits from prospective migrants, typically in the form of monetary profits, by engaging in recruitment and the administrative procedures involved in processing paperwork. The data collected for this study reveals that authorities, who were responsible for organising the KLPT, recruiting, and processing paperwork for migrants, actively work with commercial
brokers, thereby benefiting financially by requesting money from prospective migrants. Thus, these authorities, particularly at communal and provincial level, at times take on the role of brokers.

As mentioned above, after Korea stopped distributing jobs to Vietnamese labour export companies, jobs were given to vocational training colleges and poor communes in each province. Jobs in Korea were also given to poor communes whose population was in high need of overseas employment. Authorities of these communes who clearly knew the economic conditions of people residing in their area would offer a job vacancy to those who would pay considerable migration fees. Since only authorities at provincial level could make decisions on recruitment, authorities at communal level would some time work as brokers, although this was not their main job. These communal authorities would directly contact potential migrant workers or indirectly approach these workers through commercial brokers and persuade them to take an opportunity to migrate to Korea. They were often chief informants in the area and suggested prospective migrants to authorities at the DOLISA in their province.

The distribution of job quotas to localities, particularly to those with a high demand for jobs in Korea, placed job seekers in a more disadvantaged situation, since concrete information about job quotas was typically concealed. Migration opportunities are almost closed off to people who lacked connections to influential individuals managing job vacancies. Local authorities only leaked a little information about migration to those who had the financial capacity. This is well illustrated by a following example:

It was the first trial that the government intervened in the process of selection due to high corruption during the recruitment and the processing paperwork. I gave VND 10 million to an authority in my commune for deposit of a slot. They [local authorities] were very kind to me, so I gave them a gift. They did not bait for
bribes… In fact, it was a sensitive matter. Why did they give me an opportunity to migrate to Korea? That was because they knew my family’s condition. I was a poor farmer and all people in this village were very poor. Where could we find VND 10 million? But they knew my brother-in-law was working in Korea. They thought we could prepare migration fees, so they offered me a chance. If I have not had any financial resource as others in this village, I could not have gotten this offer. Now, I sincerely tell you that the gift I gave them was some tens of millions of VND, excluding the deposit I sent them before. They gave me a vacancy, so I should give back something to them. At that time, it was hard to have VND 10 million. We only could earn enough for a living, but no saving. The cheapest price for each migration was about VND 120 million. Who could believe that I could migrate to Korea with only some tens of millions VND (Tuan, returnee, personal communication, 15 May 2015).

The broker, who informed Tuan about recruitment, was actually an authority working for the People’s Committee of his commune. This broker was aware of Tuan’s ability to pay the migration fee; hence, he talked directly to Tuan and pretended the commune wanted to help Tuan’s family to overcome poverty. Previously, brokers would often take even higher amounts of brokerage fees. However, under the pressure of being observed by the MOEL and the MOLISA, local authorities who acted as brokers started asking prospective migrants for lower amounts of money. It was astonishing to me that Tuan and his friends appreciated the role of authorities and happily handed over considerable sums of money, as a so-called ‘thankful gift’. As a result, they were selected in highly competitive circumstances, which explains their desperation and inability to question or act against such practices. Tuan repeated his remarks about being ‘lucky’ to be given a chance to migrate to Korea at an ‘affordable price,’ when compared to the labour export market, which could be four to ten times more expensive. He was assured that working conditions in Korea would allow him to earn better. At the time of being interviewed, Tuan told me about his experience of migrating to Korea. He was satisfied because he could save some money. This was the total opposite to his previous migration experience to Malaysia. During his working period in Malaysia, he was only able to repay his debt and was unable to accumulate any savings despite two years of very hard work.
Migration to Korea would have been out of reach for many migrants if they could not be connected with brokers. Spaan (1994) and Fernandez (2013) argue that the involvement of brokers is crucial in stimulating migration and this was absolutely accurate in the case of Tuan. When the MOEL and the MOLISA started watching recruitment operations carefully, Tuan and many prospective migrants did not have to pay high brokerage fees as others did before. It seemed that with strict observation of these ministries, the recruitment was expected to function in a “cleaner” way, with fewer irregularities. As found in this study, however, local authorities still attempt to take money from poor people in their locality, but lesser amounts. Therefore, in this sense, the migration project has become somewhat cheaper at this stage.

Since recruitment information has been published officially on the website of the MOLISA, Vietnamese workers could apply for a job by themselves. Their application is submitted to the DOLISA in their province, then coded, and posted on a website of the MOLISA. Korean employers can access the website and choose employees categorised into each job sector. This mechanism is considered as remarkable improvement that links potential Vietnamese employees to Korean employers. However, some authorities have asked job applicants for bribes in order to have their application posted on the recruitment website early.

While authorities at communal level could play the role of broker in the recruitment process only, authorities of the provincial DOLISA could have the upper hand in making decisions on the labour selection. In practice, disregarding the EPS efforts to make the recruitment process in Vietnam more transparent, authorities working at the provincial level of DOLISA, who processed paperwork, often troubled prospective migrants for money. Otherwise, many respondents revealed that the DOLISA might delay posting workers’ applications on the recruitment website, even those who already passed the KLPT. Lists of workers recruited by labour export companies, vocational training colleges, or localities are firstly sent to the
DOLISA. Staff of the DOLISA, who are responsible for the labour export management, know the contact details of these workers. While waiting for a formal response to the job application, these officers often call applicants to offer ‘help’ with the promise that their applications would be processed. In fact, Korean employers in most cases have already selected these applicants and they just need to complete the paperwork for their migration. However, since applicants cannot contact the Korean employers directly, most of them may be worried that their application might not reach Korean employers. Thus, they often end up giving money (some thousands USD) to the DOLISA staff for assurance about their application. Because of their position as public servants, provincial authorities try to keep their reputation. They avoid taking money from job applicants in person. Most of authorities work with commercial brokers and appoint these brokers to ask job applicants for money, while a few of them directly called applicants.

Quynh and Linh were afraid that their applications might not be posted on the website and could not reach prospective Korean employers. Thus, they paid USD 1,000 - 2,000 to brokers or authorities for giving them priority. Others, who knew exactly how the recruitment process operates, remained patient and waited for the outcome without asking brokers for assistance and paying them. Until very recently, many workers learned from the experiences of others who did not pay money to the DOLISA staff, and could migrate nevertheless.

Some researchers have observed that due to high competition and the race for jobs in the expanding labour export scheme, sending countries often ‘give a hand’ to the migration industry by neglecting the rights of migrants (Asis, 2005; Hugo, 2005). Lindquist et al. (2012) have noted that some brokers are closely connected with the state and some brokers are state officers. This study also found that although recruitment and the processing of the paperwork are organised by the DOLISA at provincial level, the authorities of the MOLISA (the central head of DOLISAs) also gain financial benefits from labour export programs. The function of the MOLISA is to
observe, evaluate, and control operations related to labour recruitment of its subordinate organisations. However, in fact, the staff of this organisation has taken bribes to turn a blind eye to the corruption of their subordinates in the provinces.

In brief, this research demonstrates that brokers play an important, if not, indispensable role in job search, recruitment and migration of Vietnamese temporary migrant workers. This research also shows that various types of brokers, including professional as well as amateurs, are involved in the “migration project” in order to exploit benefits from prospective migrants. Among brokers, many who were well connected with influential people in labour recruiting companies or agencies and knew people who wanted to work overseas have worked as commercialised brokers. Having experiences of migration to and working in Korea and broad migration networks, some returnees also became commercialised brokers since they recognised the great benefit that brokers could earn. These returnee-brokers could easily approach their villagers, built trust in their relationship with these people and bridged them with recruiters. Besides commercialised brokers whose job is to deal with clients (prospective migrants) and recruiters (labour export companies, leaders of Department of Labour, leaders of vocational training colleges, and local authorities), other people such as officials of local department of labour, teachers in vocational training colleges and subordinates of local authorities, at times also played a role as brokers who attempted to find potential clients, set up prices for the recruitment and migration package. However, different with commercialised brokers, these brokers had their full-time job as teachers in public colleges or officials in governmental organisations and involved in brokerage networks only when they found a chance of making money by introducing prospective migrants to those who had authorities to give applicants a job. The existence of various kinds of brokers and their importance role to migration networks are consequences of policy changes, contextual speciality, and labour export management of the Vietnamese state.
Korean policies on Vietnamese labour selection have amended many times according to the negative effects on job applicants happening during recruitment process and the high number of Vietnamese undocumented workers staying in Korea. In each period of time when a new policy was implemented, brokerage networks might include commerciaalised brokers, temporary (or part-time) brokers under the position of teachers, recruiters, governmental officials or local authorities. The contextual differences also caused the different degree of the impact of brokerage networks on the probability of recruitment. While Ha Tinh people enjoyed more sources from their origin community to help them migrate to Korea, in Nghe An there was a lack of migration networks which could guide and facilitate their migration, particularly when Korea suspended program for Vietnamese labour import. The imbalance in job quotas distributed to three regions of Vietnam and the real need of local people led to ‘job buying’ in the North and ‘job application’ in the South. Northern workers paid a large sum of money to brokers in order to approach a job while Southern people hardly spent any money for being recruited. The complexity of brokerage networks for migration in Vietnam has shown the lack of ability of the Vietnamese state in governing migration industry. Data collected from this research even demonstrated the fact that different level of governmental officials turned a blind eye to the illegal activities of migration industry because they received big bribes from brokers.

4.2 Arrangement of Migration Fees

To reduce the number of undocumented workers in Korea, the Vietnamese government introduced a new policy in 2013 (valid up to the present) requesting each prospective migrant to deposit VND 100 million into a so-called Fund for Anti-evasion\(^5\). The deposit will be returned to

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\(^5\) Fund for Anti-Evasion: According to a designation number 1465/QĐ-TTg on 21/8/2013 of the Vietnamese Prime Minister regarding the deposit for workers sent to Korea through EPS, the amount is VND 100 million and is deposited in the Social Policy Bank in their locality before migrating to Korea. The duration of this deposit is 5
workers if they complete their contract and return to Vietnam before their visa expires. Regardless of whom (commercial brokers, recruiters, or authorities) or what (Fund for Anti-evasion) prospective migrants pay, the burden of having to have such sums ready rests on them and they collect the money from various sources.

Along with migration to Korea through the EPS, fees for migration through alternative channels often have the same or even higher costs compared to fees to obtain a visa for low-skilled workers because of the involvement of many layers of brokers and authorities. Since migration fees are costly for the majority of prospective migrants, they firstly seek help from their family, then other sources. Thus, prospective migrants have depended much on the support emanating from their social relations, including through ‘bonding ties’ such as family, relatives, neighbours, and/or ‘bridging ties’ such as usurers and different kinds of funds.

This section aims to discuss the differentiation among different type of ties in providing financial support to prospective migrants. In addition, this section attempts to show the differences in the ability of people to approach their networks with a view to borrowing money and how social capital for migration is generated, accessed, and used between the two field sites under investigation in this thesis.

years and 4 months. If workers complete their contract and return to Vietnam on time (or if they die, go missing, return to their home country due to natural disaster, sickness, accidents, or other force majeure reasons), the deposit (principal and interest) will be given back to workers after abstracting additional costs (if any). If workers return to their home country because of breaching the contract before finishing their contract, the deposit (principal and interest) will be used to compensate loss generated by workers (if any). The rest will be paid back to workers. If workers escape from the workplace of contract or do not return to their home country on time, overstay, and illegally work in Korea, the deposit will be sent to the Fund for Workforce Solutions of their province.
4.2.1 Bonding Ties

Migration is not a decision made solely by individual migrant workers but it is a livelihood strategy for their entire family. ‘Earning more’ and ‘saving more’ are the main motivations of individuals and households for investing all the resources they can mobilise to make the cross-border movement happen. This study argues that bonding ties, including family members, close neighbours, and close relatives play an essential role in providing financial support for prospective migrants. Although migration fees are often extremely high, many families attempt to provide full support for their family member(s) to obtain a job in Korea. The family serves as an influential factor for the likelihood of migration happening in the first place.

Unlike existing studies on this matter, the results of this study do not support the argument that men receive more investment for their migration from their family than women. Indeed, the family is willing to gather all available resources for any member who can migrate, regardless of gender. Generally, men are expected to be breadwinners; hence, they have more opportunities to migrate (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994a) because they often receive financial support from their family. The ideology of the family hierarchy is influenced by Confucianism, which positions men above women in the family (Dannecker, 2007; Lachenmann & Dannecker, 2002); in return, men are expected to play the role of main breadwinner. Interestingly, this study shows no gender discrimination in the investment into migration to Korea among family members. The migration to Korea depends much more on the possibility of receiving a visa rather than any decision on whether investment should be prioritised for male over female member(s) in the family. This motivated women to find a work overseas and in many cases, the role of main “money-makers” for the family have shifted to women.

In the context of Vietnam, Luong (1989) asserted that Vietnamese women historically played an
important role in generating an income for their households through commerce, handicraft, production and agriculture. However, the Vietnamese society was strongly male-dominated in terms of public life and the kinship, resulting in a clear gender hierarchy as concerns the household and employment system. Traditionally, domestic and childcare are assigned for women while men are expected to be money maker to feed the whole family. Vietnam is strongly influenced by the Confucian tradition which featured social hierarchy and patriarchal values; this, however, was challenged by the emergence of women’s movement initiating since the early of the 20th century and the French education system (Scott & Truong, 2007). Women’s rights were associated with national and class matters (Dang, 1997). Endres et al. (2012) notice that Vietnam was one of the country that early signed and approved the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on 29 July 1980. The state’s policy on non-discrimination and civil laws are clearly presented gender equality. Scott and Truong (2007) and Luong (2003) reinforce the recognition of the enhancement of Vietnamese women’s position in decision making in the family, political leadership and work force participation. The General Statistics Office reported that in 2010 the rate of women participating in domestic labour force was 48.6%, compared to 51.4% of male. This partly shows the reason why many families decided to invest a big sum of money in the migration of either male or female members. The feminization of migration in Vietnam is a clear example breaking the traditional norm and now women adopt the role of providers for themselves and their families.

Data from this study indicate that, particularly when recruitment information is not publicised widely, prospective migrants often ask their family to assist them with migration fees. If their families do not have enough money to invest into the migration, they often help prospective migrants to borrow money from various sources. Most families do not have enough money to pay all of the migration fees, except for those with some savings from their previous migration.
Fifteen respondents said that their father or siblings who were working or had worked overseas contributed the majority of their migration fees; indeed, migrants’ savings are often spent on sponsoring other family members’ migration. This result is similar to the finding of Carling (2014) that remittances are spent on migration of other family members to share the burden of making money for the family. Additionally, my respondents explained that migrants have a significant responsibility to support other members in the family to acquire employment overseas. They believe this is a wise strategy because if a migrant is working in Korea and his/her other family members can migrate to Korea too, he/she can help these family members obtain a good job and integrate in a new work environment quickly. Surprisingly, when being asked whether respondents are concerned about how remittances are used, many of them replied that they trust the recipients’ ability to manage remittances, and never ask how this money is spent. Some respondents happily said their obligation is to make money and send remittances home. The recipient (often the mother) can then use this money for the migration of another family member.

This study found a few cases where a family could gather enough money for the migration, and in fact was making money from the migration of another family member. Most prospective migrants, however, have to mobilise money from external sources for their migration. To escape the persistent poverty, many families have taken risks by borrowing considerable sums, encouraged by the prospects of a family member being able to work and earn abroad. With a deep breath of relief, the mother of a migrant worker recounted how she arranged a migration fee and motivated her son to migrate:

When I prepared migration fees for my son, all people in my family and my village doubted about the success of migration but I didn’t care. I borrowed money from some siblings and relatives who had savings. My husband was coward. He said that why we pushed all to the corner without an exit. He was afraid that my son
couldn’t migrate and we would live in a big debt because we invested a lot of money for this migration. I encouraged my son that if something went wrong, I would sell our land to pay the debt. No guts, no glory (Huong, family member, personal communication, 05 March 2013).

This mother put significant effort into her son’s migration, giving him encouragement, accompanying him through the recruitment process, and arranging the migration fee. In this way, she symbolises the typical parent of prospective migrant, who would do anything to change the economic conditions of the family by obtaining a job overseas for his/her children.

There is only one case among the sample of one family being able to afford the entire migration fee for the son at once, without any loan from relatives or outsiders. The father was the owner of a small transport business and could fund his son with the hope that he would learn new technologies and working skills and become independent after having some work experience in Korea. Although the father did not expect his son to send money home, the son earned a sufficient sum during his four-year and ten-month contract in order to repay his father and save some money. When I interviewed the father, the son had re-migrated to Korea some months prior for a new contract, and was working as a supervisor in the same manufacturing company. The father said that his son seemed more mature, and expected to earn more money in the second migration.

Many families do not have enough financial capital to invest in migration, so they have to borrow money from other sources in their networks, mostly from close ties such as extended family members and close neighbours. The majority of families preferred to take out loans from these interpersonal relationships instead of institutional networks such as banks or funds because they did not have to provide loan collaterals. Additionally, interests from these institutions were much higher than that from close ties. This was explained by a mother of a migrant worker in a
following example:

My daughter moved to Korea by a fake marriage which cost almost USD 15,000 while my son migrated there via the EPS and paid about USD 6,500. I borrowed money from my siblings, relatives, and neighbours. For USD 100 [about VND 2 million], neighbours took VND 10,000 interest, relatives might take VND 5,000 - 6,000 interest. People here support each other so that many could migrate overseas. In case someone cannot borrow money from relatives or neighbours, he can mortgage his house to get some money from the People’s Credit Fund easily. But people prefer to ask their relatives or neighbours for financial help because they don’t have to give their house documents to lenders, just writing down the content of loan on a paper and sign while People’s Credit Fund requires to keep house documents and its interest is higher (Ha, family member, personal communication, 27 April 2015).

I have noticed that Cuong Gian people received significant financial support from not only their family members, but also from their neighbours, while no one in Nghe An province borrowed money from their neighbours. High trust is shared among close neighbours in Cuong Gian commune, when they lend money to fellow villagers. Ha, a family member of a migrant, commented on this cultural behaviour among people in her area that if a migrant worker fails to make money in their previous migration and has a big debt, neighbours would still lend him/her money, thus giving him/her a chance to earn again. In the high competition of migration to Korea, Cuong Gian people still support each other, especially young people, to find a way to move out. People found it hard to find a job in this area, where half of the population practiced fishing, while the other half engaged in cultivation. Being unable to make enough money for a living, some young people lapsed into mischief. Therefore, people in the village kept helping even those whose migration was not successful (mostly due to being deported shortly after landing in Korea) and could not pay back debts.
4.2.2 Bridging Ties

Besides seeking financial capital from close ties, prospective migrant workers and their family also find money resources for migration from weak ties, mostly local banks, funds established by/for local people or usurers. I argue that weak ties are an alternative source for borrowing money when prospective migrants cannot collect enough migration fees from their bonding ties. I found some differentiation in the way people in the two field sites approach financial sources. People in Cuong Gian commune of Ha Tinh province mostly loan money from the People’s Credit Fund, founded by residents of this locality and whose major stakeholders are former migrants, while people in other communes of Nghe An province ask for support from banks and the Poverty Reduction Fund established by the government. Additionally, there are no usurers in Cuong Gian commune because usury is strongly condemned by local people; however, some usurers operate in communes of Nghe An province.

Prospect migrant workers in the Cuong Gian commune of Ha Tinh province can easily approach the local People’s Credit Fund, which was established for local people to borrow money, particularly those who desire to migrate overseas for employment. An authority of this commune said that most of the capital of this fund was mobilised by former migrants. Cuong Gian people were pioneers among Vietnamese migrants who moved out of the country to earn money. Pioneer migrants were sailors who worked on Korean fishing boats and sent remittances for investment into migration of their siblings or their next generation. Gradually, these migrants could accumulate some savings and send them to the People’s Credit Fund in order to earn interests and support other people in the commune to find a job overseas. A study of Gallego and Mendola in Mozambique (2013), which tested the impact of migration on household participation in social networks in the village economies of the origin community, showed that stable income through remittances increased household commitment and engagement in
community-based social networks. Gallego and Mendola’s study and this study provide new insights into how labour migration affects the structure of village economies at the origin, not solely the households of migrants. People in Cuong Gian commune have been motivated to find jobs overseas, particularly in Korea, Japan, and Taiwan, and the People’s Credit Fund is effective in lending them money for migration.

