Negotiating in Migration and Environmental change: Experiences of Khmer communities in the Mekong delta, Vietnam

Truong Ngoc Thuy[*]

Research Center for Rural Development, An Giang University – Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City (VNU HCM)

Abstract: This paper reviews how Khmer people in the Vietnamese Mekong delta negotiate for their sustainable livelihood in the context of environmental change and urbanization and how potentially environmental change impacts their out-migration patterns. The concept of social risks and social networks will be developed, which is defined as how local people have been vulnerable in place of origin and destination and how they respond to enhance their socio-economic resilience. Therefore, the impacts of environmental change and urbanization can also be considered the main reasons for local people's short- and long-term mobility in vulnerable regions. The starting point of this paper will overview the migration and environmental change at the global level and rural-urban migration pattern, followed by analyzing these relevant concepts to clarify the research problem. Subsequently, the overview of the fundamental knowledge of migration in Vietnam can be understood by considering their historical process as a whole. On the other hand, to understand local people's vulnerability under this circumstance, the research investigates the social risks and its consequences for locals and migrants in general, particularly for Khmer people in the Vietnamese Mekong delta, concerning their social networks and cultural value.

Keywords: environmental change, migration, Khmer community, Vietnamese Mekong delta.

1. INTRODUCTION

The nexus of migration and environmental change can be experienced in rural areas of most developing countries in recent years, where agriculture-based livelihood is exposed to adverse impacts of climatic shift and thus, mobility functions as a means of coping. Outward migration is commonly perceived as a safety net for poor farmers who lack access to resources and capital for adaptation, particularly in the Mekong delta of South Vietnam (Thong, 2019).

Vietnam is one of the countries facing severe climate change impacts; the Mekong delta region is one of the three deltas that suffer high vulnerability (Tuan, Thuy, & Ngoan, 2014). In late 2015, in particular, 18 provinces in all the three regions (North, Central, and South) of Vietnam suffered the prolonged and steady El Nino-induced drought and saltwater intrusion (UNDP Vietnam, 2016). These provinces are the leading agricultural and aquacultural suppliers in Vietnam; The Mekong Delta is considered the "rice bowl" of Vietnam (Truc, V.B.Trinh, & V.T.Danh, 2008) – with the most intensive agricultural activities, especially in rice production (with 4.1 million hectares of rice production in whole year contributing about 90% for export), aquaculture (811 thousand of

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[*] Corresponding Author: tnthuy.agu@gmail.com

aquaculture areas with 60% for export turn-over) and the diversification of the tropical fruit trees (with 294,000 hectares of fruit crops supplying 70% of fresh fruits for the domestic market and export) (GSO, 2018). Throughout the history of Vietnam, agricultural and aquacultural production has always played a key role and contributed to food security.

However, (IOM, 2016) highlights the Vietnamese Mekong Delta (VMD) as one of the top disaster-prone regions in Vietnam (International Organization for Migration, 2016) and one of the most vulnerable regions to climate change worldwide for many years (Tuan et al., 2014). In particular, the low-lying coastal regions of the Mekong delta are more susceptible because of adverse impacts of sea-level rise, saline intrusion, and drought in the dry season (Kristensen, 2001). As shown in figure 1, those coastal areas in the VMD are vulnerable to incidence and prevalence of salinity and saline intrusion by hydrology change and sea-level rise (Asian Development Bank, 2011). Salinity concentration of 4 gram/litre continues to spread inland in the Mekong delta; in 1995, 1.7 million hectares (approximately 42% of the Delta) were covered by saline intrusion and intruding up to 45-65 km (Asian Development Bank, 2011), to about 80 km in 2016 and 110 km[1] in 2020 up the estuaries of the Delta, respectively. According to the Ministry of Natural Resource and Environment statistics, the current river flow in the upper Mekong River has been significantly reduced to the lowest point during the past 90 years (The general department of irrigation, 2016)[1] (ibid.). In order to respond to serious climatic change, communities suffering from natural hazards have displaced internally in recent years (more than 2 million between 2008 and 2015), showing out-migration-oriented livelihood strategies (Thong et al., 2019) and clear signs of the migration–environment nexus (IOM, 2016).