The People’s Credit Fund was considered as a more opened mechanism, providing people with higher loans and lower interest rates compared to banks. Before this Fund, local people had to loan money from banks whose procedures were complicated and whose loans were limited, not enough to cover migration fees. Thank to this fund, people in Cuong Gian commune can mobilise a large amount of money for migration. The lending is described by a father of migrant workers as follows:

Two of my sons migrated to Korea at the same time, costing VND 120 million. Over a half of the debt was from my relatives and I didn’t have to pay interest. My sister’s son was working in Korea, so she had some money and lent me. In this village, those people who have money would lend to people who don’t have any. I also borrowed VND 50 million from the People's Credit Fund in my commune by mortgaging my house paper. The administrative procedure was simple. If we cannot borrow money from our relatives, we can take a loan from the People’s Credit Fund easily (Hoang, returnee, personal communication, 26 April 2015).

Activities of credit associations have been documented as useful resources which provide support for people who are in need of economic capital. For example, Thieme (2006) describes how credit associations among Nepalese migrants, kin, and close friends are run and help participants to gain access to loans and save money as well as benefit from a certain social security in Delhi. The data gathered for my study show that joining social networks for the purpose of financing migration brings benefits to former migrants as investors, and to prospective migrants as borrowers. In this case, economic capital for migration can be obtained
through social capital.

Conversely, in any commune of Nghe An province, there was no such effective credit model for prospective migrants. There are also People’s Credit Funds in Nghe An province; however, these Funds mostly provide financial aid to small businesses in the area and the loaning requires valuable collaterals. Therefore, prospective migrants hailing from poor families find it difficult to access this financial source. People tend to loan money from banks for their migration fees. A decade ago, the bank system was not as developed as it is at present. People in Nghe An province could loan only small sums of money from banks and other sources such as the local Poverty Reduction Fund. Therefore, prospective migrants and their family would borrow house ownership documents from relatives, as each document could allow them to borrow a small amount of money. A migrant worker explained the way his family borrowed money:

At that time [in 2003], VND 15,000 equalled USD 1. Fortunately, my parents were respectable people. That was why they could loan money for me. They borrowed 6 house papers from their brothers and sisters living in my village for the mortgage. If I migrated to Korea through EPS, the total cost is less than USD 1,200. But how to be selected if I paid that sum of money. I paid USD 4,000. One house paper mortgaged only VND 10 million. I had to borrow more money from a bank as well as from the Poverty Reduction Fund (Tuan, migrant worker, personal communication, 13 June 2015).

There is a Poverty Reduction Fund of each commune in Nghe An province. However, this fund gives priority loans to poor households in the commune. The fund is not particularly helpful for migration. The loan for each household is small and often not enough. Therefore, if a prospective migrant cannot find any financial source to borrow from his/her bonding networks, he/she has to borrow money from the bank with complicated procedures, and/or local usurers with extremely high rates of interests:
I took a loan from a bank but at that time [in 2000] one house paper could loan maximum only VND 3.5 million while my migration fee was VND 120 million. I asked my sister, my brother, uncle, and aunt to lend me money, but it was still not enough. Thus, I sought financial support from a bank. Staff of the bank visited my home to survey our properties and find whether we had house or cow. What we had was not enough to borrow money for the entire migration fee. Hence, I had to borrow money from local usurers with interest 2% a month, means that 2 million interest a month for VND 100 million loan (Thin, returnee, personal communication, 09 May 2015).

Roschelle (1997) and Stack (1974) provide evidence of the marginalised and poor relying on networks when they lacked access to the services often provided by formal institutions. This study presents similar results. Disadvantaged people are confronted with numerous difficulties in accessing economic capital provided by formal institution, for example banks and the Poverty Reduction Fund. Recently, the bank system has improved; however, it is very difficult for the poor to access this economic capital because of the complexity of loan procedures and because loan collaterals are not always available in poor households. In the worst cases, if prospective migrants and their family cannot mobilise enough economic capital from their networks for the migration, some of them have to borrow money from usurers who can operate their business in Nghe An province. Usurers do not operate in a supportive community such as Cuong Gian, because their work is considered as sinful and strongly condemned by the whole community.

In this section, I have provided empirical data to show how social networks provide financial support to sponsor the migration of prospective migrants. Not only bonding ties such as the family and the extended family, but also bridging ties such as financial institutions and individual usurers can support prospective migrants financially. Massey et al. (1987, pp. 170-171) gave an example of poor Mexican peasants who “may be poor in financial resources, but were wealthy in social capital,” which they could readily convert into jobs and earnings in the United States. Similarly, this study shows that although many people from Cuong Gian might be
poor, living in a supportive community and their ability to easily access social capital gives them the opportunity to mobilise economic capital for their migration. I agree with Fukuyama’s (1995c) argument that people in low-trust societies mostly rely on capital generated by the family and hardly find support without charge from others beyond their family. This assessment has proven entirely correct in the case of Nghe An province. I supplement his argument by the empirical data from some communities which have emerged as strongly bound by solidarity and norms of reciprocity, like Cuong Gian commune. There, people who have economic capital at their disposal help poorer neighbours or fellow villagers to make money for the economic improvement of each household, and for the entire community. Meanwhile, most of the people in other communities, which display a low sense of mutual assistance, found it difficult to access helpful resources to achieve their goals.

4.3 Concluding Remarks

This chapter’s concern is with migration networks in the pre-departure phase, which assist prospective migrants to deal with issues related to accessing information about recruitment, passing the KLPT, obtain jobs, processing the paperwork for their migration, and collecting migration fees. The literature on international labour migration has highlighted the important roles of various kinds of ties, particularly bridging ties such as college mates and brokers, in helping job seekers to find a job. The findings of my study demonstrate that bonding ties have almost no usefulness in assisting prospective migrant workers to obtain jobs. Instead, brokers (categorised as bridging ties) are crucial in connecting migrants with recruiters and authorities who have the power to influence the competitive recruitment process in the context of the highly corrupted recruitment mechanism of temporary migration to Korea. While existing studies often describe job brokers as commercial ones, the category of ‘broker’ in this study has become diversified since in some cases, teachers (i.e. of vocational training colleges), Department of
Labour officials, or local authorities at times also play the role of brokers. These influential social ties, named “linking social capital” by Bourdieu (1986), link underprivileged persons and decision-makers in the recruitment process. Fukuyama (1995c) emphasises that the closeness of ties is a decisive factor in the creation of trust. I support this argument and underline the high social position of people, which also generates high trust. Although ‘teacher brokers’ or ‘authority brokers’ are strangers to job seekers, their highly regarded position helps them to receive more trust from these job seekers.

The negative side of social networks has on the whole been under-researched in the scholarship on international labour migration. Therefore, Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) suggested that more attention should be paid to obstacles that social networks generate. Klvaňová (2010) is right when he argues that social networks in migration both facilitate and constrain the mobility. Findings of this study give more examples to illustrate this assertion. On one hand, people involved in training and recruiting have helped potential migrants to move to Korea. On the other hand, they created many constraints to extract money from these poor prospective migrants. I agree with Kawachi et al. (1997, p. 1345) that both positive and negative social capital can be brought about by the same network.

As regards financing for migration, Christinawati et al. (2013) and Hugo (1995) prove that the family can provide funds. Results of this study show that family and extended family are primary networks which motivate prospective migrants to seek a job overseas, invest their savings in the migration of other family members, and arrange finance for migration. Beyond the family, financial capital can also be sought from formal financial institutions and informal networks of usurers.

My study again confirms Putnam’s argument that the more social capital people can access and
gain, the higher chance for them to achieve their goals and vice versa. Supportive communities such as Cuong Gian commune, where local people can easily obtain financial as well as social capital, has given more opportunities for people to migrate. In contrast, the limited financial and social network resources of people in other communes of Nghe An province have resulted in lower chances for people in this area to migrate for work.

This chapter also argues against the assertion that networks are static. Findings of this study illustrate the changing nature of networks according to the changing in policies of both Korea and Vietnam on temporary labour migration. Individuals in networks for assisting labour migration between Korea and Vietnam form and join new networks, which in turn can support prospective migrants to move to Korea through other alternative channels.
Chapter 5

Networks for “Making Money” and Management of Remittances while Working Abroad

The driving force behind the migration to Korea of Vietnamese is to earn money in order to improve their family’s economic condition. The results of this study show that, in the pre-migration stage, not only prospective migrants and their family participate in the “money making” project but brokers, recruiters, and authorities are also deeply implicated in this project by seeking benefits. Families are very helpful to prospective migrants by providing the funds for paying the necessary migration fees whilst brokers play an influential role in the outcomes of recruitment and the processing of paperwork for migration. The opportunity for engaging in migration is the initial step towards completing the “migration project” successfully. The decisive outcomes of migration, however, depend much on the amount of remittances sent home, which constitutes the primary achievement of migrants from their migration. This chapter continues the discussion about roles of social networks in dealing with problems related to finding paid work, remittance transfer, and management of remittances while Vietnamese migrants are working in Korea.

The chapter argues that Vietnamese migrants, who are ranked lowest in terms of economic and social conditions in host societies such as Korea Lim (2002, 2003), make the best use of the networks available to them in order to achieve their goal, not only in their pre-departure phase but also during their overseas stint. Although Vietnamese migrants move to Korea through various channels, as discussed in Chapter 4, they all become low-skilled workers in low-wage jobs. Due to the regulations imposed on different types of visa, Vietnamese migrants rely heavily
on various networks to maintain their legal status and secure their jobs. Low-skilled workers recruited through the EPS enjoy full and free job allocation from this system, while their counterparts holding visas for high-skilled workers, spouses of Koreans, overseas students, and so on have to look for a new job on their own or with the assistance of job brokers or close friends. The differentiation in using networks results from not only the various visa types but also visa status. Documented workers can ask for support in searching for jobs and dealing with problems related to those jobs from formal networks established by Koreans or migrants, while undocumented workers find hardly any assistance from these networks. They only can look for help from informal networks, mostly their friends, relatives, co-villagers, or brokers.

In addition, this chapter argues that the differences in the use of networks by migrant workers are also affected by gender. Most of migrant workers who migrated to Korea through EPS are male. The majority of male migrant workers among my informants worked in the construction or manufacturing sector; only a few found work in the agriculture and fishing sectors, and soon after arrival moved to manufacturing. Meanwhile, their female counterparts mostly performed agricultural work. Due to the geographically isolated nature of their work places, those who work in farming seemed to have fewer opportunities to access social capital than those living in areas of high migrant population density. Moreover, because of the limited positions available to women in the Korean labour market, many female migrant workers in my study moved to Korea via marriage migration. These divergent migration flows result in dissimilar networks used by migrants. EPS workers rely on social networks set up through the formal labour export system whilst workers who intend to migrate through a sham marriage have informal networks at their disposal to facilitate their migration. Thus, the channels of migration to Korea are gendered which has led to the formation of different network serving each types of migration channel.

Segregation of the labour market of receiving countries is segmented by gender, age, national or
ethnic origin and marital status (Brah, 1994; Rajman & Semyonov, 1997; Schrover et al., 2007). The Korean labour market for Vietnamese workers is particularly segmented by gender in which jobs in fishing and construction are assigned for male migrants while female migrants can have limited access to jobs in manufacturing and agriculture. The segregation of Korea labour market also one of factors resulting in the gendering in networks for job obtainment. Gender differences also occur in the receiving and managing remittances. Mothers, elder sisters, wives are more trustable recipients rather than other male members in migrants’ families. Migrants in this study mostly rely on matured women in their families to manage remittances and often contact with these female members to discuss on how remittances should be spent.

The chapter contributes to our understanding of social networks by arguing against the depiction of networks as static, as it has emerged in existing studies. Such studies rely on static conceptualisations of the ways networks develop by emphasising only their existence, operation, and persistence whilst neglecting their dynamic nature (Boyd, 1989; Grieco, 1987; Hagan, 1998; Massey, 1988). In contrast, my study focuses on the changeability of networks in terms of their temporality and spatiality. Support networks for newly arrived migrant workers may differ from networks they form or join after becoming more familiar with the host society. Support systems available to documented workers are also different to those available to them when they slip into undocumented status. Such transformations are indications of the temporal dimension on which social networks are based. In addition, after crossing international borders, brokerage networks established in Vietnam no longer play an influential role during migrants’ overseas stay. Families, which help migrants to pay the upfront migration fees, change their role to being remittance recipients and assistants to migrants in the management of the money transferred.
5.1 Networks in the Search of Jobs

The scholarship on international labour migration has paid attention to the vital role of networks in the search for and acquisition of jobs. The common results that emerge repeatedly in migration studies about social networks of migrants during their overseas life are the observations that social networks have a positive impact on the job search (Gans, 1974; Granovetter, 1995; Marin, 2013; Marsden & Gorman, 2001; Mouw, 2003; Trimble & Kmec, 2011; Wegener, 1991; Yakubovich & Lup, 2006) and better wages (Aguilera, 2005; Aguilera & Massey, 2003; Greenwell et al., 1997; Yeffal & Zhang, 2012). Temporary labour migration between Vietnam and Korea requires migrants to be recruited before migration, and to work for the specific employer with whom they sign a contract. However, most of them change their workplace several times during their stay in Korea. Therefore, this section focuses on the variety of networks assisting Vietnamese migrants in staying in the first contracted job as well as searching and obtaining new jobs.

I argue that due to their different legal status, Vietnamese documented and undocumented migrant workers engage in different networks for finding and keeping jobs. In addition, I argue that not all social networks are supportive or beneficial as the existing literature on networks makes it out to be. Some networks are willing to give free or reciprocal support to migrants (families, relatives and close friends), while some may exploit them (various types of brokers and in some cases ethnic networks). This study shows that co-ethnic networks do not necessarily have positive outcomes for migrant workers. This type of network is supportive when the network is small in scale and close in tie. The larger the scale of co-ethnic networks, the less support its members provide to each other. Within co-ethnic migrant networks, ethnic solidarity can in fact exist alongside mistrust, competition, and exploitation.
5.1.1 Networks for Documented Migrant Workers

- Staying in the First Contracted Job

Far different from chain migration, in which pioneer migrants have already established primary resources for newly arrived migrants in the host country (Mahler, 1995; Somerville, 2011), Vietnamese migrants to Korea through the EPS since 2004 do not usually have any close connections in Korea. Having limited social contacts there, co-ethnic fellow workers become reliable networks for new migrants. The scholarship on migration documents ethnic solidarity that helps migrants, especially newly arrived ones, to overcome difficulties they encounter whilst living in the host country. Indeed, Ryan et al. (2008) and Ryan (2007) have observed that newly arrived migrants, particularly those with limited social, economic and cultural resources, may find themselves dependent upon ethnic-specific sources of support. Ethnic solidarity, as Padilla (2006, p. 11) observed, has been “a source of collective identity and a form of reaction against outside threats”. Ethnic solidarity or bounded solidarity of immigrants is based on the obligation of migrants to help newcomers from the same origin communities or countries (Portes, 1998; Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). This study also shows how Vietnamese new migrant workers firstly endeavour to make relationships with co-ethnic people to obtain help. Fortunately, due to the great numbers of Vietnamese migrants who have moved to Korea annually since 1992, it is easy to find Vietnamese workers in many Korean companies. The majority of respondents in this study said that they received help from their co-ethnic fellow workers who have lived in Korea for a longer time and are experienced in finding and doing work. These migrants are eager to help newcomers navigating the job market, settling into a specific employment, and become skilled at their job.

Given that labour migration between Vietnam and Korea is of a temporary nature, staying in a
job, which was obtained in the pre-departure stage, is necessary as this helps migrants to maintain their legal status. However, among my informants, there were a few cases of experienced migrant workers who were unwilling to assist newly arrived compatriots to become familiar with their jobs. At the workplace, migrant workers who have arrived earlier and are already accustomed to life in Korea are often assigned to guide co-ethnic newcomers. Some may compassionately instruct new workers on how to perform the work initially, but as time passes they may begin to worry about their juniors outdoing them at work. Some newcomers experience bitter surprises when asking for support from their co-ethnic fellow workers, because they demand some ‘return’ for their guidance. The expectation that newly arrived workers might receive a lot of help from their co-ethnic workers can, thus, turn out to be an illusion. Because of the debts to finance the initial migration, newly arrived workers are pressured to perform well in order to remain in the job, and in doing so they may outperform co-ethnic fellow workers. Furthermore, in the early stage of their life in Korea, most newly arrived workers cannot communicate in Korean well; therefore, they cannot ask native co-workers to instruct them. The lack of necessary social networks makes it difficult for these migrants to integrate into the new work environment. Furthermore, in some of the worst cases, newly arrived migrants are confronted with cheating and exploitation by their co-ethnic fellow workers. A migrant worker narrated a bitter story with his co-ethnic worker after having just arrived in Korea:

I cannot forget how my co-ethnic fellow worker treated me when I had just arrived in Korea. Kim Hee [the first work place] was very isolated. There were only three Vietnamese workers in my company: that man [the senior fellow worker], another Vietnamese fellow worker who was also a newcomer like me, and myself. We three lived together in a flat provided by the company. I spent money carefully because I had a big debt. You know, Koreans didn’t abuse and oppress me but this Vietnamese worker did. The senior bullied newcomers although he was one year younger than me. My Korean boss appointed this man to instruct us to operate the machines and behave at the workplace. He guided us sometimes but he did so reluctantly. We tried to make him happy by doing housework for him. He always ate all tasty things and left the less delicious ones to us. Monthly, we gave him
money to buy food for us. He often spent this money quickly and we mostly had to eat instant noodle and eggs during the last ten days of every month. I was living in hell... (Dat, migrant worker, personal communication, 11 June 2015).

Mahler (1995)’s study about social networks of Mexican migrants in America also shows that newly arrived migrants had to pay back the help they received from senior migrants in the form of material goods. Similarly, the ‘bitter surprise’ about such behaviours on the part of the co-ethnic seniors, which Dat faced, made him realise that assistance from earlier arrived migrants should be exchanged for ‘something’. This revelation constitutes a major source of culture shock for new migrants. Working in a company where there was only one co-ethnic experienced worker, Dat and his fellow newly arrived migrant workers had to rely on ‘calculated assistance’ from his co-ethnic former migrant. Although Dat was discontent with this man, he had no choice other than ‘keeping his mouth shut’ and doing what his senior expected. In this case, the co-ethnic community is not truly helpful to migrants, as Portes (1998) also pointed out. They want to get benefits by exploiting the difficulties that newly arrived migrants face in the early stages of their stay in the host country.

- *Searching for and Obtaining a New Job*

Accessing job information in order to quickly obtain a well-paid job with good conditions in the host country is critical for Vietnamese migrant workers since their migration is a strategy for securing livelihoods, albeit on a temporary basis. The literature on job search distinguishes between formal (impersonal) and informal (personal) means of such search (Montgomery, 1992). As regards formal methods, workers search for jobs from newspaper advertisements, ‘help wanted’ signs, or direct application to a company (Granovetter, 1995; Lin, 1999b; Mouw, 2003). Meanwhile, those who use informal means can find jobs through their social network ties (Fernandez & Weinberg, 1997; Granovetter, 1995; Granovetter, 1973; Petersen et al., 2000).
Giulietti et al. (2013) argue that the utilisation of personal contacts has the advantage of being relatively less costly and may provide more reliable information concerning jobs, compared to impersonal methods. Those who can access useful information have advantages in finding employment, while those who cannot may miss out on job opportunities that are only available through such channels (Uzzi, 1999). Granovetter (1995, pp. 14-15) argues that “the more satisfied individuals are in their jobs, the more likely they are to have found them through contacts.” This implies the significance of social ties in job acquisition and level of job satisfaction. Social networks are indeed facilitators for the economic integration of migrants through the provision of social support and useful contacts during the job search process (Aguilera & Massey, 2003; Alarcon, 1999; Carrington et al., 1996; Yakubovich, 2005).

During the job seeking process, social networks may assist members to navigate the labour market and overcome structural barriers (Bian, 1997; Granovetter, 1995); to improve the effectiveness of the job search process; and to provide crucial information about desirable jobs (Aguilera & Massey, 2003; Raijman & Tienda, 2000; van Meeteren, 2012) and those to avoid (Aguilera, 1999; Espinosa & Massey, 1997). The literature on job search through personal (informal) methods shows the predominance of distant ties in helping workers compared to bonding ties. Wegener (1991) argues for the need to consider the social stratification of different groups of workers in their utilisation of strong and weak ties. His study provides confirmatory evidence that people in low-end jobs prefer to use close ties, while people in high-end jobs find it was effective to use bridging ties to advance their careers. Based on the evidence generated by this study, the findings point to the opposite, i.e. the importance of bridging ties (such as staff working for the MOEL and brokers) for job seeking and job acquisition not only during the pre-departure but also overseas stint, particularly for migrant workers who obtain E-9 (temporary low-skilled) and E-7 (temporary high-skilled) visas. Close ties such as close friends or relatives
living in Korea are less effective in providing abundant job information because these people do not have many connections to different social milieus as people with distant weak ties do.

- Workers Holding an E-9 Visa

Compared to workers moving to Korea through other channels, workers recruited through the EPS are entitled to receive support from the system when wanting to change jobs. Low-skilled migrant workers are granted an E-9 visa for working in a contract company in Korea for the initial duration of three years. Such visa can be extended by another 22 months. This study found only two of 80 Vietnamese workers (who worked or were working at the time of being interviewed) spent the entire time of their first visa to work for one and the same company without changing employer. Most of the workers surveyed changed their job due to the bankruptcy of the company they were contracted with, or hardships they encountered while working in their first employment. When these workers wish to shift to another job, they can seek support from the EPS in order to be connected to a new employer. The MOEL has opened branch offices in almost all districts in Korea to support low-skilled EPS workers to find new jobs. Workers looking for new jobs through the MOEL are provided with recruitment information and contact details of companies located in their area. The job seekers can directly contact these companies. The timeframe for obtaining a new job is restricted to three months. During the first three years of their visa, a migrant worker is permitted to change jobs up to three times. During the period of the visa extension, they can shift two more times to other jobs. In addition to facilitating job introductions, these offices also provide free consultations on labour laws and assist migrant workers to negotiate with their Korean employers about wages, payment delays, and insurance. This helps migrant workers to remain in employment. Hence, the MOEL plays a key role in the provision and maintenance of jobs for EPS low-skilled migrant workers.
Although migrant workers holding an E-9 visa may find good jobs through other social ties such as friends, they can only sign a new contract with permission by the MOEL. A few migrant workers I spoke to experienced difficulties in finding a suitable job, while most of my respondents in this study said that they were happy with the support they were given by the MOEL. Thus, EPS workers hardly try to look for jobs through other sources, such as their friends or relatives. Therefore, it can be concluded that formal networks, more specifically the MOEL, play a significant role in helping E-9 visa holders to solve job-related problems.

Data from this study indicate that in the pre-migration stage a high proportion of Vietnamese male workers are hired to work in manufacturing, construction, and fishing, while female workers often acquire a job in the agricultural sector. Many male job applicants apply for work in the manufacturing sector, where workers are entitled to higher wages, better social welfare, and better working conditions, and where they can build relations with co-ethnic fellow workers more easily. However, there is significant competition for such jobs in the manufacturing sector. Those who are not confident to deal with such competitiveness have to register for employment in the construction and fishing sectors. Their female counterparts tend to apply for a job related to agriculture merely to enter Korea legally.

The segregation of gender-specific jobs for male and female migrant workers has important implications for the access social networks created for particular job sectors and established in particular areas. For example, the EPS regulations only allow migrant workers to change their job within the sector they registered to work in. My study documents eleven cases of migrants who changed from agriculture to the manufacturing sector and thus became undocumented. Among the reasons cited for doing so were the “longer working hours and fewer days off but without wages paid for overtime working”, “[being] sick because of feeding and being in contact with cows daily”, “staying in a container which was extremely cold in the winter and hot in the
“summer”, and “living in an isolated rural area with Korean employer’s family only”. Being undocumented, they are now separated from the supportive networks provided by the EPS whose offices are mostly concentrated in urban areas. This underlying problem was that most migrant workers working in agricultural sectors were women. The study documents eight of those 10 cases as involving female migrant workers. The living and working conditions are indeed very harsh for women. Networks in the rural areas, where female migrants worked on their first contract, from which might ask for support were not established as dense as that in cities. Most helpful connections were virtual such as friends living in other places in Korea. Actual networks which they could directly approach were limited. Therefore, these women often escaped from their contract job after a short time working in the fields. The high competition in recruitment together with the restrictions set out by the EPS regarding the changing of jobs was an unexpected circumstance for those female migrant workers.

- Workers Holding an E-7 Visa

While low-skilled workers holding E-9 visas, who are hired through the EPS, can access rich information about jobs provided by the MOEL, their counterparts who migrated to Korea based on the E-7 visa for high-skilled workers have to find a job on their own or pay co-ethnic brokers who have strong connections with the Korean labour market in order to be introduced to jobs. Some researchers argue that networks of fellow colleagues and organisations (Salaff et al., 1999), classmates (Avenarius, 2002; Wong & Salaff, 1998), or both classmates and business associations (Harvey, 2008) are essential sources of job information for high-skilled migrants workers. The results of this study, however, illustrate a contradictory scenario where high-skilled workers (who are, in fact, recruited as low-skilled workers) mostly access employment through job brokerage agents.
The migrant workers on E-7 visas included in this study have faced high levels of exploitation by brokers when attempting to acquire a job in their pre-departure phase, as well as while staying in Korea. The eligibility criteria for an E-7 visa application require higher qualifications compared to those for an E-9 visa. Anyone, even without a high school degree, can apply for a low-skilled job in Korea through the EPS, while E-7 applicants are required to have obtained a bachelor degree and to have good command of the English or Korean language. Due to the high selection standards, some workers, under the instruction of brokers, purchase a fake bachelor degree in order to meet the requirement. The fake degree would only be revealed if officers of the Korea Immigration Service checked applicants’ knowledge and skills related to the degree in the event of these workers wanting to change their job. E-7 workers can renew their visa annually if they are still in a contracted employment.

In fact, obtaining an E-7 visa is often just a means to migrate to Korea in a legal manner. The ban imposed by the Korean government on recruiting new Vietnamese workers between 2012 and 2016 has resulted in the use of alternative pathways to migrate to Korea for making money, including through high-skilled labour migration. In the years before this ban, a small number of Vietnamese workers were granted visas for high-skilled employment. These workers took up employment as professionals with commensurate salaries. In recent years, the number of Vietnamese workers who are granted E-7 visas has increased remarkably. Although holding a high-skilled work visa, many of them take up low-skilled jobs (and are paid accordingly). Opportunities to migrate to Korea through E-7 visas are limited because only a few companies in Korea are eligible to hire high-skilled foreign workers. There is in fact a greater shortage of low-skilled workers. Furthermore, native workers are prioritised for high-skilled positions. Therefore, E-7 visa holders have to take the same type of jobs and receive the same wage level as low-skilled workers who hold E-9 visas. In order to maintain a valid E-7 visa, these workers have to
obtain a position for high-skilled workers, but do low-wage jobs with assistance from brokers.

The regulatory framework of the E-7 visa has hampered migrants’ ability to be introduced to jobs by formal networks. This makes brokers indispensable in bridging job seekers with Korean employers. Before their departure, E-7 visa applicants “buy” a job from a job brokerage agent in Vietnam. While living in Korea, if E-7 visa holders want to change their job, they have to ask for assistance from brokers. These are mainly Vietnamese migrants who have lived in Korea for a long time and stay in close relations with Korean job brokerage companies, which provide up-to-date employment and recruitment information. Brokerage fees often cost over USD 5,000. These agents work with their Korean business partners in Korea, who can link job seekers to a Korean company that is entitled to hire high-skilled migrant workers. A contract between the worker and the company is signed before applying for a visa. However, wages are likely to be much lower than what is mentioned in the contract. Additionally, the worker ends up doing the work of a low-skilled migrant worker.

Duy, an E-7 visa holder, was encountering difficulties in looking for a job and maintaining his legal status. He had been jobless for over two months and was spending his savings to make a living. Duy was stuck, trying to obtain formal recognition of his degree and seeking a contract with a different Korean company. For over two months, he had been unable to find any company that would give him a contract. He had tried to look on employment websites. However, due to his limited Korean language skills, he could not understand all the information written in Korean. This situation depressed Duy very much. During this period in limbo, he could not earn any money and was instead spending his own savings. Duy confessed to me that he was doing a low-skilled job in a manufacturing company to which he was introduced by his friend, although he was aware of the illegality of this action. He said that he needed to earn for a living and save up for his next job brokerage fee. Duy understood that he was breaching Korea’s immigration
laws because he was holding a high-skilled visa, but working for a company that was merely permitted to recruit low-skilled foreign workers. If the Immigration Service had been aware of this, his visa would have been cancelled immediately and he would have been deported soon thereafter. Duy’s primary concern was to make money, so he was not really concerned about the type of visa obtained. However, his wife wanted to settle in Korea. Therefore, Duy tried his best to keep his current visa valid, as it would have allowed for family reunion. Duy asked Ngọc, a Vietnamese marriage migrant who worked as a job broker and translator, for her assistance in finding a new job for him. The brokerage fee agreed amounted to KRW 500,000 (approximately USD 440) provided Ngọc could link him to a job brokerage agent who in turn could help him to get contracted work. If Ngọc could obtain a contract for Duy directly and assist him to process the paperwork, he would have been willing to pay KRW 2.5 million (approximately USD 2,200) for the whole package to her.

Given these circumstances, this study therefore confirms the claim made by Sanders and Nee (1987) that co-ethnic ties may bring profits to some people at the expense of others. Menjívar (2006) and Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) have observed that important critiques of social networks in migration literature point out the downside of social ties, including the ways in which migrants become exploited as a result of relying on those ties. The co-ethnic migrant community is not always helpful and sometimes seeks its own benefit by exploiting fellow nationals. Krissman (2005) argues that assistance is often available only at a very high price. This is further elucidated by the results of a study by Roggeveen and Meeteren (2013), which reveal that non-assistance exists among Brazilian people who live in Amsterdam.

Despite job seekers and job brokers in this study being fellow country people (“co-ethnic”), solidarity which would create and consolidate systems of allegiance, obligations, reciprocity and indebtedness, as suggested by Poros (2001), does not exist between them. The results of this
study are similar to the findings by Poros (2001), which reveal that the solidarity that did exist among Brazilian people overseas did not occur on the basis of ethnicity through economically altruistic reciprocity, but on the basis of establishing exchange and market rules that allowed the “selling of jobs” among migrants. In this study too, job seekers on the E-7 visa have to pay a high price for obtaining work.

Some co-ethnic networks may help migrants to provide economic opportunities at a lower risk (Waldinger, 1996); however, they also segregate migrants from the networks of native people. The social and economic integration of migrants can be contradictory because co-ethnic networks channel migrants into certain industries and neighbourhoods. Thus, the overreliance on co-ethnic networks may increase social exclusion (Lu et al., 2013). Being embedded in a predominantly co-ethnic social network may result in reduced chances to participate in mainstream economy and social activities in the wider society. Hence, this could limit migrants’ potential for upward mobility (Fong & Ooka, 2002) and slow down their overall integration (Poros, 2008). Duy, who obtained a bachelor degree in engineering and can speak some English, found himself bound to co-ethnic connections relying strongly on the assistance of co-ethnic job brokers. He, like other E-7 visa holders, did not attempt to establish relations with native co-workers in order to ask for their help in providing job information.

❖ Workers Holding Other Types of Visa

While E-9 visa holders find jobs with the support of the MOEL and E-7 visa holders typically rely on co-ethnic job brokers in having to “buy” jobs, other migrant workers who move to Korea through other types of visa as spouses, students, medical patients or tourists tend to use their close ties to close friends or relatives in the search for jobs. Because the ‘front door’ of the Korean labour market is closed, Vietnamese workers now have to enter Korea through ‘side
doors’ in order to find work. These types of visa do not require workers to obtain a contract before their departure like E-9 and E-7 visas do; therefore, workers holding non-labour visas initiate their search for work after landing in Korea. While migrant workers with tourist visas remain documented for a short time (three to six months), migrant workers holding a spouse or student visa have longer periods of legality at their disposal.

Primarily, a valid visa merely protects migrant workers from being arrested; it does not help them to get support in their job search from formal networks set up for foreign workers such as those provided by the MOEL. They also can usually not afford to pay broker fees for being introduced to a job. Thus, in the early days of their stay in Korea, migrants often ask their close friends, co-villagers, or relatives for help in finding a job. All respondents in this study who moved to Korea on non-labour visas said that they decided to migrate because they have some friends or relatives living there who would assist them to look for a well-paid job. Prospective migrants tend to build up transnational networks with their friends, co-villagers, or relatives before their migration to Korea. They often keep in touch with their close ties who are already working in the host country and are regularly updated about job information as well as living conditions. There is no report of friends or relatives turning their back on these migrant workers when asked for help.

There is a noticeable dissimilarity between the “network behaviour” of workers who migrate to Korea through alternative channels in the two field sites of this study. As discussed in the previous chapter, a great number of people from Cuong Gian have migrated internationally, especially to Korea. Therefore, Cuong Gian people networks are established widely throughout Korea, and people from this area often stay in touch with their co-hometown group. This study has similar findings to that of Tilly (2007) on networks of Latin American and Caribbean migrants in the United States, which indicates that if former migrants refused to help new
migrants, they and their family were likely to be criticised or shunned by the whole community in the origin as well as in the host country. Cuong Gian people tend to bear in mind their obligations to provide support to their co-villagers. The level of solidarity among Cuong Gian people is particularly high, with people being socialised into helping each other to move out and “make money”. Hence, mutual support instead of mutual competition seems to be the custom among people coming from this area, even when they stay overseas. Furthermore, these migrants organise an annual meeting for their fellow townspeople, which is considered an important event where all Cuong Gian migrants who live across Korea gather and enjoy a buffet party together. In this meeting, newcomers are introduced to others so that they can receive more help from their fellow townspeople.

I was surprised at the size of this community when I participated in the wedding, held in Korea, of a couple hailing from Cuong Gian. This wedding was hosted on a Sunday at noon, which is considered an ideal time to gather because, thanks to Korea’s advanced transport system, migrants who live throughout this country can travel to any place within half a day. Over three hundred guests joined this party and most of them were friends of the groom and the bride from the same hometown. Some guests told me that they had come to the wedding not only because they were friends of the couple but also, more importantly, because they wanted to meet friends from their hometown. This sociality among Cuong Gian migrants can help especially newly arrived migrants to broaden their networks, which is crucial for opportunities to find good jobs and to deal with problems related to all aspects of life in Korea.

To the contrary, observations of this study show that people from other localities in Nghe An province have loose social connections, particularly when they live abroad. Free mutual help occurs among very close bonding ties, such as relatives or family members, but this help does not extend to other people coming from the same hometown. Thus, only people whose family
members or relatives are living in Korea can expect to receive assistance with the search for accommodation and a job. They do not display much concern about helping other co-ethnic migrants. I have observed that Nghe An migrants often form a small group and mostly socialise by having lunches or dinners together, but the obligation to help each other does not appear clearly among these individuals. Since temporary labour migration to Korea has been suspended and because they cannot find enough support from fellow townspeople staying in Korea, people in this province have to move to other labour-receiving countries to earn money, since they cannot use alternative means to move to Korea in the way and to the extent that Cuong Gian people do.

In summary, holders of different type of visa have different strategies for accessing jobs by engaging in different social networks that can support their job search. EPS migrant workers enjoy free assistance from job centres established by the MOEL, while their counterparts holding visas for high-skilled workers have to pay high costs by “buying contracts”. Migrant workers holding other types of visa share the same strategy of accessing new jobs by asking help from their close ties.

- *Maintaining Employment*

The results of this study confirm that networks at the workplace play an important role in assisting migrants to remain employed over time. Most of the respondents in this study said that they have good relations with their co-ethnic fellow workers, while only some respondents expressed the opposite opinion. Living apart from their families, most migrants seek not only instrumental but also emotional support from their co-ethnic fellow workers; Korean employers often provide accommodation and meals for migrant workers and let co-ethnic workers live together.
However, there is high competition among co-ethnic migrant workers at the workplace, leaving co-ethnic fellow workers in the fear that they might be out-performed. Conflicts and competition derive from the pressure many migrant workers are under in light of the significant debts they have incurred. Padilla (2006) observes in a study of Brazilian migrants in Portugal that in the beginning, most newcomers do not pose a risk for competition, and thus assistance received by more established migrants is common practice. However, at a later point in time, migrants may fear being overshadowed by these newcomers. Padilla (2006) concluded therefore that solidarity was not automatically derived from the co-ethnic nature of networks; co-ethnic solidarity may arise at different stages of the migration process, fade out, and vanish altogether over time.

The findings of this study confirm these conclusions. Ethnic solidarity tends to decline when migrant workers become more familiar with their work and when competition starts to set in. The pressure to compete with each other leads to some Vietnamese workers preferring not to work with other Vietnamese migrants. One of my informants reported that his Korean boss commented on Vietnamese workers’ creativity and diligence at work, but often talking in disparaging terms about each other and being unable to work well within a co-ethnic team. In the workplace, Vietnamese workers prefer to work with Korean people because, according to my respondents, they are considered more honest and helpful than their co-ethnic workers. Some migrant respondents explained that where the competition at the workplace is high, there is no space for ethnic solidarity. Only close ties such as close friend and family members are regarded as truly helpful, whilst fellow countrymen in the workplace tend to be uncooperative and unsupportive of each other.

In order to remain employed and keep good relations with their Korean employers, Vietnamese migrant workers also engage in non-co-ethnic networks established by native people for them, such as centres for support of migrants. A staff working in the AMCSC stated that because of
their limited Korean language skills, Vietnamese migrant workers often visit this centre to ask for help in communicating with their employers. Misunderstandings between Vietnamese employees and Korean employers as well as unmet expectations are issues that migrants cannot voice easily to their employers, but can be discussed with the staff working for this centre.

5.1.2 Networks for Undocumented Migrant Workers

Undocumented migrants have been criminalised as “illegal” and subjected to excessive and at times heavy-handed forms of policing (Genova, 2002). They are excluded from fundamental human rights and many rudimentary social entitlements. They receive little if any legal protection from the host country; instead, they are exposed to many dangers (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994b). A study of Cvajner and Sciortino (2010) on irregular migration flows in Europe reveals some results that have developed through clandestine entries, while the most common form of illegality is the result of overstaying. Vietnamese low-skilled migrant workers on the EPS are granted a visa E-9 to enter Korea, but many of them subsequently become undocumented due to overstaying or changing their job sectors without the permission of their Korean employer. Others who migrate to Korea through alternative channels become undocumented upon expiry of their visa.

The irregular status comes with many constraints for the undocumented workers, particularly in the attempt to access good jobs. Aguilera and Massey (2003) provide a comparative analysis of the accessibility to jobs between Mexican documented and undocumented migrants in the United States. They found that documented migrants could search jobs openly and widely and had full geographic mobility, whilst undocumented migrants faced many obstacles in job attainment. The scholarship on migration has provided abundant evidence of how undocumented migrants utilise social networks and benefits from them. Aguilera (2005) provides evidence that distant ties,
friendship ties, and nonfamily ties are positively associated with the earning capacity of Mexican undocumented migrants. The results of Yeffal and Lastra’s (2011) study also demonstrate how Mexican undocumented workers in the United States depend on friendship ties for economic benefits. Involvement in informal networks is particularly important if not crucial for making a living in the labour-receiving country (Aguilera, 2005; Aguilera & Massey, 2003) because these workers can hardly find support from formal networks.

This section discusses social networks which Vietnamese undocumented workers engage in to deal with problems related to the regulatory barriers of Korean policies on undocumented workers, which prevent them from finding and keeping jobs. Given the vulnerable position of Vietnamese undocumented migrant workers in Korea, I argue that social networks are critical for undocumented workers to circumvent issues such as the crackdown on undocumented workers, job obtaining, and wage claiming (in case they are arrested suddenly).

For many years, the Korean government tacitly approved of the employment as well as the residence of undocumented workers (Castles, 2000) because Korean small- and medium-sized businesses were in high need of foreign labour. Ten years ago, undocumented workers did not live in constant danger of being deported, as the Korean government would turn a blind eye to their existence. Employing undocumented workers was a favourable choice for Korean employers because these workers were experienced and could communicate well in Korean, since most of them were overstayers and had worked in the host country for a number of years. The penalty for employing undocumented workers applied to Korean employers was not particularly harsh (as in the case of Singapore, where employers are threatened with imprisonment; see Battistella, 2002).