Regarding numeric data of Thuy's study, about 50% of young Khmers from rural core households engaged in non-farm jobs acquired their jobs through relatives working in the same place, or they were persuaded by relatives or friends to go and seek jobs in the same areas, especially when moving out of the village to urban areas to work as unskilled and low-paid labourers. Nevertheless, the young may also be heavily impacted when their household income is vulnerable. An arising issue in rural areas is the spontaneous migration of the young to cities for low-skill, low-paid and unstable work in factories or enterprises. Furthermore, out-migration also has negative social impacts on rural lives. (1)This mobility flow features geographical distances and dependence of left behind people (mainly elderly and children) on remittances from migrants; (2) Out migration also threatens the breakdown of traditional family structures, spiritual life and social values changes in a negative trend that have long existed; (3) the unbalance labour force between rural and urban areas; the lack of social cohesion among family members in family and communities as well (Thong et al., 2019).

Generally, the social vulnerability of the Delta to climate change impacts coupled with the opportunity of fast economic development has encouraged the migration to the urban centres. Migration can boost people's vulnerability when connected to the absence of funds, precarious living circumstances, and pressure on already fragile or non-existent infrastructures, social services, and the environment itself (Melde, 2015). Because of the diversity of people's vulnerabilities and resilience, several studies have demonstrated that climatic stresses disproportionately affect the poor, the elderly, certain ethnic minorities and vulnerable women and children in rural and urban areas. However, to date, there has been limited research on the linkages between climate change and the migration flow of ethnic people in the Mekong delta.

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[1] https://vietnaminsider.vn/vietnam-copes-with-historic-drought-and-saltwater-intrusion-in-mekong-delta/

2. The existing rural-urban migration knowledge in Vietnam

2.1. The shifting nature of mobility in Vietnam

Human mobility is not a new phenomenon and one of the most essential features of Vietnamese history because of its experience of endless foreign wars (A. Dang, Goldstein, S., & McNally, J 1997; A. Dang, Goldstein, & McNally, 1997). Alongside the research of Tana (1996), the history of Vietnamese mobility (Hardy, 2003) was analyzed under the three administrative periods: The French colonial regime (1859-1954); the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) (1954-1975); and the subsequent Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) in the Renovation since the late 1980s (Tana, 1996).

The population movement was more popular during the French colonial period (1859-1954). Dang, Goldstein and McNally (1997) contended that there are 3 forms of mobility, including (1) the rural-urban migration of landless people, (2) the movement of local wage labourers from subsistent rural areas to plantation/mining operated by the French, and (3) seasonal agricultural migration for seeking temporary employment opportunity is the third category represents apparently the most significant movement scale (A. Dang, Goldstein, S., & McNally, J 1997). During this time, the French-planned migration program aimed to accelerate economic development rather than reduce overpopulation pressures in the Northern Delta and uplands of Vietnam. Dang et al. (1997) and Hardy (2003) argued that the wave of seasonal migration during this period had greater permanent impacts, which were the subject of an "overpopulation debate". The purpose of their movement was mainly for survival strategy and labour market demand responses (Ngan, 2010).

During the twenty years of the Vietnamese war (1954-1975) after the victory over the French colonial forces at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, a large-scale population movement followed suit under war conditions as a result of conflicts of government regimes and policies between the North and South of Vietnam (Dang et al., 1997). According to the Geneva agreement, while South Vietnam followed capitalism, North Vietnam adopted socialist ideologies. Urban people in the North evacuated to the countryside to escape war, whereas Southern people moved from rural areas to urban cities to avoid conflict in the countryside and seek safe lives. Therefore, the migratory pattern in Vietnam during this period was implemented by governmental regime policy on migration and upland development (Dang et al., 1997)

After the country's reunification in 1975, the government's planned policy orientation integrated national reconstruction efforts toward de-urbanization. The repatriation of the southern people to their homeland village and the endeavours to establish the "New Economic Zones" mainly were completed by the early 1980s. These aimed to restrict the population growth of urban centres and densely settled provinces in the Red River Delta (Dang et al., 1997).

Hardy (2003) pointed out two problems in terms of the deurbanization process and the rural-urban mobility gap of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, explaining as follows: (1) to reduce population pressure within regions, a vast migration wave took place from the Red River delta into the Mekong river delta and central highland, (2) the highlander had been bias by the ideology of "revolution meaning" (Hardy, 2003). Hardy (2003) argued that the decision-making process reveals a complex inter-relationship between policy and practice. When they migrated to the North and the central highland regions, migrants from the Delta used their village discourses following the official ideology, which interpreted the population movement to defend their fatherland (Mori, 2008).