Before the term of ex-Korean president Park Geun-hye (from 25 February 2013 to 10 March
the Korean labour market was quite open to undocumented workers. Formerly, they could move freely from place to place. They just avoided appearing in public spaces during certain periods of the year when the police were instructed to arrest them. The complex strategies employed by undocumented workers to deal with threat of deportability and actual occurrence of deportation can become a routine part of their daily life (Galvin, 2015). Vietnamese undocumented workers did in fact attempt not to expose themselves in public places such as markets and train stations. At first glance, undocumented workers seem to be more restricted in accessing jobs compared to documented workers due to their irregular status. Indeed, the data of this study reveal that at that time, undocumented workers could find jobs easily on their own or with help from their friends or relatives. Thin, an undocumented worker, told me how he became undocumented and how he managed to obtain a new job. When his formal contract was about to end (which meant that his visa would expire soon, making him an undocumented migrant), Thin decided to leave the contract company and find another job. Before leaving his job, Thin kept frequent contact with his friends and kept up-to-date about recruitment opportunities in companies around his friends' workplace. Thin did not try to seek a new job before leaving the contract company because he could not arrange the time for meeting with the new employer and check the conditions of the new job; instead, he started searching for a job after moving to his friend’s place.

Seeking jobs with the help from friends or relatives is common for undocumented workers. The previous section demonstrates the competition and conflict among co-ethnic fellow workers employed at the same company. It is remarkable to note that these competitive situations occur when relationships among these co-ethnic workers are weak. Undocumented workers find jobs by themselves or through close ties (friends, relatives, or siblings) at no cost and without any competition.
When managing undocumented workers started to become difficult for the Korean government, together with complaints by the public about the social chaos caused by their presence, Korea started crackdown campaigns targeting them (Chae, 2010; Seol, 2000). In parallel with attempts to remove undocumented workers from the country, the Korean government applied amnesties to call for voluntary return to their home country. The purpose of the amnesties offered by Korean government leaders was solely to give a chance to the undocumented to go back to their home country without punishments and fines imposed (Seol & Skrentny, 2004b). In addition to encouraging businesses to stop recruiting undocumented workers, the Korean government offered subsidies to businesses which hired native ones (Seol, 2000). Bilateral agreements through the MOUs between Korea and its labour supplying countries were signed that regulated amnesty for undocumented workers who voluntarily returned to their home countries and deportation for those who were arrested (Seol, 2005a). Previously, Korean employers rarely encountered any form of penalty. However, in recent years, Korean laws on recruiting foreign workers have become stricter. Fines have been applied to those who hire undocumented workers and the amount to pay for fines depends on the number of undocumented workers employed. In the worst cases, the business might be forced to close down for some years. This has led to fewer and fewer Korean companies recruiting undocumented workers, which has resulted in harsher circumstances for these workers to obtain jobs. They rely even more on their close ties who they can trust, and are not likely to report their legal status to the Immigration Service.

While the documented enjoy extending their social networks with local, international, and co-ethnic fellow workers, their undocumented counterparts have to avoid contacting potentially untrustworthy persons who might put them at risk. In recent years, because of a rising number of undocumented migrants, crackdowns have occurred more frequently. The police cooperate closely with the Services of Immigration to work efficiently in arresting undocumented workers.
Crackdown campaigns have pushed a large number of undocumented workers into hiding. My participant observations in the Counselling Centre for Foreign Workers - one of six centres established by the MOEL - have shown that very few Vietnamese workers visited it. This centre is located in Ansan, a so-called multicultural city where 69,413 migrants out of 765,022 total population are residents (Center for Foreigner in Ansan, 2012). Korea’s largest industrial zones are concentrated in this city and workers in the many factories there perform day and night shifts. Some years ago, this Centre had six staff responsible to help Vietnamese migrant workers, and this number was reduced to four in 2015. One member of staff provides face-to-face counselling to Vietnamese migrant workers, while the other three counsellors work on the phone. Previously, many Vietnamese workers who live in Ansan city and neighbour cities visited this Centre frequently. However, in recent years, the Ansan city government has become stringent in controlling unauthorised workers which has led to the decline in visits this Centre receives by Vietnamese undocumented workers. They have moved to more isolated areas in the Centre and the South of Korea where jobs are more readily available for them and they can avoid being arrested. According to my field notes, it was easy for me to approach Vietnamese undocumented workers in 2013, but I had very few chances to talk to workers of this group in 2015. In the end, I had to extend the field site of the fieldwork in 2015 to Teagu city (in the Centre of Korea) because of the limited approach to undocumented workers in Ansan city. Recently, it is not only Ansan city that has become more restrictive for undocumented workers; in other cities, undocumented workers are also alerted to stay away from certain locations where police often check foreigners’ ID and informants who may bring trouble. These restrictions have consequently made Vietnamese undocumented workers avoid contacting co-workers who might cause trouble.

Ryan et al. (2008) illustrate that people became more distrustful in the contexts of great
diversity. This also happens with Vietnamese undocumented workers in Korea such as the case of Tien. Tien was deported to Vietnam by force. He worked in a family business producing auto parts in Shihung city. He became undocumented after shifting to a manufacturing factory from a farm raising cows in a rural area, which he had signed a contract for initially. Tien stayed in Korea for about four years and worked in this manufacturing factory for almost two years. His co-worker reported that their Korean boss liked Tien very much because he was creative, hardworking, and could speak Korean well. Being aware of the risk of deportation, Tien often avoided socialising with strangers, only maintaining contact with his close friends and co-workers, like many other undocumented workers. Unfortunately, a Pakistani co-worker, who envied Tien because the Korean employer used to commend him on his great work attitude, asked his Korean wife to report Tien’s illegal status to the police. The arrest came unexpectedly for Tien, who had not prepared for such eventuality.

An interesting finding should be noted which is the enthusiastic assistance of Korean employers in helping undocumented workers to maintain their stay in Korea. This is contrary to the study by Aguilera and Massey (2003) which found that Mexican undocumented migrants lived in fear of detection and deportation and were highly dependent on their employers, who could get rid of them simply by reporting their existence to immigration authorities. They had limited access to a few jobs in few occupations, since not all employers were willing to violate federal labour laws. Vietnamese undocumented workers, in contrast, do not face the same fear. In fact, Korean employers often help migrant workers to avoid being arrested by the police. As stated above, Korean employers like to employ undocumented workers because they are considered hard-working. Moreover, another obvious advantage for employers is that they can reduce their wages significantly, as employers do not need to buy any kinds of insurance for undocumented workers. Thus, in spite of the risks that Korean employers may face for doing so, many family or
small-sized businesses nevertheless employ undocumented workers. Vietnamese migrant workers tend to receive preferential treatment by Korean employers compared to workers coming from other countries because Korean employers reportedly think they are smart and diligent; some companies even highlight ‘Vietnamese only’ on their labour wanted signs. This partly explains why Vietnamese undocumented workers can still obtain jobs fairly easily, although recently Korean employers started to prefer to hire documented workers in order to avoid complications with the law.

Lan and Tuan, who were undocumented workers, told me about the scenarios in which their Korean employers, who are often criticised for being business-minded and concerned only with profits, helped them to hide themselves from the eyes of immigration service officers:

One day, suddenly officers of the Service of Immigration came to my factory. Fortunately, my Korean employer already knew this, so he asked me to hide myself somewhere. After two hours, I came back to the factory. That day, seven workers of the next-door factory were arrested; all are Vietnamese. However, we [Lan and her undocumented co-workers] were fine (Lan, returnee, personal communication, 28 April 2015).

Whenever my boss informed me that the Service of Immigration might come to check, I should go somewhere to avoid being arrested. My boss knew pretty well about the checking. I have worked for this company for eight years but was never caught. Actually, the Immigration Service officers only come to check when local people report about the presence of undocumented workers or illegal operations of workers such as gambling or fighting (Tuan, returnee, personal communication, 26 April 2015).

Lan and Tuan were surprised that their Korean employers were informed about the visit of officers working for the Immigration Service. Assisting undocumented workers to go into hiding brings mutual benefits for both workers and employers: undocumented workers can save themselves from being deported while their Korean employers can protect their business.
In the case of being arrested suddenly, undocumented workers often ask their roommates, close friends, relatives or wardens (who work at the camps where undocumented workers are taken into custody), to assist them to claim unpaid wages. When unexpected events occur such as arrest and deportation, undocumented workers believe that it is their destiny. Arrested workers are sent to a camp and wait to be deported, as per the explanation of a returnee named Dung. There are about nine camps for undocumented workers across Korea. Two people share a room with a toilet attached. Three meals are served per day. There is a TV in a common room which must be turned off before 9 pm. Residents are neither allowed to use a mobile phone nor the internet. However, there is a landline booth and residents can make calls from there. Surveillance cameras are everywhere. According to Dung, although daily needs were provided, he felt depressed because he could not often have contact with his friends or relatives to seek at least some emotional support. The Vietnamese embassy also shows no interest in assisting its undocumented citizens although there are representatives working for Vietnamese overseas labour in the embassy.

Participants of this study who were arrested and placed into those camps said that with help from wardens they managed to claim unpaid wages. In fact they all received their wages. Their friends or relatives helped them to pack the luggage and sent it to the camp. The most surprising result from the data for me was participants’ complete disappointment with the manners of consular officers of the Vietnamese Embassy, who should play an important role as representatives of the Vietnamese migrant community in Korea. Comments from Vietnamese migrant workers on staff of the Embassy are all similar: “Their tasks are to collect money from us”, “They just want to trouble us so that we have to vomit our money for them”, “With money, everything turns to be possible while they have just refused to approve.” Many of the undocumented workers were arrested when their passports had expired. Being undocumented, they were not permitted to
renew their passport; the Vietnamese Embassy only grants a new passport to undocumented migrants (with higher fees compared to the regular price) when detention centre officers ask it to assist with the paperwork process for their deportation.

In summary, most of Vietnamese undocumented workers imposed restrictions on themselves in making relations with potentially unreliable people. Their close ties are supportive in the job search and claiming unpaid wages while Korean employers help them to hide and escape from the police. On the other hand, co-workers might ask a Korean to report their irregularity to the authorities because of competition in the workplace. After being arrested, the Vietnamese embassy is expected to protect their overseas citizens but does not show much responsibility in this regard.

5.2 Networks for Managing Remittances

The success of migration does not solely rest with the amount of remittance sent home, but also importantly with the effectiveness of their use. Many studies have demonstrated that the major proportion of remittances is spent on consumption for daily needs, social events, buying land, and building houses (Adepoju, 1998; Cobbe, 1982; Gmelch, 1980; Hermele, 1997; Massey et al., 1999a; Thomas-Hope, 1999) or invested in opening small businesses (Arif & Irfan, 1997; Rhoades, 1978). It is undeniable that migration helps individual returnees and their families to enhance the living standards. This section analyses the role of networks in relation to their use by migrant workers for remittance transfer and management.

5.2.1 Transferring Remittances (Chuyen tien tay ba)

Using an effective transferring method helps migrant workers to save more money. The results
of this study show that Vietnamese migrant workers favour using the service of *chuyen tien tay ba*, a remittance transfer method of overseas Vietnamese in which remittances are sent to the home country through an intermediary agent. Such service is complex in organisation but convenient to use. I argue for the need to include the important role of intermediaries facilitating the sending of remittances into the concept of “social networks” in relation to migration. This is so because intermediaries organise webs of international connections in order to facilitate the remittance transfer efficiently, which significantly assist migrants to safely send remittances home.

Basically, there are two methods of remittance transfer practiced among migrants all around the world: formal and informal. Operations of formal systems are regulated through official financial systems. Siddiqui (2004) has observed that banks and postal services have provided reliable services in all host and origin countries in Asia, but they are costly. Alternative systems, which do not fall into the realm of the regulated financial sector, are informal in nature, also known as ‘underground banking’, ‘informal banking’, ‘unregulated banking’, ‘quasi-banking’, ‘alternative banking’, ‘alternative remittance systems’, and ‘parallel banking’ (McCusker, 2005). Two methods are used in informal systems, namely: the hand-carry system, by means of the migrant or a trustworthy person such as a close friend or relative, and remittance transfer through non-bank transfer firms, such as travel agencies or ethnic stores. The formal systems are considered secure but also have many drawbacks, such as charging more expensive transaction fee (Siddiqui, 2004), taking longer time to complete the transaction, and involving bureaucratic hassles (El Qorchi et al., 2003; Passas, 1999). In addition, poor or absent banking services in many rural areas constrain the accessibility for the recipient customer. Previous studies have showed that an overwhelming majority of migrants, particularly undocumented ones, prefer informal methods (through agencies) to formal channels for transferring money (Amuedo-
In comparison with formal systems, informal ones are marked by greater convenience as migrants can transfer money any time and their family in the home country can receive remittances without having to open a bank account.

Another advantage of informal systems, such as Hundi (an unconditional written order by a person directing another individual to pay a certain sum of money to the recipient named in the order), is their speed: recipients can typically obtain the remitted amount within two to three days (Thieme & Wyss, 2005). Based on the context of host and origin countries, the exact organisation of informal remittance transfers differs. The informal practice has different names in different regions or sub-regions; for instance, hawala (India, Pakistan, and the Middle East), hundi (Pakistan and many Muslim countries), fei-ch’ien (China and Southeast Asia), chit (China), chop (China), qiao-pi (China), hui kuan (Hong Kong), padalaand paabot (the Philippines), phei kwan (Thailand), chuyen tien tay ba (Vietnam), kyeyomoney (Uganda), mali a mbeleko (Zambia), and Mulasin (Cuba) (Chan & Shiroyama, 2009; Cheok et al., 2013; El Qorchi et al., 2003; Hernández-Coss, 2005; Orozco, 2002; Passas, 1999; Puri & Ritzema, 1999; M. M. Rahman & B. S. Yeoh, 2008; Seddon, 2004; Seddon et al., 2002; Wucker, 2004). Although these money transfer systems are all formed differently, they share some common attributes as regards their organisation. Persons implicated in the money transfer comprise the remitter (the migrant), intermediaries (in the host country as well as their business partners in the origin country), and the recipient (the family member of the migrant). Intermediaries are often co-ethnics of the remitter.

This study finds that very few Vietnamese migrant workers in Korea engage in remittance transfers through the formal banking system. Those who use this service are migrant workers who have lived in Korea for a number of years and have already repaid their debts. As Korean
employers often provide migrant workers with accommodation and meals, a large proportion of the wages earned during several months are usually accumulated and transferred to an account set up by or for their family members in Vietnam. Similar to the results of previous studies conducted by Amuedo-Dorantes and Pozo (2005) and Thieme (2003), the findings of this study show that accessibility and awareness of the existence of the banking system does not divert their choice of money transfer mechanism. The process of opening a bank account is instructed to them by way of a three-day orientation course provided by the KOLAF shortly after their arrival in Korea. Additionally, the banking infrastructure is well-developed in Korea and has been improved in Vietnam to the extent that branches are now available everywhere, particularly in areas which have a large number of migrant households. However, this method is not a preferred choice of most Vietnamese migrant workers. While Amuedo-Dorantes and Pozo (2005) and (Thieme, 2003) found that migrants were less likely to use banks when they lacked appropriate immigration and identification documents, legal status does not affect the use of the formal banking system by Vietnamese migrant workers. A migrant can open a bank account when he or she is documented and carry on using this account when his or her legal status turns into undocumented. Another popular way for undocumented workers to transfer remittances is that they can ask their close friend or relative to open a bank account in this person’s name. After obtaining an account, undocumented workers can change the passwords of the internet banking account and pin number of their ATM account to start using it as their own account.

The findings of this study reveal that in only a few cases when Vietnamese migrant workers, their close friends, or relatives have a chance to visit Vietnam, migrant workers sometimes ask their close ties to carry some money back to their family. This method of transferring remittances is not found to be common in this study. Migrant workers often bring money with them whenever they visit their home. Unlike Nepalese migrants, who often encountered high
risk of loss or theft when engaging in hand-carrying (Seddon et al., 2002), Vietnamese migrant workers seem able to carry money home safely during air travel from Korea to Vietnam. Hand carrying is, as Thieme and Wyss (2005) notice, free of charge and is a method that lends itself nicely to avoid fraud. However, it is not a commonly used method by Vietnamese migrant workers. Many of them explained that they or their friends rarely visit their homes in Vietnam because of the high cost this would incur for the air tickets, gifts for families, and expenses during their home visit. They would have to spend a significant amount while being unable to earn any income. Due to the pressure of repaying the debts accumulating to make the migration happen in the first place and also to accumulate some savings, migrant workers only visit their homes on some special, but rare, occasions such as weddings or funerals of family members. Therefore, this method is not their preferred choice. These reasons explain why Vietnamese migrants choose chuyen tien tay ba as their most preferred method of remittance transmission.

The majority of migrant respondents in this study stated that compared to the transaction fees by banks, chuyen tien tay ba is in fact more costly. While banks charge approximately KRW 15,000 for each transaction of the amount below USD 5,000, the fee for chuyen tien tay ba is between KRW 20,000 and 30,000 for transfers up to USD 1,000. The transaction fee is double for USD 2,000, triple for USD 3,000, and so on. Discounts can apply for regular clients. However, many migrant workers confessed that they want to send remittances home on a monthly basis, because of the fear of being tempted to spend their earnings on unnecessary items if the extra amount remains in their account. Migrant workers, particularly males, admit to being easily tempted to spend money when they know that they have an extra sum of money in their bank account. Therefore, chuyen tien tay ba, which is likely to be more costly, in fact helps migrant workers to send higher remittance amounts to their family.

The organisation of chuyen tien tay ba is complex and is based on mutual trust between remitters
and dealers. This service assists Vietnamese migrants to send remittances to their families in Vietnam through intermediaries. It is actually illegal in Korea as well as in Vietnam. This highly organised system is composed of webs of social connections that facilitate international money transfers. In other words, it is through social networks that this system operates money transactions. Like the practice of ethnic stores in North America (Nielsen, 1985), many ethnic stores of Vietnamese migrants in Korea engage in the remittance transfer business. A client (migrant) in Korea hands over a sum of money to a money collector (co-ethnic migrant) in his or her store such as restaurant, grocery shop, travel agency, or gambling den. This money collector directs his or her connection in Vietnam to send the amount on to the recipient.

There is a tendency among migrants to make deals with money collectors (dealers) from the same hometown as the remitter. This, as one of my migrant worker informants explained, is safer because the remitters can keep track of the identity of these dealers. It is not difficult to find dealers coming from the same hometown of the remitter because many migrants, who have lived in Korea for many years and have wide connections among their co-migrants, are working as remittance transfer dealers between Korea and Vietnam. Formerly, only businesspeople who were well off and had extensive social connections in both Korea and Vietnam could run this kind of business. However, in recent years, this money transfer service has mushroomed among the Vietnamese migrant community in Korea due to the high demand for sending money to home communities. Individual migrants who have lived in Korea for a number of years and who have established social relations with Vietnamese migrants and also accumulated savings, have opened up such services; they have sent the necessary funds to Vietnam to set up the end service, namely the delivery to the recipient family with the help from their family members.

Results of this study match the findings of Hernández-Coss’ (2005) study on chuyen tien tay ba between Canada and Vietnam, which found it as a reliable channel of sending money home since
the verbal contracts for the remittance transfer are made between remitters and dealers who have earned good reputation for their business (as well as coming mostly from the same hometown as the remitters). No official contract is signed between remitters and money collectors and no receipt is issued to remitters. When being asked whether this transfer method involves a risk of loss, all respondents in this research immediately answered “no”, “there is no record of fraud by intermediaries”, or “no, the reputation of those businesses is very important. If they intend to cheat someone, their business would be closed soon. We can report the cheating to the police.”

To ensure the longevity of their business, dealers have to guarantee the security of remittance transfer, as failure to maintain the trust of their customers would lead to the immediate collapse of their business. Besides, this method of money transfer is regarded as convenient and speedy. The transaction takes place within a few hours, and the recipients can receive the amount transferred even before it is deposited into the money collectors’ account, if the remitters are regular customers. The remitters in turn cannot cheat the dealers because the dealers already know them and their families in Vietnam. Hence, the security of the transfer is fully assured on the basis of mutual trust.