Since the late 1980s, in the newly created context of Renovation (Doi Moi *in Vietnamese*) - the transition of the national economy shifted from a centrally planned to a market economy (Tien and

Ngoc, 2000), and the state no longer regulated migrants between the regions in the same way as before. The globalization of the export-oriented Vietnam economy has generated different labour force demands, including demand for mobility between regions and provinces (Scott and Chuyen, 2004). In free migration, network availability was significant; the social network and family became flexible and were "as much invented as inherited" (Hardy, 2003). In the research on the rural-urban migration in Vietnam, Tien & Ngoc (2000) claimed that the vast labour force was the essential resource of the spontaneous migration to the cities resided in rural areas. Hence, farmers can control their production power in the family and mobilize the labour power in households to shift to non-farm income-increasing activities as well (Tien & Ngoc, 2010) .

Despite economic and demographic as the main reasons for spontaneous and government-sponsored program migration (United Nations in Vietnam, 2010), it is currently evident that environmental degradation has significantly influenced and determined Vietnamese population mobility patterns. Hence, the government has initiated some resettlement programs since the 1990s, communities have been resettled by the government and at the same time have been suffering substantial environmental degradation in recent years (over 2 million people between 2008 and 2015) (International Organization for Migration, 2016). Many people also move back to their original areas as soon as the main risks are perceived to be gone, without any long-term resilience strategies. At the same time, several hundred thousand people living in areas severely damaged by natural hazards or at high risk of exposure have been relocated through government programs. Many others have undertaken seasonal migration or have migrated permanently to urban centers to escape environmentally unbearable living conditions, to enhance their livelihoods, or simply to support through remittances to their family and community in their efforts to adapt to environmental degradation and climate change in their areas of origin.

2.2. Khmer people and their mobility

The Khmer group of Vietnam is the largest ethnic minority group with over 1.3 million people (about 7%) of about eighteen million totally, followed by Chinese and Cham with about 823,000 (about 1.0%) and 10,000 people, respectively (GSO, 2016). The Khmer people in Delta concentrate on 23 districts of the eight provinces An Giang, Kien Giang, Can Tho, Hau Giang, Vinh Long, Tra Vinh, Soc Trang and Bac Lieu (Figure 2.1). This group is part of the Mekong delta multi-ethnic communities in general and Kien Giang province particularly. Initially, Khmer group lived in their own language and practised their own religion, and the subsequent process of incorporation into and between these different ethnic groups was characterized by different historical periods in Vietnamese (Thuy, 2012).
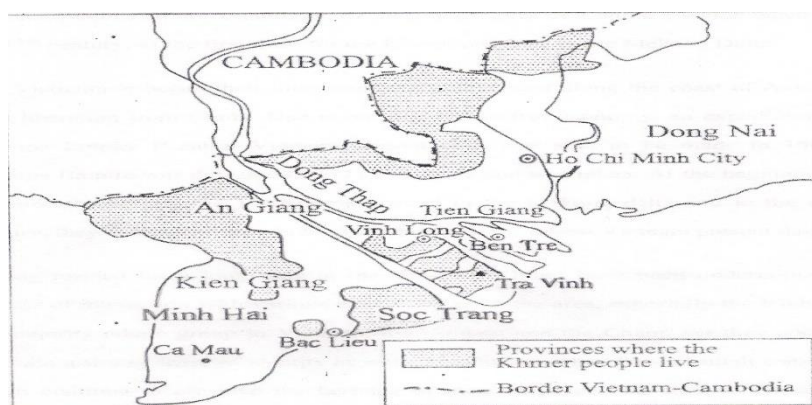
Figure 1. Distribution of Khmer in the Mekong Delta (*Source*: Thach Ngoc Minh, 2002)

About the geographical location among groups in the Mekong delta, the Kinh (majority people) community lived in convenient trade locations and owned arable land that they used for agriculture and aquaculture practices; the Cham and Hoa (Chinese origin) people also lived in advantageous natural locations (in the lowest areas of the Delta). The Khmers, on the contrary, mainly lived in areas with poor geographical conditions around the mountainous slopes, coastal areas, and in separate groups. The small groups were called *phum* in Vietnamese ('small village'), and large groups were called sok ('commune') (Thach, 1993). Due to their more extreme conditions, Khmer communities were isolated and self-contained (Thuy, 2012).

On the other hand, they have formed social relations with each other, contributing to southern Vietnam's local culture and general cultural characteristics (Thuy, 2012). In Thuy's research about the national poverty reduction policies impacts on the livelihood of Khmer poor people, there is a strong sense of family. Most of them prefer to obtain work through their informal social networks and learn experiences rather than through official government channels. According to Thuy (2012), their social relationship is simple; their villages have been constructed by households historically in the clans and kin. Khmer livelihood strategies in the Mekong delta rely on mobilizing household labour and diversifying income for survival (Thuy, 2012). Led to the work of Lan (2009) in relation to the cross-border work of Khmer people, poverty in terms of lack of productive land, low educated, and language barriers is the central point encouraging Khmer ethnic people to move across the border to Cambodia in search of better employment opportunities (Lan, 2009). As with Huy's (2009) findings regarding the Khmer migration in Tra Vinh province, over one-third of the family members are migrant labourers outside their village, representing 45.47% of family labourers. In addition, 76.32% of migrants have moved toward commercial or industrial cities for above 6 months to initially engage in informal sector jobs (Lan, 2009). On the other hand, when agricultural production in recent years has been exposed to climate change such as drought, saline intrusion, and flood; the research of Dun (2011) illustration that the common practice of local people who rely on agriculture during the flood is also mobility near or far towards other provinces for work as seasonal labourers (Dun, 2011).

2.3. Conceptualization of rural-urban mobility

The conceptualization of migration as multi-dimensional is problematic when operationalized. From economists' viewpoint, rural-to-urban migration can be seen as the labour mobility process from the less-developed to more advanced areas. According to Lewis (1954) (as cited by Loi, 2005), the main reason for migration is the wage difference and labour inequality between rural and urban areas especially employed in the industrial sector. However, other researchers argued that Lewis's migration theory could not clearly explain migration in developing countries because the specific feature of developing countries is the high population growth. Hence, rural-urban migration is not only because of the cities' wage difference and labour demand (Loi, 2005). The most common theory concerning the cause or origin of migration mentioned by demographers and geography is the push-

pull theory (Harper, 2001), which means that people move because of whether they are being pushed out of their homeland or pulled to a better prospect at the destination. The contribution of Portes and Borocz (1989) in two common characteristics is that the theory of push-pull is involved in the origins of migration flow and the supply-demand related to migrants' adaptation practices (Portes & Borocz, 1989). In reality, in line with Harper's (2001) work, a complicated mix of push and pull factors operates jointly to impel migratory behaviour. In line with the research of Ngan (2010), the push factor can consider the motivation of capital interests involving escaping their poverty or natural disasters and fears for personal safety at homelands (Ngan, 2010).

In contrast, the pulls are likewise complex and involved in the perception of better economic opportunities and greater social stability and affiliation (Harper, 2001). In the same viewpoint of Lee's push-pull theory (S.Lee, 1966), the push factors are driving forces and more critical than pull factors for producing migration in rural areas where local people are faced with such challenges, including deprivation unemployment, and landlessness. In the analysis of Cu Chi Loi (2005) about the push-pull perspective, while either push or pull factors may affect migration, migration is primarily the product of a combination of both "push" and "pull" factors related to the areas of origin, destinations, as well as individual factors (Loi, 2005).

It is not surprising to find that different and contesting views exist regarding the causes of migration, given its complexity. These differences arise from perceptions and determinants that are not always made explicit. The push-pull framework has emerged from the neoclassical theory that aims to illustrate the economic context of labourer flows (Bauer & F.Zimmermann, 1999). According to Piche (2013), perceiving the labour market is one of the conceptual weaknesses of research on migratory economic integration in both developed and developing countries (Piche, 2013).