Although *chuyen tien tay ba* is formally illegal in Korea, it is likely that the Korean government deliberately avoids scrutinising the operations of this money transfer system. Therefore, Vietnamese migrant workers commonly use this method to send their savings to their family. Both the remitters and recipients find *chuyen tien tay ba* is speedy, convenient, confidential, and trustworthy. This service is fast because recipients can receive remittances within a few hours even during holidays, while transferring through banks usually takes a few working days. It is convenient because migrant workers do not need to go to the bank during its opening hours, and can instead just use internet banking to transfer money to the intermediary’s account at any time. Given their tight working schedule and lack of days off, this door-to-door service is highly
advantageous. Furthermore, phone communications with dealers, without the need to provide any identification documents, help undocumented workers avoid disclosing their illegal status. Only the recipient is required to show his or her identification cards to the delivery person to ensure that the amount is sent to the correct person.

5.2.2 Managing Remittances

Choosing a suitable method for transferring money helps migrant workers send regular remittances and relatively high amounts home. Another decisive factor affecting the success of the migration project is the effectiveness in the use of those remittances. Due to their absence from home, migrant workers have to ask their family to manage and use the money they have earned. The remittance act, therefore, confirms the argument made in Chapter 1 that not only migrant workers, but also their family engage in the “money making project” that is to improve their economic circumstances. While the main obligation of migrant workers is to earn and send money home, that of their family is to manage remittances in an effective manner.

Remittances are a mechanism that helps migrants fulfil multiple obligations to their families (Batnitzky et al., 2012). As Cai (2003) describes, this operation is a unique form of transfer embedded within an intra-familial relationship; indeed, this study agrees with Gentry and Mittelstaedt (2009)’s argument that the family stands at the core of the remittance process. The relation between migrants and their family affects the amount and nature of the remittances. The findings in the study by Osili and Greico (2004) indicate that sojourners, or temporary contract migrants, tend to remit high percentages of their income; it is an established fact that those who return home after spending a temporary period abroad are likely to send a larger proportion of their income than those who settle permanently in the host country. Philpott’s (1968) study of Montserratian migrants, for instance, shows that the longer time migrants live overseas, the
fewer remittances they send to their family because they adapted to new social obligations in the host country.

In the case of the Vietnamese migrant workers in this study, in the early stage of their migration, they send almost their entire wage home, just leaving a small sum of money for their own daily expenses. After paying off all their debts, migrant workers might allow themselves to increase their spending on their own daily needs; however, migrant workers understand the ‘temporariness’ of their migration, whereby they make money during the course of several years only to establish a firm economic foundation and provide financial help to their family, so they do send remittances home on a regular basis and as high a percentage as possible.

All participants in this research said they send money to their family in the home country to fulfil their obligation as the main breadwinner. Working in Korea can result in higher levels of savings compared to working in other host countries in Asia. Vietnamese migrant workers in Japan can obtain the same or slightly higher wages compared to Vietnamese migrant workers in Korea; however, they also have to spend higher sums of money for accommodation and living expenses. In contrast, participants in this study, even the undocumented workers, explained that they can maximise their savings because most of their Korean employers are willing to pay for accommodation and two meals per day. The data of this study show that most of them send home over half of their wage (while a few cannot make any or good savings because of their expenses on gamble, prostitution, and drinking). As also shown in other studies (Collinson et al., 2006; Curran & Saguy, 2001; Osaki, 1999; Vete, 1995), female migrant workers tend to send a higher proportion of their wage compared to their male counterparts. This study also reveals the same result as some respondents explained, “men spend a lot on socialisation and their private interests”, “whenever we eat out together, our male friends often pay for us. That is Vietnamese culture, right?”, or “girls mostly spend on shopping, but since we
wear uniforms, we don’t need to buy many clothes”.

Connections between migrants and left-behind families are retained firmly. Each person in these transnational families plays different roles for the achievement of the common goal of the whole family: to improve living standards. Remitters (migrants) often kept contact through frequent communications via media means with recipients (family members) due to the exchange information about how to transfer, how much of remittances, who the recipients are, and how remittances should be spent. Vietnamese migrant workers and their families use texts, cheap phone calls, and free chat programs through internet such as Tango, Viber, Facebook, Kakao Talk to keep in touch with each other. Social medias are transforming migration networks (Dekker & Engbersen, 2013). Medias have made migrants’ life in separation from their families easier (Wellman, 1999). By this way, transnational communication links migrant workers with people back home. Thus, through remittances, migrants and their families in the origin country can maintain the closeness of transnational family relationships. Migrant workers have obligations in economic support to left-behind families whilst their families play a role of remittances managers. Responsibilities to each other help to tighten family ties though migrant workers and their family live in different countries for a long time.

Remittances are often sent to a specific family member whom the migrant worker believes can manage money well. It is interesting that all participants send remittances to female family members, such as their mother, older sister, or wife. They believe that these recipients are capable of handling remittances to pay back debts, cover daily expenses, buy land, build or refurbish a house, and invest in a small business. An example was given by this migrant worker:

I send remittances to my oldest sister who is living with my parents, my wife, and
my son. I rarely send a big amount of money to my wife because I don’t want my wife to think too much about managing the money. She is still young and may not be mature enough to handle all expenses. My sister doesn’t involve in gambling or any other wasteful behaviour. She always thinks of the family first. So, I trust her and ask her to be the remittance recipient. Now, my sister takes care of all expenses of my left-behind family and I know my remittances are well managed (Dat, migrant worker, personal communication, 11 June 2015).

Dat, like other migrant workers in this study, said that he totally trusts the ability to use remittances wisely of the family member whom they choose to be the recipient and money keeper. What the above quote also shows is that migrants believe that the remittances they send home are not their own personal money but their family’s. This is so because their family helped them to borrow money to cover the initial migration fee. Therefore, most of them do not intervene too much in the way the remittances are spent, because they understand that a large portion of the remittances is to repay the debts incurred for migration and to cover daily and other necessary expenses of the family. This study notices that although many remitters do not ask the recipients for exact details of the use of the remittances, the latter often do keep the remitters updated about this use. The family, in other words, is very aware of the difficulties in which the money is being earned. Thus, they display great responsibility in not daring to waste it.

The noticeable result is that networks involved in transferring remittances are gendered. Regardless of migrant workers’ gender, they all tended to transfer money to their trustable female family at the receiving end. Robert (2016) notices that there is a progressive feminisation of remittance circuit that female migrants first often send money to their partner; however, the misuse of remittances by husbands makes female migrants tend to send remittances to other women in the family. and De Jong (2000) have observed that in the large part of East and Southeast Asia, the wife often control over daily expenditures of the family. Traditionally, Vietnamese women are “homemakers” whose role in the family are managers. Results of this
study show that, since matured female family members such as the wife, the older sister or the mother often manage family issues, they are money keepers. That explains why remittances receivers are assigned to these women.

Remittances are economic support migrant workers provide to their families. In turn, these migrant workers receive emotional support from families through frequent communications via media means. Kelly and Lusis (2006) note that emotional support is sometimes sought not from local networks but through transnational communication. Vietnamese migrant workers often tell their families about living and working conditions in Korea. They also discuss family matters such as the way to look after old parents, how to bringing up left-behind children and children’s education, and the usage of remittances. These migrant workers may feel that they continue to play an important role in making essential decisions on family matters even while they are living in another country. This also significantly reduces the loneliness often occurring with people living apart from their families.

5.3 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has discussed social networks which Vietnamese migrant workers engage in as they relate to the “money making” aspect of their migration project and the sending of remittances to their family left behind in Vietnam while they are working in Korea. There are four key findings which are related to the reconceptualisation of networks along their temporal and spatial changeability, the decisive factors affecting the provision of support, and the beneficial and damaging outcomes of support given to migrants.

The first main finding of this chapter is associated with the temporal and spatial nature of migration networks. Ryan et al. (2008) pay attention to the temporal changeability of network
connections in a morphological sense (migrants expand or narrow their social relations), whereby Ryan (2007) is concerned with the changeability of networks in terms of spatiality. In the same vein, this study provides evidence on the dynamics of networks over time and across space. In the early stage of staying in the host society, the social networks of and for newly arrived migrants are limited. However, the longer the time they live in the destination, the more social ties they build up and are involved in. This helps migrants to have more choices on what social networks to join for resolving problems related to their jobs and daily life in the later stage of their overseas stint. In addition to gradually extending their networks in the new society, migrants attempt to sustain networks with people in their origin communities, especially family members left behind, whom they can ask for support to deal with problems they cannot personally solve.

Secondly, this chapter has illustrated and analysed the situation of different groups of migrant workers, based on their types of visa, legal status, and gender who obtain support from different social networks. The frequent changes of the migration policy framework have resulted in the formation of different kinds of networks, which serve migrants with different types of visa and legal statuses.

The third finding is that the existence of ethnic solidarity depends on the closeness among social ties and co-ethnic networks, which are not always advantageous to the newcomer migrants. Similar to the studies by Ryan et al. (2008) and Williams (2006), this research consolidates the argument that migrants might benefit from or be disadvantaged by these networks, particularly in the context of high competition and distrust among the wider co-ethnic community. The elaborated dynamics of co-ethnic networks have been shown to have two opposite sides. On the one hand, these networks are helpful to newly arrived migrants, those who are in close relations, and those who come from the origin community where people have high levels of obligation for
reciprocity towards each other. On the other hand, in a competitive environment such as at the workplace, co-ethnic workers might be a threat to migrants due to the fear of being outperformed by newcomers. This duality is also evident in regard to co-ethnic brokers: they effectively support migrants to solve problems related to the obtaining of jobs or remittance transfers, while at the same time making significant profits from the services they provide to migrants. The highest level of ethnic solidarity occurs within small groups in which members have close relations with each other. Only close ties such as between close friends, relatives, or co-villagers are truly there to help newly arrived migrant workers. In the wider migrant community, assistance with linking migrants to jobs or transferring remittances to the home country is often provided by brokers, and come with high costs. This study confirms the argument advanced by Fukuyama (1995c) that distrust occurs among strangers although they are in fact co-ethnic people.

Lastly, this chapter also contributed to a more nuanced understanding of the gender aspects involved in networks caused by the segregation of the labour market and restrictions in migration policy practised by the destination country as well as organised for remittances receiving. The majority of migrant workers working in remote farming fields are female who are less protective by Korean labour policies than those working in other job sectors in urban areas. Both formal and informal networks in rural areas are limited in quantity and in providing support for farmer migrants. The gendered migration channels also affect the participation in networks for migrant workers. While migrant workers, mostly males, holding E-7 and E-9 visas can approach various sources for job acquisition, women who migrated to Korea via sham marriages are bounded in support given by their family members, relatives and friends. Many women take part in feminisation of migration; they participate in a labour force overseas and become main providers of their family left behind. In home country, it is also women who decide on daily
finances and thus assume responsibility of receiving remittances.
Chapter 6

Networks for Establishing Sustainable Livelihoods

upon Return to the Home Community

Chapter 4 has discussed networks which assist different groups of prospective migrants to obtain a job in Korea and make the necessary arrangements for the migration fees in the pre-departure stage, while Chapter 5 has analysed networks in their link to migrants’ strategies and ability to remain in paid work and manage their remittances while in Korea. The key question raised in this chapter is whether and, if so, how social networks continue playing a role in helping returnees to establish means for securing a livelihood upon return. Since they are temporary contract migrants, return is an inevitable feature of their migration experience, even if they do manage to stay on beyond the end of their first contract (which they often do by turning into an undocumented worker).

This chapter is, therefore, concerned with discussing the role of social networks in relation to assisting return migrants (returnees) to strategise and use their remittances for creating sustainable livelihoods after relocating to their home communities. The findings of this study illustrate yet again the crucial role of migrants’ families in this regard. This study also found that lack of support - both from non-family networks in helping returnees find a job, and from formal associations in the communities in establishing a strategic plan for an effective livelihood - contributed to the inability of returnees in settling into a stable life. More specifically, the analysis focuses on how different groups of returnees (based on their visa status before leaving Korea and gender as well as origin community) establish their own business, find a new job, migrate overseas again or to other parts of Vietnam, or even remain unemployed under the
influence of social networks in their home communities. I narrow the discussion to social networks affecting the economic re-establishment of returnees, not extending to investigating their social and psychological re-integration. In addition, I also identify an interesting point of how networks affect temporary unemployment of returnees.

6.1 Networks and Setting up a Self-Owned Business

Return migration is considered as a stage of spatial mobility that signifies the completion of the migration cycle, that is returning to not only the country of origin, but the community of origin (i.e. the same place they had left; Anarfi & Jägare, 2008; Eastmond, 2006; King, 2000). When studying return migration of Pakistani workers who had migrated temporarily to the Middle East for employment, Iqbal and Khan (1982) pointed out three reasons for return flows: the change in labour demand, political instability of the host states, and repatriation of undocumented workers.

Policy makers and NGOs refer to voluntary return when a migrant returns to his or her home country without being forced to do so (Davids & van Houte, 2008). In the case of refugees, the voluntary return takes place when they decide to go back their origin community after considering the conditions in their home country (Dimitrijevic et al., 2004, p. 29). According to Noll (1999), return can never be voluntary if migrants find no legal alternative. Therefore, any kind of return than personal choice is involuntary (Ruben et al., 2009). Involuntary return might become ‘least worse option’ in a ‘no win situation’ (Chimni, 1999) that migrants have yet not accumulated enough resources for the resettlement upon their return. Ruben et al. (2009) state that assistance to return migrants might include financial, material, and non-material assistance which can be provided before, during or after return.

I have observed that the voluntary return to Vietnam from Korea of Vietnamese migrant workers
occurs after the end of the work contract; the decline in labour demand mostly caused by financial crises, or forced return caused by deportation due to unauthorised stay in the host country. Voluntary return in this case means that migrant workers, including documented or undocumented, decide to return to their home country in the absence of direct coercion. After making some savings and prolonged staying apart from family, the majority of undocumented migrant workers wish to have family reunion while documented workers want to leave Korea before the expiry of their visa in order to be able to apply for a new work visa based on a new contract. In recent years, the promise to grant a new work visa to those who voluntary return to their origin country on time and are employed by a Korean employer has encouraged Vietnamese migrant workers to maintain their legal status so that they can have another opportunities to find an employment in Korea.

Return may not be the outcome of a calculated strategy (Cassarino, 2008b), but can happen in unfavourable and involuntary circumstances as in the case of deportation of undocumented workers. In the same vein as Chimni’s results (1999), my research has found that when return is not voluntary, returnees encounter more obstacles in obtaining a job in their home country. Most of the Vietnamese returnees who had migrated to Korea were undocumented at the time they left the country. Many of them were deported rather than having returned voluntarily. At that point in time, they did not have clear strategies for making a livelihood upon their return. Bearing in mind the temporariness of their migration, migrant workers embark upon the migration project in the attempt to save money, to overcome financial difficulties and improve their economic conditions. This has strongly affected sustainability of life upon their return, or in other words, affected the success of their migration project.

The scholarship on the occupational choices of return migrants has focused on the importance of savings accumulated overseas to initiate small business (Arif, 1998; Athukorala, 1990; Castaño,
However, migration scholarship has neglected the issue of sustainable life after return and networks which assist returnees to find a stable job. In fact, savings are not the only one decisive factor affecting the sustainability of their life upon return. The data gathered for this study provide evidence that returnees tend to rely on social networks for exploring and choosing suitable and available means for their livelihood. Because legal migration is possible only on a temporary contract basis, its success cannot be measured purely on remittances but also on its sustainability, in terms of resulting in job opportunities in the home communities. The findings of this study highlight the importance of remittances alongside the crucial influence of social relationships on what kind of employment returnees want to do, can obtain, and succeed after returning to their home country. Without social networks, which help migrants to engage in sustainable social and economic reintegration, their migration cannot be completed successfully in a lasting sense. Although migrant workers usually return to their home communities, Koser and Black (1999) note that it is uncertain whether returnees will fit smoothly back into their communities of origin. After some years, their ‘home’ left behind might have changed and, more importantly, the migrants themselves might have changed (Ghanem, 2003); they might have adopted new meanings of culture and identity (Hammond, 1999) and work practices learnt in the host country (Chae, 2010), in addition to developing new aspirations. Additionally, many of them do not keep in contact with people back home for updates about the domestic labour market and job information in order to plan for their re-settlement. Therefore, returnees are confronted with many obstacles after going back to their home community. Ruben et al. (2009) argue that return can only become sustainable when returnees can be re-embedded in terms of economic, social networks, and psycho-social aspects.

Existing scholarship has shown that those who spend a longer time abroad can save more and
tend to move into self-employment upon their return (Galor & Stark, 1991). My returnee respondents were temporary migrant workers who were granted visas to work in Korea for a few years. However, many of them extended their unauthorised stay in Korea, re-emigrated there through a non-labour visa, or made a new contract to work in this host country for a few more years; hence, they might have lived there on average between six and ten years. Taylor (1987) argues that returnees do not wish to revert to their pre-migration level of income because they place themselves in a higher economic and social position upon their return. After returning to their home country, returnees do not want to take up hard physical work and lowly paid jobs. Thus, as Ilahi (1999) has observed, a common result found in return migration studies is that returnees who have some savings tend to establish their own business in the home country, while they may often not be hired by local employers at the salaries they demand.

Most of my respondents in this study said that among the various kinds of occupations, self-employment is their most preferred option. However, the findings of this study indicate the problematic situation that most Vietnamese returnees face in finding jobs or livelihood opportunities upon their return. The high level of overseas earnings leads to higher expectation on better income and working conditions compared to their pre-migration ones. It is, however, unlikely for returnees to obtain good jobs of the kind they wish for. The lack of support provided by the Vietnamese government to invest in development of the communities where I conducted my fieldwork has resulted in few changes in the availability of jobs for local people. Therefore, some returnees, who have been able to secure sufficient savings and assistance from their families, establish their own small business. Piracha and Vadean (2010) distinguish two kinds of self-employment: the so-called ‘own account’ business owners, who run their business alone or with the assistance of household members, and ‘entrepreneurs’, who hire non-household workers. I borrow this classification of business and use those terms in this study. The data
collected in this study indicate that most of the returnees start their own account business rather than engage in entrepreneurship. This is due to limited financial resources and their limited ability to run a business. Except for those returnees who wanted to retain the possibility of re-migration to Korea by returning to Vietnam when they were still documented, I found that other returnees were forced to leave Korea because of their irregular residency status. These undocumented migrants have no chance to re-migrate to this host country, which means that their opportunity to earn more in Korea has ended. Therefore, most of the returnees are very careful to invest into a small business. They often search for help from trustworthy relations to assist them to run a business or provide family care, so that they can find time to focus on setting up and establishing their business.

There are stories of successful self-employment as well as cases of failure. The migration project is considered as successful when the returnees have a stable life and the means of earning a living upon their return. A remarkable point found in this study is that there is an effective support network, particularly by families, involved in these successful cases. Families help migrants not only to manage remittances while these migrants live overseas but also to run businesses after these migrants return to their home communities.

6.1.1 Cases of Success

The case of Ly illustrates the important role of his family in supporting him to operate a business and look after his children so that he can have time to focus on developing his business. Ly migrated to Korea for the first time in 1996 and returned to Vietnam involuntarily in 2011. During his first migration, he was deported in 2005 because of having been arrested due to undocumented status. He then changed his name and had a new passport made in order to re-migrate to Korea in 2008. His second stay ended in 2011 by deportation. As a whole, he had
spent almost 14 years working in Korea. During the first few years there, he could not save much because he had to repay debts that his family had accumulated for his migration fee (about USD 1,000, which he believed was reasonable because market brokerage fees for migrating to Korea were higher at that time). Under the ITTP, he was recruited as a trainee who received lower wages compared to workers. His monthly wage was USD 316 only. Ly was not allowed to keep the entire wage because the deduction of USD 150 was directly sent to a fund every month. This amount would have been returned to him if he had not escaped from the company he was contractually bound to. However, he could not wait to receive that money and finally decided to leave the contract company after one year of working there. He then found a better job where he received the salary of a wage worker, not that of a trainee as before. This meant that he could make more money. Later, his wage increased commensurate with his rising work experience, and due to an annual increase in the minimum wage mandated by Korean regulations.

After returning to Vietnam, Ly was not confident about finding waged employment because he just held a high school diploma and had been absent from the Vietnamese labour market for a prolonged time. During the second period in Korea, Ly therefore hatched a long-term plan for his return. He regularly sent remittances to his parents and asked them to gradually open up a small transport business by buying a large truck for rent. When Ly returned to his hometown in Vinh city, his father handed over the business to him and introduced him to his business partners. After four years of running this business, with the surplus he made and in addition to a loan from the local bank, Ly could buy another large truck. He learnt how to drive and became a truck driver and used another truck for rental. By the time of interview, his business had developed remarkably. He had hired three workers to work for him. His wife helped him to deal with the orders while his parents looked after his two small children. The total revenue each truck brings in per month amounts to between VND 60 million and 80 million. The profits from
running the two trucks bring a good life for his family. Recently, he has hired another driver to replace him so that he can devote his entire time to promoting his business to a transport company. Ly’s case represents a positive example among the 33 returnees interviewed in this study as he established a successful life back in Vietnam. Ly already planned to open a transport business when he was still working in Korea. With a lot of support from his family back at home which helped him to investigate the local transport market and build up business relationships while Ly was abroad, a small transport business was established.

Two other returnees also seemed to develop their businesses well. One opened a seafood restaurant, while another was running a hotel on the seaside. These returnees asked their family members to invest their remittances by buying land on the coast when it was very cheap. After over ten years, the land prices rose remarkably. They sold a part of their land and used this money to invest in a restaurant and a hotel business respectively. Their families also helped them to manage their businesses, although they also employed others to work for them. When I visited their places, I observed many guests having meals in the restaurant and the hotel rooms are fully booked.

Unlike these returnees who were able to establish their own businesses, five other returnees among my sample opened their ‘own account’ business in which they work alone or with the assistance of family members. Although most migrant workers who worked in Korea have much higher savings compared to those returning from other labour-receiving countries, these monetary resources are typically not sufficient to run a business. Own account businesses that Vietnamese returnees often run are therefore small shops (agricultural products, clothes, or grocery) set up in rural areas, or restaurants, small hotels, construction materials shops, or transport services set up in urban areas. Hien, a returnee, describes her current business conditions as follows:
My husband and I left Korea four years ago. Both of us were deported. I migrated to Korea for the first time in August 2000, and then was forced to leave the country in 2005. I changed my name and made a new household registration book that allowed me to move to Korea a second time in 2008. Again I had to return to Vietnam involuntarily in 2012. In total, I had spent almost 9 years in Korea while my husband spent 12 years there. After returning to Vietnam, we built a big house and opened a shop selling clothes to children in my town. My parents live near here and they help me with looking after my children. I usually send my children to my parents’ house early in the mornings and pick them up after closing the shop. I earn little money from this shop, just enough for meals but not enough for all the expenditures of my family because my customers are only local people of this small commune. I knew that many people in this commune migrate overseas for work; so I also provide a currency exchange service. People sell or buy USD in my shop. We also bought land in Hue, where my older brother lives, and built a block of rooms for rent. He helps me to manage the business there. He is quite rich so I don’t have to pay him anything. Our current life is stable but we want a better future for our kids. Hence, we try to make more money. I can handle this shop alone. My husband could not find any good job here, so he migrated to Germany almost two years ago and now is working as a waiter in a Vietnamese restaurant there (Hien, returnee, personal communication, 18 April, 2015).

Compared to other self-employed returnees, Hien experiences fairly good economic conditions thanks to the savings she and her husband accumulated during the many years working abroad. She and her husband were deported without preparing for such circumstances and did not have a plan for making a livelihood upon their return in place. After returning to their home communities and discussing with their family and friends, they gathered information about the current needs of local people in their hometown and then decided to open a shop to sell children’s clothes and provide a currency exchange service for local people. Because their hometown is located in Cuong Gian (a coastal area where the need for rental rooms is very low), Hien invested into this type of business in Hue, a city located in the Centre of Vietnam, where her older brother resides. She constructed ten rooms near Hue University and lets them out to students. With the assistance of her brother who helps her to manage the rental business, she has been able to accumulate some more savings, thus ensuring a stable life for her family.
The return of Hien and her husband was a sudden occurrence, but they were able to catch up quickly with the current economic condition in the home country due to regular contacts with their family and close friends left behind. Hien followed the advice of her brother to reduce the risks of her investment by dividing their money into three types of business: selling clothes, exchanging currency, and leasing rooms. Hien herself managed the shop and the currency exchange because customers are people from her hometown, who knew her well and trusted her business. Meanwhile, the older brother assisted her in managing the leasing business because this property was far from her current residency. She would mostly contact him via phone and had the profits transferred to her bank account on a monthly basis. Hien had received useful support from family and close friends for the start-up and management of her businesses.

There are other ‘own account’ business owners like Hien. The success of their self-employment is due to the same features: relying on the resources provided by their social networks, such as information about local demands, so that they can provide appropriate supplies. These returnees often receive assistance, mostly from their families, to open and run the business. The above examples support my argument that savings collected from working overseas are significant financial resources in the creation of self-employment of returnees; however, the development and sustainability of migrant returnees’ businesses highly depend on support from their social networks, particularly familial ties.

6.1.2 Cases of Failure

Alongside stories of successful investment, there are also cases of failure with self-employment. Returnees who are self-employed often calculate carefully before investing into any kind of small business because of the difficulties in accumulating these savings, earned during many years of working overseas. Therefore, returnees try to look for a small business where the risk of
failure is low. However, this does not mean that they can completely avoid failure. This study documents one case of a returnee who failed in running a small business because of the lack of supportive networks.

Dung was a student at the University of Civil Engineering but quit his study in his third year due to his low performance. He was encouraged by his family to migrate to Korea for work as a trainee in 2003, based on the financial investment of his father who had worked in Bulgaria for eight years. His starting wage in Korea was KRW 540,000, while the migration fee was VND 70 million (approximately KRW 7 million). Hence, he had to work extra to repay the money borrowed from his father. He worked in the company he was contracted by for three months, then shifted to another company and became an undocumented worker. In 2008, he had an accident while operating a driller. Two of his fingers were cut off and he had to stay in hospital for four months. He purportedly described himself as agile, creative, and diligent, which helped him receive a higher salary compared to his co-workers at that company. However, after the accident, he decided to stop working in a factory and started working as a money transfer agent. He also lent money to Vietnamese gamblers in Korea. He earned good money from this work. However, after a short time of doing this business, he was suddenly arrested and deported to Vietnam in 2010.

After returning to Vietnam, Dung bought a house in Vinh City, while his parents lived in their hometown located in a rural area of the Hung Nguyen district. He invested his savings and some money borrowed from a local bank to start his own business, a shop selling house paint. He believed that the economic conditions of local people had much improved and the demand for building houses was increasing. Dung confessed that he did not spend much time on gathering market information and establishing business relationships; his decision to run a business was based mostly on instinct. When operating his business, Dung encountered difficulties in
obtaining orders because he only had a few partnerships. In fact, some business people, who had set up their firm business networks some time before him, controlled the whole business dealing with the sales of construction and building materials in this locality. They also sold paints at a lower price because they could purchase them at a lower price from wholesale suppliers, while Dung bought paints from the retail business.

The story of Dung’s business is an example to illustrate how the lack of knowledge and skills in business, and more importantly the lack of networks that can provide one with useful information about this field of business, can result in failure. Dung was confident that he had enough money and skill to run a paint shop; unfortunately, he failed to realise the high competitiveness of the paint market in Vinh city. According to Dung, due to his absence for many years when working overseas, he had lost important social networks that could have provided him with the necessary orientation and information about the market development through the years. By now Dung was more familiar with Korean society where he believed people were more honest, trustworthy, straightforward, and fair in business. For all these reasons, the isolation of his business led to bankruptcy after one year. Fortunately, Dung did not have any debts because he had stopped his business early enough. He was unemployed for a year, then became a wage employee. Because he could speak Korean well, he found a job as assistant to the Korean director of a Vietnam-Korea road construction project in Vietnam. At the time of writing this thesis, he was receiving VND 10 million a month (approximately USD 450). He stated that this money was barely sufficient to cover the daily expenditures of his family of four, but did not allow him to set aside any savings. According to Dung, only businesses can earn real profits. Therefore, he was calling on his friends to invest into an employment brokerage service for returnees who want to obtain jobs with Korean companies operating in Vietnam. Dung believed that this business could be profitable because the increasing number of Korean
companies in Vietnam would lead to a high demand for Vietnamese workers who have experienced working with Korean people and can speak Korean, and he would not have to invest as much capital as for his previous business. Dung was trying to avoid the failure of his first experience in running a business and to broaden his networks of investors, business partners, and potential clients. His uncle and younger brother, who also worked in Korea and had also returned to Vietnam, were helping him to develop networks of job seekers who are migrant returnees. He said that he was carefully investigating the labour demand of Korean companies in Vietnam, displaying much prudence in the establishment of a business this time round.

Cassarino (2008a) categories three degrees of ‘return preparedness’. Returnees have strongest degree of preparedness when they gather enough tangible and intangible resources to initiate their resettlement in their home country. Another group of returnees whose cannot obtain sufficient necessary resources due to short stay overseas has lower degree of preparedness. The third degree pertains to migrants who do not intend to return yet and cannot make a proper preparation for their return.

The degree of preparedness for the return has important impact on the success of returnees in establishing a livelihood upon their return. Cassarino (2008a) argues that those who have strong degree of preparedness for their return carefully calculate the costs and benefits of return as well as institutional, economic and political changes in their home country. Besides developing skills and knowledge, returnees also expand valuable contacts that can help them to resettle in the community of origin. I have analysed the success and failure of some small businesses run by returnees to illustrate the important role of social networks in the business operations of migrants who left for Korea for several years, and who upon return face a lack of knowledge about doing business, as well as lacking social networks to support the development of one. The results of this study illustrate that the success or failure of returnees in running a business significantly
depends on their preparedness before returning home. Those received help from their contacts in Vietnam, particularly their families, who understood well the business environment and assisted them to establish business were likely to be more successful than those who lacked of helpful contacts despite of having enough monetary resource for opening a business. The more supportive networks that returnees have, the higher the likelihood that they succeed in running a small business is.

6.2 Networks and Finding Waged Employment

Previous studies on return migration present different findings from this study in relation to the factors affecting the choices for waged employment of returnees. According to a study by Tiemoko (2004), West African returnees who had migrated overseas for work based on family’s encouragement and had stayed in contact with their families throughout their stay overseas were more likely to engage in salaried employment. A study of Borodak and Piracha (2011) provides different findings from Moldovan returnees, who tended to go into waged employment if they stayed illegally in the host country. In another example, Ngo and Pham (2015) demonstrate that Vietnamese returnees who worked in Japan primarily relied on the International Manpower Development Organization of Japan (IM Japan) or their returnee friends to obtain a job with a Japanese company in Vietnam.

Unlike Vietnamese returnees from Japan who had access to an organisation such as IM Japan, there is a lack of similar organisations formed to assist Vietnamese migrants returning from Korea to obtain a job with Korean companies or other companies located in Vietnam. The limitation in their ability to access recruitment information is an important factor, resulting in the small number of returnees from Korea engaged in waged employment. Most of the returnees prefer to work with Korean companies over locally owned companies because they expect that
their experience of working in Korea might help them obtain a good position and higher wages. The findings of this study show that at the time of fieldwork, only two of thirty-three returnees had become wage employees in a manufacturing or service company, although many of them had returned to Vietnam some years prior to the interview and only one was working for a Korean company.

Obtaining a stable job in governmental or public organisations or in large companies where workers can have well-paid salaries and pensions is the dream of most returnees. They, however, have no o du 6 (influential people who make crucial decision or have connections with people making crucial decision in recruitment) in order to access such job positions. Only a few returnees have family members or relatives who can be their o du because they are poor and rank low in social and economic strata in their home country. Therefore, to approach an o du, returnees have to pay huge brokerage fees for obtaining a good job back at home. I was surprised when many interviewees repeatedly told me about the o du custom in the North and Central North of Vietnam. Many job applicants cannot obtain a desirable position without an o du, although they are qualified and have to pay some tens to some hundred million VND (a thousand to over ten thousand USD). Jobs are limited, while the demand for jobs by local people is extremely high. This has increased the important role of o du in the process of acquiring a job.

The fees for ‘buying’ a job (demanded explicitly or implicitly) depend on the closeness of the relationship between the job applicant and the o du, and the prospective income from the job. High brokerage fees for jobs, high competition among job seekers, together with lacking access to o du, have resulted in difficulties in finding good wage employment. Thus, returnees rarely find a stable waged job from Vietnamese organisations or companies.

6 O du is a Vietnamese word which means ‘umbrella’ in English. This word implies protecting forces or influential people who can support someone to achieve something promptly; for example, to obtain a good job or position at work.
Because finding a well-paid job with good working conditions is so difficult, some returnees work as brokers in Vietnam. In the eyes of the community of origin, returnees are regarded as persons who had gone through the migration process, have overseas experience, and hold trustworthy contacts (Singhanetra-Renard, 1992; Spaan, 1994); thus, being migration brokers is a potential career option. In the context of Vietnamese society, where people hold low trust towards others beyond bonding social networks, people in the community believe that returnee brokers, who are their neighbour or co-residents in their hometown, are more trustworthy compared to other commercial brokers. This constitutes an advantage for returnees wanting to work as migration brokers, particularly for migration to Korea.

Although temporary labour migration between Vietnam and Korea has been taking place since early the 1990s, I noticed that, up to the present, there is a lack of associations formed by former migrants to aid prospective migrants. Returnees have access to rich information and can draw on their own experience about the migration; hence, they would be one of the best advisors to prepare others for migration. This study found three returnees who were working as brokers, introducing local people to companies that help prospective migrants. These brokers are not workers who receive a monthly salary from that company; instead, they receive a share from the migration fees paid by each prospective migrant. The more clients they can introduce to the company, therefore, the higher the income they can achieve.

According to the comments of some respondents in this study, among the various types of brokers, returnee brokers are regarded as the most reliable because they live in the community; hence they feel more responsible for clients from the same hometown and the success of their migration. In fact, prospective migrants can be reimbursed for their migration fees if they cannot migrate. Any accusation of signs of cheating may ruin these brokers’ business reputation and they would face ostracism from the community. This is illustrated by the following example.
Minh, who outed himself as a formal broker living in Cuong Gian commune of Ha Tinh province, was linking people from his hometown to companies that introduce Vietnamese people to overseas work. Minh had worked in Germany as a low-skilled worker for five years and later migrated to Korea on the basis of a three-year work contract. He was deported after overstaying in Korea. Upon return to his home community, Minh started providing brokerage services since he realised his migration experience (and more importantly, his relationships with people in communal and provincial authorities in charge of labour recruitment and training) would be beneficial for this job. Minh particularly aimed at bringing people from his hometown to Korea because he noticed that the majority of young people in his community had a strong desire to migrate to Korea. People in his commune can afford to pay the migration fees as they can find financial support easily from their community (as discussed in Chapter 4). With the savings earned abroad, Minh could send two of his sons-in-law to Korea for work and two of his sons to Australia for study and later for settlement. The youngest son had completed his bachelor in French and was studying for a master degree in the United States. Minh has built a good reputation in his village as he has assisted many people to migrate to Korea successfully. Depending on the closeness of the relationship between prospective migrants and Minh, he would charge over a thousand to several thousand USD for each successful case. The efficient cooperation with the authorities and the reputation of his family as one whose members can migrate to economically advanced countries made his voice influential in his community. All respondents of this research who come from Cuong Gian commune knew Minh. They described Minh’s as an idolised family in the village, and Minh as an understanding and skilful broker who is cognizant of migration policies, cleverly handling problems related to recruitment and the processing of paperwork, only charging brokerage fees if people migrate successfully. Previously, he had assisted co-hometown people to migrate to Korea through the EPS. However, since Korea suspended receiving new Vietnamese workers on this scheme, Minh had flexibly
turned to building necessary networks with companies in Ha Noi to provide brokerage services related to overseas study. He encouraged local young people to complete high school so that they could have a chance to receive an offer from a Korean college, which could be a way to make migration happen.

Minh worked as a formal broker, and was earning well from doing this job. Due to his good reputation in the business and a large number of people in Cuong Gian commune wishing to work in Korea, Minh had many clients. He was running his business well because he maintained wide and important networks with local authorities, labour export companies, companies for overseas study, and prospective migrants.

While Minh proudly told me about his job as a broker, two others were too shy to explain to me that they just wanted to help their villagers. However, when I asked whether they took some money for their help, they confessed that they did not set clear fees, but people gave them money as a gift for their assistance. The gift might consist of a thousand USD or more. Although the money received from providing such services is substantial in comparison with their income, brokerage was not the main job of these two returnees. They were informal brokers that operated on an ad hoc basis. When they would find someone interested in migrating overseas, they would offer him or her an opportunity to migrate. As I have observed in the field sites, returnees tend to be brokers for the country they themselves had migrated to. Previously, there existed some informal brokers in each commune of my field sites, particularly in Nghe An province. Unfortunately, Korea’s ban on receiving new Vietnamese workers and the strict policy in granting visa for Vietnamese people have led to the phasing out of brokerage jobs for some returnees. Under these new circumstances, they can hardly find any prospective customers for labour migration to Korea.
The cultural and social context of Vietnam has created constraints for returnees in building up a sustained livelihood upon their return. The mechanism of job obtaining in Vietnam which lacks of appropriate intervention of the government hampers workers to approach good jobs. Although some return migrants endeavoured to accumulate skills and knowledge during their stay in Korea, they were unlikely to be connected with well-paid jobs in their country. Networks in their community only could help them to ‘buy’ a job if they afforded. Otherwise, working as migration brokers was the most preferred paid employment.

6.3 Networks and Re-Migrating Overseas or to the South of Vietnam for Employment

This study includes seven returnees who were planning to re-migrate to Korea or to the South of Vietnam, where many Korean companies are concentrated. Due to the limited job opportunities in their hometown, migrants find it often difficult to obtain a good job upon their return. Many returnees become unemployed after returning to their home communities. Having been in the role as main breadwinner in their family, returnees are regarded as heroes or heroines by their family and their community because they encounter many difficulties and make sacrifices while working overseas to provide for their family.

Both Vietnamese men and women obligate to earn for their family; however, the Vietnamese culture assigns women as financial managers in the family. This research shows that before migrating overseas for money earning, female migrants might not be money keepers due to various reasons such as “being a young member of the family” or “did not have money”. However, after returning home, remittances which were kept by another woman in the family were transferred to the female returnee. Since they play the dual role of money provider and money keeper, their voice in the family is more respected.
It is important to note that in this study no one blamed returnees if their migration had not been successful. Returnees only encounter the pressure of financial problems if they cannot repay debts for migration and accumulate some savings or cannot obtain a good job in their community upon their return. Therefore, they end up adopting a different strategy by looking for another job overseas or in the South of Vietnam, where many Korean companies want to hire return migrants who have working experience in Korea. Families and people in some community, such as Cuong Gian commune, are willing to support these returnees, who failed in their previous migration, to find other job opportunities.

Those who were documented when they left Korea may be eligible to go back this host country. The re-migration process can be shortened if the Korean employers of the last company agree to sign a new contract to receive the very same migrants back. Most Vietnamese migrant workers attempt to build a positive relationship with their last employer because they know they may need a new contract as a guarantee for their remigration to Korea. If migrant workers cannot obtain a new contract before leaving Korea, they are likely to encounter many difficulties when applying for their remigration: they have to return to Vietnam for about three to six months to apply for a new visa, and then re-migrate to Korea, going through the same process of recruitment as they did for their previous migration (pass the KLPT and wait for the official recruitment from the new Korean employers). In case they have to wait for some years, their profile might be deleted altogether from the recruitment system. Therefore, by any means, returnees who are now prospective migrants have to make sure their job application is posted on the employment website quickly after passing the KLPT. Three returnees in this study informed me that they had successfully passed the KLPT and had been waiting for some years to re-migrate. Recently, their name had disappeared from the recruitment system and they could not complain about this with any Vietnamese recruiters. This means that the opportunity to re-
migrate becomes less likely for them. Therefore, it is crucial to maintain good relations with the Korean employer to increase the possibility for remigration to Korea.

My study includes an example of how a wise migrant maintained a good relationship with her Korean employer in order to get her new contract signed before leaving Korea. Linh returned to Vietnam three months earlier than the stated time of her contract completion because of the impending delivery of her first baby. She was affiliated with the last company for over a year, where she and her husband worked together. Linh confessed that she had actually not worked since falling pregnant and her total time working for this company was in fact less than a year. However, her husband worked hard and maintained good relations with the Korean employer so that they could ask their employer to sign a new contract for Linh. A few months after giving birth to a son, Linh applied for her remigration to Korea. Her application was easily approved after she had obtained the required scores of the KLPT.

As stated above, many documented workers plan for their remigration to Korea before returning to Vietnam, while undocumented workers have no chance to re-migrate due to their illegal status. Before Korea applied biometric scanning on foreign visitors, many Vietnamese undocumented workers who had been deported would change their name, obtain a new passport and manage to re-migrate in this way. However, since the scanning has been implemented, opportunities for re-migration to Korea no longer exist for undocumented workers.

In the case of those returnees who have no new opportunity for remigration to Korea, they have the option to migrate to other labour-receiving countries. For those who do not have many savings, the common destinations are Taiwan, Singapore, and Malaysia. Those who have more savings prefer to invest their money to find a job in Japan or in some Western countries such as Germany, England, or Australia, mostly on the basis of tourist visas. Most of these returnees do
not have to borrow money for their second migration because savings accumulated while working in Korea are often enough to cover the migration fees. Although these returnees plan to migrate to other countries than Korea, they are nevertheless confident to go to a new country because they are deeply involved in migration networks. Through experience from the previous migration, returnees can approach the ‘right’ brokers that may help them to lower costs and risks.

Lan, who lives in Cuong Gian commune (one of the so-called labour export commune), was taking a rest after a few years of working in Korea. She was planning to find another overseas job. This time round, she did not experience the same anxiety she faced when preparing for the first migration. She knew whom she should approach to find an overseas job. She explained to me about her plan for migrating again:

I stayed in Korea for three and a half year, became undocumented two years after arriving there. My parents passed away, so I voluntarily returned to Vietnam one year ago. I have not worked since my return, just enjoyed life. Of course, I prefer to stay in my hometown but when no more money is left, I have to work elsewhere. I am thinking of migrating to Taiwan or Malaysia. Here I can earn VND 3 - 4 million by selling fish, but I don’t like to take this job. I want to work overseas because the work I don’t think is hard, just lasting for many hours, and I can earn better than selling fish in my hometown. I am now using up my savings made during my previous migration to Korea. When the entire savings are nearly spent, I will think of what to do. I migrated before so I know many people doing brokerage. I can find a good broker easily and they also can find me a job easily (Lan, returnee, personal communication, 28 April 2015).

Although Lan had migrated overseas for employment once, she was not able to find a job overseas on her own; she still had to rely on brokers. However, the networks which Lan engaged in for her first migration could help her to plan better for the following migration. She knew the ‘right’ person who could assist her to obtain a job, and was therefore assured that at any time brokers could effectively link her to a job in a foreign country.
An interesting point which is contradictory to the cultural behaviour of people in Central Vietnam is that many returnees tend to rely on the savings accumulated whilst working in Korea and remain unemployed for a long time (up to some years), while others who never migrated are constantly thinking of ways to save, and keeping track of their daily expenses. Seven returnees said that they had spent some months or even some years relaxing and planning the best strategy for increasing their earnings. This attitude - thinking about ‘now’, not ‘tomorrow’ – stems primarily from wanting some enjoyment after years of working hard overseas, and from the confidence of knowing the ‘right’ contact to find a job when they need it.

In addition to migrating overseas for employment, returnees who were undocumented workers tend to find a job in the South of Vietnam if they have supportive networks, such as family and relatives who can provide them with jobs or have knowledge about jobs. There are many job opportunities migrants can obtain in the South because an increasing number of Korean, Vietnamese and foreign companies operate in this region. Besides, it is considered as a good place for settlement. Workers who plan to migrate to the South often discuss with their siblings or relatives about career options, and how these bonding ties can support their economic integration.

The case of Tuan is an example. At the time of being interviewed, he was not worried about money because he had already received a job offer to work for his uncle, who operates a hotel in Ho Chi Minh city. Before moving to the South for work, he married, took a rest for several months and attempted to have a baby. He told me that his job consisted of communicating with customers, mostly Koreans, because Tuan could speak Korean fairly well. Tuan said that he and his family decided to settle in this city which, he believed, is a good place for a family and their children can have a better education there. I have kept in touch with him via Facebook, and over the last year Tuan has settled into life in Ho Chi Minh city and has a well-paid job. His uncle
trusts him and appointed him as a manager of the hotel. He happily informed me that he is going to bring his wife and son to this city soon.

Another returnee, Phu, went back to Vietnam seven months ago after spending eight years working in Korea. He wanted to be with his family for a year, and then open a shop selling fabrics in Ho Chi Minh city. He told me in more detail about his plan:

I plan to migrate to Ho Chi Minh city. My sister is a fabric wholesaler and promised to help me develop my own small business. She wants me to be a retailer of fabrics, so she will open a shop for me. If I make a profit, this income source will be mine. If not, I can return the fabrics to her. I do not need any capital to invest into buying fabrics. I have visited her place to investigate the business. She is running her business very well because she has engaged in this business for many years and has many business partners and customers. With her help, I believe I can make money well (Phu, returnee, personal communication, 15 May 2015).

Phu had the advantage to have the vital support of his sister, who owned a well-developed business; thus, he did not need to look for a job in his community. Instead, he could move to the South, where his sister lived, and start his business without worrying about financial capital and the outcome of the business. He only had to pay for renting the shop, which was affordable because he had some savings from his working period in Korea. He confessed that he would never have dreamed of moving to Ho Chi Minh city if his sister had not been there and able to help him with the business. Phu told me that if his business were to be successful, he would bring his family to this city.

It is worth noting that remigration to overseas or migration to other parts of Vietnam mostly happens with male returnees because they are regarded as the main income earners in a male-dominated society like Vietnam. Female returnees only re-migrate overseas for the purpose of earning money if they are single or divorced and cannot find any good job in their home
community. If female returnees are married, after several years of working overseas, they are expected to stay at home and look after the family, especially children and ageing parents.

In short, re-migration is also a common livelihood strategy among Vietnamese returnees. However, this strategy can only be accomplished with the support generated by social networks. While migrants rely on brokers for their remigration to Korea or other countries, familial networks are influential factors to the migration to the South of Vietnam of some returnees.

6.4 Networks and Being Unemployed

Some scholars explain the unemployment of returnees on the basis of various factors, such as dissatisfaction with wages offered by recruiters when they re-join the domestic labour market (Arif, 1998), discontinuity of service in local jobs and lack of recent work experience required by employers (Muschkin, 1993), or ‘de-skilling’ due to having worked in lower-ranking jobs abroad compared to those that they held pre-migration (Smart et al., 1986; Stahl, 1982). The findings of this study provide other reasons for the unemployment of returnees, that is the lack of networks providing job information and assistance to obtain jobs as well as being discouraged from obtaining a waged job by their family.

In contrast to some other neighbour governments in the Asian region, there is a lack of reintegration programs provided by the Vietnamese government aimed at returnees. For example, the Pakistani government introduced credit schemes to promote self-employment, inclusive of the unemployed (Arif, 1998). The Overseas Pakistanis Foundation is responsible for providing information and assistance for the economic re-adjustment of returnees. Meanwhile, the Philippines government has also established a set of institutions in the home country and destinations to promote reintegration of returnees, particularly as regards the economic aspects.
The number of Korean companies built in Vietnam is increasing, providing more jobs for local workers, especially for those who have experience with Korean work culture and can communicate in Korean. However, most Korean companies are concentrated in the South of Vietnam while the majority of returnees live in the North and the Northern Central regions. These returnees rarely move to the South if they do not have any close relations who can assist them to obtain a good job. They also rarely access recruitment information of Korean companies in the South because this information is mostly announced in newspapers or on the company’s noticeboard. It is surprising that the Departments of Labour of each province, which processes applications for jobs in Korea, do not keep contact with or provide any support for these returnees, and link them with jobs in Vietnam, particularly with Korean companies.

One unexpected result of this study was that 19 out of 33 returnees did not have paid work when the interviews took place. I expected that returnees would find a job immediately after returning to their home community. I should mention that some returnees, who declared themselves as unemployed, were in fact only temporarily so, since they were searching for other opportunities. However, they wanted the right job, not just any job for the sake of being employed.

An interesting finding of this study shows that some returnees can receive good job offers but they refuse them because of their family’s disapproval. The family may discourage returnees from taking up a well-paid job if their workplace is far from home; working in an area far away in Vietnam is considered the same as working overseas because of the long distance and limited chances to visit home. Returnees have been absent from home for many years to work overseas; therefore, their family expects a proper reunion at some point. Some migrants marry during their migration period while others have a family when their return home. In the pre-migration phase,
the family is an incentive for prospective migrant workers to seek a job overseas although they have to live apart from home for several years; after returning, if migrants can build a house and have some savings, their family often asks them to settle in their own community. Many returnees said that their families discouraged them from accepting a job that requires them to live far from home, despite of the high salary they might get. This is narrated by Dung:

Returnees mostly are middle-aged and reluctant to take jobs in far away areas [in Vietnam]. For example, many Korean companies in Thai Nguyen, Bac Ninh, Ha Tinh provinces, and Ho Chi Minh city give the priority to those who can speak Korean. The Samsung factory in Thai Nguyen province offered me a relatively high salary, approximately VND 18 million. However, I could not take that offer because my family doesn’t want me to live apart from them again. If I do that job, I have to travel monthly to visit home. My wife said our children are still small, so she needs me beside her. She persuaded me not to do this job and insisted me to find a job in this city so that I can help her to look after our two kids (Dung, returnee, personal communication, 24 April 2015).

Dung’s wife asked him not to take the job offer because she did not want to live apart from her husband anymore. Therefore, he opened his own business, but went bankrupt. He was unemployed for a year before finding out about a Korean-Vietnam construction project in his city. Thai Nguyen is a poor province and is not considered as an ideal place for families to settle. Workers from other areas working in this province prefer to not bring their family with them, which means their savings are affected because of the need to pay for travelling costs to visit their family.

In additional to the distance of the workplace, some returnees were discouraged by their family from accepting a job due to the difficulty of the work itself. Tuan explained the reason why he did not apply for a job in Korean companies near his town, although he met all the requirements:

There are two Korean companies near here, one is an electronic manufacturing
company and another is a clothing company. They prioritise to recruit returnees who worked in Korea. Of course, all job applicants have to go through an interview. If they meet job requirements they may be recruited. Workers do day shift in one week and night shift in the next week. My friend in this village is working there and receiving salary of VND 5 million monthly. My family does not want me to take that job. They said I already worked hard in Korea many years so I need to relax for some months, concentrate on having a baby, and then plan to find a job in Ho Chi Minh city where my uncle is living. Currently, I don’t have any paid job (Tuan, returnee, personal communication, 09 May 2015).

Being discouraged by their family from engaging in waged jobs with worse working conditions and low wages, like the case of Tuan, has resulted in unemployment of some returnees. After discussing with his family, this returnee knew about recruitment but he did not apply for a job in these Korean companies. He and his family believe that they deserve some time together and to establish more efficient livelihood strategies for the future, rather than working in these companies.

6.5 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has discussed the important role of networks in regard to the various options for making a sustainable livelihood upon migrants’ return. The role of networks in securing this was assessed in relation to returnees’ search for jobs and the use of remittances, and by factoring in the differences between the various groups of migrants based on their gender and migration status. The key findings in regard to successful migration show that male returnees who worked in the manufacturing sector in Korea often have more opportunities to develop their self-owned business in their origin community or in the South of Vietnam. This success depends mostly on the level and depth of support they received from their close ties, such as family or extended family, who helps them to manage their business affairs or take on caring for other family members. These returnees have emerged as the most successful among their migrant returnee peers because of the high sum of remittances accumulated whilst working abroad and, perhaps
more importantly, the level and type of assistance they receive from familial ties.

Meanwhile, female returnees tend to come back to their role as caregivers of their family after spending some years working abroad. It is unclear whether their legal status as a migrant has any impact on the success of their livelihood upon return. It appears that gender is the overriding factor and the persisting socio-cultural roles assigned to women in Vietnam are caregivers. If they play a role as breadwinners (by earning overseas), this is a temporary obligation.

Most documented migrants wish to go back to Korea for another round of overseas employment based on support by their Korean employer, while undocumented migrants tend to establish their self-owned business or look for a job in the domestic labour market in Vietnam or in other destination countries.

Ruben et al. (2009) raise the important question about the contribution of return to the development of country of origin. Koser and Black (1999) note that there is severe criticism by scholars against the positive link between return migration, sustainability, and development. Sustainable return migration takes place when returnees are socially and economically embedded in their society (Davids & van Houte, 2008). In terms of social embeddedness, a clear differentiation was found between support provided by families and non-family sources in assisting return migrants in reintegrating into their home communities or country. Families (“bonding ties”) are the most crucial ties helping returnees to succeed in setting up their self-owned business, while brokers (“bridging ties”) continue to have an important role in assisting returnees to find other types of work or re-emigrate overseas. The successful cases of obtaining sustainable livelihood perform that they have built and maintained transnational networks with people in the home community in their pre- and post-return. Particularly in the context of Vietnam whose the domestic labour market has high competition partly due to o du culture, the
lack of post-return assistance crucially affect the establishment of sustainable livelihood of returnees.
Chapter 7

Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

The main purpose of this study is to draw attention to the multiple roles of social networks in the context of temporary contract migration between Southeast and East Asia in assisting migrants at each stage of the migration cycle to achieve their main goal: to earn a sufficient amount for making a living upon their return, and thus establish a sustainable livelihood after their migration. This study investigates the spatial and temporal bases of social networks because migrant workers who form part of a transnational space are not only engaged in social networks in the country of origin, Vietnam, but also continue to expand their networks in the country of destination, Korea. Gender aspects of these social networks are also examined because migration from Vietnam to Korea is highly gender specific. The analysis was guided by the network-based theory of social capital, which was applied to the actual experience ‘on the ground’ of Vietnamese temporary migrant workers in their attempt to succeed with their “migration project”. The migrant experience was explored and tested via qualitative methodology on the basis of in-depth interviews and participant observation, and cross-validated with interviews conducted with other stakeholders (Vietnamese government officials, staff of NGOs in Korea, recruitment agents, family members). The outcome is a multi-dimensional analysis of the role of social networks in migration.

In this final chapter I shall summarise the key research findings and discuss their implications for the research on social networks and social capital in transnational, and particularly intra-
Asian, contract labour migration. Based on the findings of the research, this chapter will bring together the combined dimensions of networks established to reap benefits from the migration project and ensure a stable life upon the return of migrants. In doing so, it will highlight the main contributions made by this study in terms of empirical, theoretical and methodological approaches. I also propose policy directions required to construct a better migratory framework for temporary labour migration, in Asia in general and from Vietnam to Korea specifically. Finally, I will point to the limitations of the research by providing suggestions for further research on social networks of international labour migration.

7.2 Key Findings and Discussions about Social Networks and Temporary Labour Migration

Taylor (1987) argues that network ties are a source through which migrants can accumulate capital for their migration. In order to bring the migration project to successful completion, migrants, especially temporary labour migrants, have to rely heavily on networks to assist them in creating and accumulating economic capital. In this study, I have discussed several questions associated with social networks of and for migrants: 1) How do changes in the regulatory framework of temporary labour migration affect agencies of migrant workers and their implications for networks they join? (Why are networks formed? What are the exact purposes they serve? How are they formed along the migration cycle? What is their composition? How are networks categorised in terms of bonding and bridging ties?); 2) How beneficial or damaging are networks? (How do networks serve the “money making” project of migrants? Who are the beneficiaries?); and 3) What are the characteristics of networks in relation to their temporal and spatial embeddedness, and in relation to gender?

In this section, based on the findings of this study, I discuss four main points related to social
networks for Vietnamese temporary migrant workers in relation to the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter 2. First, I summarise the effects of the regulatory framework of temporary labour migration between Vietnam and Korea on building migrants’ agencies since the start-up of these migratory flows up to present. Second, I categorise both the beneficial and damaging effects that social networks have brought to migrants in each phase of the migration cycle. Third, I confirm the spatial and temporal complexity of social networks. Finally, the gender aspects of social networks are discussed in the last section.

7.2.1 Effects of Changes of the Regulatory Framework on Social Networks for Migration to Korea

Bebbington and Perreault (1999) and Foley and Edwards (1999) provide insights into the many discussions on social capital and social networks and call for greater attention to be paid to the wide socio-economic and cultural context in which social capital and social networks are generated. More specifically, Goss and Lindquist (1995) and Naughton (2014) suggest to bring the dialectic between structure and agency to the forefront in scholarly debates on social capital and social networks. When investigating the field of migration policies over time, i.e. since the start of Vietnamese migrant recruitment for work in Korea, it becomes evident that policies have been subject to frequent changes since the early stage of contract based labour migration in the 1990s. Vietnamese workers were hired to work in Korea through Vietnamese labour export companies under the regulations of ITTP (1994), and had to pay considerable sums of brokerage fees but worked as trainees who did 3D jobs and did not received the full wages of formal workers. Their families, however, invested their own financial resources to help prospective migrants to obtain a job in Korea. Due to the secrecy of the recruitment process and limited job quotas given to Vietnam, prospective migrants mostly depended on brokers who helped them to “buy” a job. When job quotas started to be distributed to vocational training and localities,
brokers, under the cover of recruiters and vocational and language teachers, became influential individuals in the labour selection. This period is marked by the termination of ITTP and the implementation of EPP (2003) and then EPS (2004). After the spread of corruption in recruitment for the Korean labour market was revealed, the MOEL decided to launch the EPS, which amended the entire process of recruitment and made this process more transparent. Prospective migrants who did not have any trust in the transparency of the recruitment process still sought support from brokers to be selected, while those who understood the mechanism of selecting workers applied for a job on their own. The suspension of the hiring of new Vietnamese workers by the MOEL between August 2012 and May 2016 led to the formation of various kinds of networks serving different types of channels for legal entry to Korea, such as sham marriage, overseas study, tourism, and medical treatment. Each network has different strategies for assisting prospective migrants to obtain a visa. Korea has recently accepted the need to grant limited visas for Vietnamese low-skilled workers. Therefore, moving to Korea through alternative channels is now the option chosen by most prospective migrants.

I argue that the changes in policies on contract labour migration between Vietnam and Korea have caused the changes in the organising and operating of networks that facilitate migration. This means migrant networks are not static but in constant flux in response to a shifting policy environment. In order to make gains from migration in this frequently changing space of recruitment policies, brokerage networks have been very active in forming new networks, which can immediately support people to migrate. Meanwhile, prospective migrants and their families have also displayed great flexibility by mobilising resources from new networks to obtain a visa to enter Korea legally. My findings have illustrated the importance for considering the impact of macro policies and their frequent changes when analysing networks, leading to a dynamic, non-static picture of networks and their role. Thus, looking carefully at the context and changes in
which networks are generated provides an insightful lens to understand the diverse outcomes of the changeability of social relationships, or in other words, the changeability of network connections in a morphological sense.

7.2.2 *The Spatial and Temporal Complexity*

Hiller and Franz (2004) have concerned themselves with new, old and lost ties in networks, while Ryan (2004) and Charsley (2005) have analysed the changes of familial connections through migratory movements. This study supplements these scholars’ discussion on social networks by paying attention to other aspects of their dynamic nature: the changeability of networks in terms of temporality and spatiality. By examining transnational social relationships implicated in the migration project, this study advances our understanding of networks by introducing complexity and shifting spatiality. While making money in Korea, my migrant participants play the role of providers who provide a living not only for themselves but also for the family left behind. Meanwhile, the family in the home country helps these migrants to manage remittances and encourages them to overcome difficulties in their work and life. The relationship between migrants living overseas and their families is maintained by frequent contact about issues related to family and remittances. However, the family at home cannot help the migrants to deal with every issue occurring while in Korea. Hence, migrant workers make new relations with friends, co-workers, and local people and join new networks in the host country, which may introduce them to a new job and or assist them to transfer remittances to their families back home. Migrant workers continue to engage in diverse relationships within geographically dispersed networks. The connections between migrant workers and local and transnational networks help to recognise the spatial distribution of networks.

In addition to spatial complexity, networks may also shift over time. The familial ties help
prospective migrants to organise financial matters in the pre-migration phase and then change their role to be remittance recipients and managers, or, in some cases, business networks interlocutors so that migrants can start their business as soon as they return to their home community. The family continues to be a supportive source for returned migrants in providing care for children and the elder, so that these migrants can focus on developing their career.

Meanwhile, brokerage networks that assist migrants to find a job are also changing over space and time. In the pre-migration stage, prospective migrants often need assistance from multi-layered brokers ranging from the local to the central administrative level in order to obtain a job. However, after moving to Korea, if migrants wish to change their job, brokers in their home country cannot help them to find a new job in Korea. E-9 visa holders can ask the MOEL to match them with another job while E-9 visa holders often seek support from co-ethnic migrant brokers to obtain a job. Upon their return, migrants who want to find a job in the domestic labour market can search for support from influential persons who can link them to employers, while those who desire to work overseas can find assistance from brokers as they did in their previous migration. These findings are overwhelming evidence corroborating the notion that over time, most migrant participants in this study have developed new social relationships and find alternative sources of support from these new networks. The temporal changing nature of networks is evidenced not only by the changing of roles of the same network in each stage of migration, but also by the extension or limitation of networks in a certain phase. For example, sharing the same findings of Ryan et al. (2008), this study has illustrated that the support systems required by, and available to, newly arrived migrants may differ from the types of networks they establish after becoming more familiar with the new environment of the host society. My observation and analysis of the networks Vietnamese migrants tap into while they live in Korea shows that the newly arrived migrants holding an E-9 visa often make relationships with co-
workers at their workplace and co-ethnic close friends, whilst those who hold other types of visa or become undocumented workers have to be more active in joining new social networks that can link them to jobs because they do not receive any formal support from the MOEL. This observation points to the implication of temporal differentiation of networks cross the time. In addition, similar to Schapendonk and Van Moppes (2007), I point out the changing forms of solidarity within migrants’ networks over time. The solidarity among co-ethnic close ties is mostly maintained firmly, while that of co-ethnic distant ties differs through time. This is strongly affected by Vietnamese culture which results in people often having more trust to and thinking of helping only their ‘bonding ties’ while throwing suspicion on people who they have distant relationships with. Co-ethnic fellow workers are often helpful for newly arrived migrants. However, in the case of contract-based migration from Vietnam to Korea, the extreme competition among workers at the workplace has resulted in jealousy and distrust, whereby some workers intentionally undermine co-ethnic fellow migrants who do well at work due to the fear of losing their current job. In addition, in the case of policies on recruitment of Vietnamese workers for the Korean labour market are often changed, the changing nature of networks also performs in the flexibility of formation of new networks serving for different channels of migration. This unique change of networks reflects is specific policy context of migration between Vietnam and Korea for making money.

The complexity of networks which temporary migrant workers holding different types of visa is presented in the appendix.

I have demonstrated the changing nature of social networks spatially and temporally which challenges the more static picture provided by other scholars of social networks. The emphasis on the dynamic and complex nature of social networks requires migrant workers to display great adaptation and the ability to mobilise resources taken from social relations in order to complete
their goals. However, not all migrant workers achieve success in accessing and utilising resources from networks. The next section will address migration success and failure because of positive or negative consequences generated by networks.

7.2.3 Advantageous and Downside Facets of Social Networks

The large body of research on social capital and social networks emphasises the notion of connectivity which necessarily helps migrants to get ahead, but little attention has been paid to the risks caused by social networks. My study has provided a more nuanced analysis by confirming the “double-edged sword”-like nature of social networks (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000, p. 231) by displaying not only beneficial but also damaging aspects in relation to turning migration into a successful endeavour. The data yielded by this study provide strong evidence that social networks play crucial roles in assisting migrants to make their migration successful. Familial ties tend to help migrants finance their migration (in pre-departure stage) and effectively use remittances (during the migration stage), whilst brokers act as powerful networks that introduce migrants to jobs in any phase of the migration cycle. However, it is not necessarily the case that networks for migrants are always helpful. In the Vietnamese communities of origin as well as destination, generally, help is often provided within a small group of extended family. In case of Cuong Gian people, who were born in a community where solidarity and obligations among co-villagers are high, they are helpful to their co-villagers either when they are in the home community or abroad. In the context of the large scale of co-ethnic community, assistance from people within the community has emerged as highly commercialised. In all stages of migration, most migrant workers often have to pay high sums of money to brokers for linking them to those who make decisions in the recruitment. Negative consequences generated by networks have shown by the high costs incurred by migrants for assistance received from their co-ethnic networks. In other words, networks might be beneficial to some people but detrimental
to others.

7.2.4 Gendered Networks

This study supports the call by Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994a) and Menjívar (2000) for the need to pay attention to the micro-sociological dynamics of networks that produce gender-specific meanings of social capital. Empirical evidence of the differentiation between men and women in the way they take part in different kinds of social networks for various channels of migration or job sectors that prioritise males or females has demonstrated that networks are gendered. Silvey and Elmhirst (2003) suggest that social hierarchies within networks are likely to lead to differentiated access to resources. Decision-making among family members based on gender norms influences not only conceptions of femininity and masculinity, but also the choice of who would be migrating. I expected that women might have less resources and opportunities provided by the families for their migration than men, as migration is commonly believed to be the domain of the latter. Contrary to my expectations, the results of this study show that families are willing to invest all their financial resources for the migration of any of their family members, if they are likely to migrate to Korea. Additionally, I noted an interesting result that contradicts other studies, whereby women are confronted with suspicion (Hellermann, 2006) or criticised by the communities at the origin and abroad (Dannecker, 2005); as a result, they distance themselves from existing networks and find themselves lacking support. My observations show that while living in Korea, some migrant women worked in agriculture but then they tend to move to manufacturing. These and other women working in manufacturing are quite actively participating in social relationships with men from the same ethnic background. Therefore, they can find support from these networks in the same way as their male counterparts. Upon return to their home community, as per the findings of Le (2013) and Healthbridge Foundation Canada (2008), this study shows that the social position of migrant women in the
family and community is enhanced, as their migration contributes to the improvement of the family’s economic condition. However, this may not change their relative position within the family. Women returnees maintain their role as caregivers in the family. The difference between my results and Boyd and Grieco (2003)’s is that women, not their husbands, can manage the income they earned while overseas.

7.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, I begin with the evaluation of each organisation involved in the “money making” project of Vietnamese migrant workers, addressing some inefficient aspects of the regulatory framework dealing with contract labour migration between Vietnam and Korea, and the operations of relevant organisations formed to assist migrant workers. This is followed by recommendations for policy amendments in order to improve the system of recruitment and using workers of both Vietnam and Korea.

7.3.1 Recommendations for the MOEL, Korea

This study has illustrated the effects of policy changes of the host country Korea on agencies of Vietnamese migrant workers as well as individuals involved in the migration project, such as brokers. Although Korean policies on low-skilled and low-wage migrant workers have been revised several times, gradually improving the conditions of migrant workers, there are several points that need to be reconsidered.

Firstly, although the sovereignty and economic benefits are the most important interests of Korea when taking a role as a labour-receiving country, it should also be concerned about the rights of and provide basic social protection for foreign workers. The foremost requirement to develop
policies regarding migrant workers in Korean society, or any society where the role of migrant workers is becoming more important, is a deeper understanding of the difficulties migrants encounter. As I have analysed in Chapter 4, the ban on hiring Vietnamese workers as a response to the high rate of undocumented people residing in Korea does not stop Vietnamese workers from migrating to this host country. The migratory flows to Korea continue, but through alternative channels. The findings of my research revealed that people migrating through these alternative channels mostly become undocumented a short time after landing in Korea. This has led to more difficulties for the Korean government in controlling and managing migrant workers.

Over the past decades, Korean policy developments have concentrated on expelling undocumented workers when their population reaches high levels. This shows the weakness of the Korean government in managing foreign workers. Since importing low-skilled workers is undeniably beneficial for Korea, the government should consider a better solution for dealing with the high rate of undocumented workers, rather than a sudden suspension in foreign worker visas. Korea also should not transfer the responsibility in controlling foreign workers to the government of the labour-sending country, because migrant workers are granted a visa for a legal entry to Korea by the Korea Service of Immigration; the movement of Vietnamese citizens to Korea seems to be out of the control of the Vietnamese government. Thus, I recommend that the MOEL and the MOLISA should discuss together a longer-term agenda for sending and receiving labour between Vietnam and Korea.

Secondly, undocumented migrants have been confronted with restrictions in accessing formal supportive networks provided by the Korean government. The system established by the MOEL to provide support for foreign workers excludes undocumented ones, which increases their vulnerability. Being undocumented is unexpected for any migrant workers. However, the structural barriers and working conditions lead many migrant workers to this condition. The
Korean government and its people should recognise the contributions of foreign workers to the economic development of Korea and reward these contributions by providing better working conditions, for example for workers in agriculture. Thus, policy makers should start with an expanded notion of protecting foreign workers, particularly undocumented ones, to put it into action.

7.3.2 Recommendations for the Vietnam MOLISA, SOLISAs and the Embassy of Vietnam in Korea

My research has pointed out that the Vietnam MOLISA is mostly concerned about negotiating a high number of job quotas rather than requesting better working conditions and protection for Vietnamese workers from the Korea MOEL. Korea often has the upper hand in making any change or decision related to the renewal or extension of MOUs. In addition, the MOLISA has shown its passive role in attempting to protect their workers overseas. Although the MOLISA has sent their staff to Korea for the management of workers abroad, migrant workers can hardly approach and receive any support from these officials. Whenever migrant workers ask for any kinds of assistance from staff of the Embassy of Vietnam in Seoul, they often face the arrogant attitude of the staff. Additionally, most of services provided by the Embassy of Vietnam are at higher costs compared to regular prices. Given the fact that the migration of Vietnamese migrants has contributed to the development of Vietnam as a labour sending country, it is advisable that the MOEL and the Embassy of Vietnam give more serious consideration to the safety of migrant workers, because they are Vietnamese citizens and more importantly contributors to the nation’s development. In order to protect Vietnamese migrants abroad, the MOLISA and the Embassy of Vietnam in Korea need to support the Overseas Vietnamese Association in Korea, which connects and support Vietnamese migrants residing in this host country as well as being an effective support system for Vietnamese migrants. The more
protection migrant workers receive from these organisations, the less risk they face while earning abroad.

The findings of this research also indicate that the processes of recruitment and paperwork completion in the pre-migration stage are poorly regulated. Data from my study and information from mass media have revealed that staff of MOLISA and the SOLISAs often blame Vietnamese migrant workers in case of any complaints by Korean employers and the MOEL. They intentionally ignore the root cause: the defection of Vietnamese migrant workers after a short time of working in the contract companies, which is mainly caused by the burden of extremely high debts for brokerage fees and sometimes bribes to MOLISA and the SOLISAs staff. Furthermore, it is unfair to put responsibility to protect Vietnamese migrant workers on Korea’s shoulders, while the MOEL and many NGOs in Korea continuously establish many centres to provide support for migrant workers; on the other hand, formal Vietnamese international labour migration organisations have provided little or no actual support for migrant workers so far. My study has demonstrated that the DOLISAs in provinces where I conducted the fieldwork, and the DOLAB (a department of MOLISA in charge of managing Vietnamese workers overseas) in fact function ineffectively. High corruption at various levels, from local to central, occurs at each step of the process. Despite many amendments, the EPS has made recruitment in the labour-sending countries more transparent; yet, individuals working in the MOLISA and the SOLISAs continue to find ways to take advantage of job applicants. Therefore, it is urgent and necessary to reform the entire apparatus from the local to the central level, which considers the advantages of workers as the first priority for the long-term development of international labour migration from Vietnam to not only Korea but also other labour-receiving countries.

Chapter 6 of this thesis shows that return migrants find it hard to access support for job search from the local DOLISA, which organises select workers for Korean companies. While Korean
companies in Vietnam often prioritise workers with experience in Korean companies and can communicate in Korean, many return migrants cannot be connected to these jobs. The DOLISA of each province has a centre for job introduction; these centres, however, mostly provide recruitment information about companies located within their province. I suggest that the MOLISA should help these DOLISAs to be more active in seeking jobs and connecting return migrants to Korean companies. In addition, it should fund the establishment of volunteer organisations to encourage migrants to plan strategically for their migration and return, as well as equip them with basic information about policies on working overseas.

7.3.3 Recommendations for the Community of Origin

Putnam (2000) argues that helpful and friendly community interactions are like social capital based on networks. Findings of a study on ethnic entrepreneurs and ethnic firms (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993) confirm the critical role of community for the mobility opportunities of newly arrived migrants. Similarly, this study has demonstrated the helpfulness of the communities of origin, such as Cuong Gian, in creating chances for their residents to migrate overseas. The local government at the level of commune is quite active and helpful in mobilising financial resources for assisting their residents to migrate and encouraging migrants to invest their remittances in the People's Credit Fund, which in turn gives loans with low interest to individuals who want to work overseas. Therefore, assisting communities to generate positive social capital for migration is a way to support local people to improve their life. Other localities should learn and replicate this model to help their residents find a job overseas. Moreover, educating villagers to be supportive to each other will encourage mutual help, so that individuals who take part in “money making” projects can be further assisted.
7.4 Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

7.4.1 Building up Criteria for Measuring Social Networks

This is one of the first studies of social networks involved in the “money making” project of temporary labour migrants who move from Vietnam to Korea. As outlined in Chapter 2, this study does not aim to measure the closeness or the strength of social relations, but focuses on examining various kinds of assistance provided by different types of networks. Therefore, this study is limited to identifying criteria for measuring the usefulness of each type of network in the case of temporary labour migration from Vietnam to Korea. However, these criteria might not be applicable for social networks of migration to other labour-receiving countries, where migrants are confronted with different structural barriers. Since migration based on contracts among Asian countries is increasing, identifying a set of criteria for measuring social networks involved in migration in both countries of origin and destination is necessary. Clearly, further research will be required to establish a system for the measurement of social networks for contract labour migration.

In addition, in this study, I tended to focus on the convertibility of social capital (which generates resources from social networks) to economic capital (remittances) by examining how social networks help migrant workers to make and manage money. I have paid little attention to the investigation of the convertibility of social capital to other forms of capital, such as cultural capital (a set of symbols and meanings; Bourdieu, 1986) and human capital (individual skills and abilities; Coleman, 1988). I suggest that a new generation of research in social capital and social networks of international labour migration needs to address the extended questions of the convertibility of social networks to other forms of capital to recognise their importance in building a sustainable life, not only in terms of economic but also cultural and human
development.

### 7.4.2 Data

Studying social networks of Vietnamese migrant workers should look at a wide range of involved individuals and organisations. The limitations of this research are related to the scope and the sample of research participants, which significantly impacts the interpretation of the data generated. The number of participants is not large enough to make the results of this research representative, and thus generalisable to social networks of temporary migrants in Asia.

Further limitations are related to the availability of data for analysis. Despite the study’s attempt to select various groups of informants for richer data and a multi-dimensional view of social networks, it lacks information provided by Korean employers, staff working for the Vietnamese Embassy in Korea, and Vietnamese and Korea policy makers who are directly or indirectly engaged in networks for Vietnamese temporary migrants. Due to a fear of being asked questions associated with working and welfare conditions of foreign employees, and with the hiring of undocumented workers (if any), all Korean employers refused to take part in this study. I believe that opinions of Korean employers will help the search on networks for employer-tied migration as this study makes more comprehensive analysis. Meanwhile, the Vietnamese Embassy in Korea was unsupportive when I invited them to participate in my research. The Vietnamese Embassy in Korea has been criticised widely by the whole community of Vietnamese migrants in Korea because of their irresponsibility and superior attitude towards their overseas citizens; however, it would be useful for this kind of study to obtain information from staff of this institution, to cross-check the comments Vietnamese migrants often made on them and their services. Information from policy makers on the why and how of existing policies on temporary labour migration would lead to a deeper understanding of difficulties or political barriers in the
proposal and implementation of policies. Thus, further research into examination of various groups is desirable to extend our knowledge of social networks of temporary labour migration.

Although a fairly large group of migrants (for a qualitative study) was recruited, most of them were working or had worked in manufacturing and agriculture. Only a few informants worked in fishing and construction, whose working conditions and social welfare might differ; in turn, this might affect the formation and accessibility to social networks of migrant workers in these fields. Data presented in this study, therefore, reflects only the social relationships of Vietnamese migrant workers whose jobs fall in the agriculture and manufacturing sectors.

7.5 Summing Up

This chapter has summarised the key findings and implications of the thesis, as well as proposing some recommendations for concerned individuals and institutions engaged in the “money making” project of Vietnamese migrant workers who moved to Korea for earning. The study developed and tested the concept of social networks in the context of temporary labour migration in Asia. This study found evidence to support claims that several structural barriers of the migratory framework of contract labour migration between Vietnam and Korea have restricted opportunities for earning and ensuring stability in the life of Vietnamese migrant workers. This study also addressed the agency of migrant workers, shown by their forming and participating in social networks in order to deal with structural barriers to make their migration successful.


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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Samples’ characteristics

<table>
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<th>No.</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Year of birth</th>
<th>Age at migration</th>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>Level of education before migration</th>
<th>Job before migration</th>
<th>Year of migration</th>
<th>Year of return</th>
<th>Times of migration</th>
<th>Visa type</th>
<th>Legal status</th>
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<td>1989</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
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Data collected from migrant workers working in Korea

Vocational training is a two-year program providing technological and technical trainings to students who already graduated grade 12.
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Data collected from returnees who worked in Korea and already returned to Vietnam

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Data collected from returnees who worked in Korea and already returned to Vietnam

1 male

301
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Appendix 2: Changes of roles of migration networks in different phases of the migration cycle

- *In pre-departure*

Figure 1: Migration networks for job search, recruitment and migration

![Diagram of migration networks for job search, recruitment and migration]

Figure 2: The role of relatives and neighbours for job search, recruitment and migration

![Diagram of the role of relatives and neighbours for job search, recruitment and migration]
Figure 3: The role of commercial brokers for labour migration

Central level ↔ Provincial level ↔ Commune level ↔ Village level

Korean International Training Cooperation Corps. → brokers → Labour supply companies

Departments of Labour → brokers → Prospective migrants

Vocational training colleges → brokers → Prospective migrants

Local authorities → brokers →

Figure 4: The role of commercial brokers for sham marriage migration

Prospective female migrants ↔ Brokers in Vietnam ↔ Brokers in Korea ↔ Korean men

Korean Embassy/Consulate ↔ Local Department of Justice ↔ Local City Hall

Korean Immigration Service
Figure 5: The role of commercial brokers for overseas study migration

Prospective migrants ——— Brokers in village ——— Overseas Study Companies

Korean Embassy/Consulate

Colleges/Universities in Korea

Figure 6: The role of recruiters for job search, recruitment

Labour export companies (recruiters)

Prospective migrants

Vocational training colleges (recruiters)

Prospective migrants

Commune authorities (recruiters)

Prospective migrants

Figure 7: Networks for doing Korean language proficiency test

Exam organisers (recruiters)

Brokers

Exam invigilators

Examinees
Figure 8: The role of central and local authorities for job search, recruitment and migration

Authors of the state level  Authors of the provincial level  Authors of the commune level

Prospective migrants

Figure 9: Networks for arrangement of migration fees

Family members  relatives

Interpersonal networks

Arrangement of Migration Fees

Institutional networks

Banks
People’s Credit Fund
Poverty Reduction Fund

Friends  Usurers
• While staying aboard

Figure 10: Networks for job search of documented migrant workers

Figure 11: Networks for staying in the first contracted job and maintaining employment of documented migrant workers
Figure 12: Networks in the search of jobs for undocumented workers

![Networks in the search of jobs for undocumented workers]

Figure 13: Networks for remittance transfer

![Networks for remittance transfer]

Figure 14: Networks for Remittance management

![Networks for Remittance management]
• *Upon the return*

**Figure 15:** Networks for setting up a self-owned business

![Networks for setting up a self-owned business](image)

**Figure 16:** Networks for finding waged employment

![Networks for finding waged employment](image)

**Figure 17:** Networks for re-migrating overseas

![Networks for re-migrating overseas](image)
Figure 18: Networks affecting unemployment

Returnees

Family members