According to Piche (2013), three modes of incorporation building on the principle of labour market segmentation were founded by the study of Michael Piore in 1979. The group of the labor market, who refers to professionals and skilled workers, have unionized and significantly advanced in relation of sustainability, high salaries, and good working conditions. In contrast, another group of the labor market has marked by low wages, unstable employment and low unionization levels. However, the most original idea concerns the third mode of incorporation examined on American, Asian immigration (Japanese, Koreans), Cubans in Miami by Portes (1981) is the ethnic enclave, who includes immigrant groups located in particular geography have their own business to serve their own network and mostly belonging to other immigrants (Portes, 1981). In this sense, Piche (2013) argued that this third mode of incorporation into the labour market contributes to the notion that unskilled immigrants are not all at the bottom of the socio-economic level.

Based on the literature above, the research aims to conceptualise the migratory livelihood of the Khmer communities vulnerable to environmental change in a framework of constant displacement between the city and their homeland, which is followed by a dynamic process of their cognitive and practical reconstruction in their social networks. This research focuses on how they reorganize and make sense of their lives when moving to a different geographical place.

2.4. Push-pull factors and risks to society in mobility

Some indicated push-pull models are classified as factors lacking a structure to incorporate them into an explanatory scheme (Skeldon, 1990). When migration is considered an action rather than a process, motivation factors that shape and facilitate human decisions in mobility are structured as both spatial and temporal binary oppositions (rural-urban, underdeveloped-developed, tradition-modern), and parts can be explained as the operation of push-pull (Mori, 2009). As Hear, Bakewell,

and Long (2018) goes to argue, the inception and perpetuation of Lee's migration theory have been explained in another way at the micro-level (as household decision making) or the meso level (as a social network). He clarified that while people viewed migration as household strategies driven by the risk rather than by an individual issue, others have emphasized that chains, networks, and culture are essential in sustaining migration. So, the two earlier approaches offer valuable complexity and underline the value of the individual. In particular, Portes and Borocz (1989) contended that social channels, an essential aspect of labour migration, create spaces for the settlement of individuals who do not directly participate in the labour process. In Piche's (2013) study, migration has been examined as a multifactorial and multidimensional phenomenon incorporating its three main features: origin and destination; micro, meso, macro and global analysis levels; and economic, social and political dimensions (Piche, 2013). To go beyond the convention, some recent anthropological studies on migration, particularly rural-urban migration, challenge this rural-urban dichotomy with cultural analysis.

Besides the discussion of the meaning of push-pull theory, the risk society concept of Ulrich Beck (1999) also supports us in fully understanding what difficulties Khmer ethnic migrants and their left-behind family members have coped with in the context of environmental change influence. The risk society concept of Ulrich Beck (1999) helps us understand what difficulties Khmer ethnic migrants and their left-behind family members have to cope with in the context of environmental change. In this research, the risk concept of Beck will be applied to comprehend the impacts of environmental hazards and migration on the life of local ethnic people.

Following the line in thinking of the relationship between risk and environmental change, the driving forces for rural-urban migration are urbanization and economic growth, as well as climate change impacts to be viewed as complex interplay and sequence of movement. The urbanization process has taken place worldwide and has been seen from different perspectives and in various dimensions. Cities with greater opportunities for generating income have encouraged more people to migrate, causing inequality and poverty (Saraya, 2008). Although environmental change has not been considered the direct driver influencing migration, frequent climate-related occurrences impact local people's livelihood activities and motivate them to leave to limit their risks (Binh, 2018). Moreover, there are various significant socio-economic consequences of migration caused by the current context of climate change in source communities to be coped with for sustainable development. In the same vein, Antman (2018) goes even further by pointing to the migration consequences in terms of more negligible livelihood diversification, restricted poverty reduction opportunity, leaving behind elderly and children who have to be taken care of, coping with natural disasters, diseases, and environmental degradation, and lacking labour force in climate change mitigation practices. The impact of migration also increases gender inequality gaps when female non-migrants have been burdened with their unpaid family work and have to deal with the climate event shocks. In contrast, they have less opportunity to access resources in the locality (Binh, 2018).

Another work by Geest (2014) examined the impacts of climate variability on local livelihood and the reasons to migrate to the Mekong delta of Vietnam. In his findings, internal migration can serve as an adaptation strategy for climate-event change. It contributes not only to a sustainable livelihood for the migrants but also to the improvement in life quality for their left-behind family members. Whereas internal migration could improve the local livelihood, Geest argued that the poor young migrants had faced other challenges at their destination after moving to avoid one type of vulnerability. Notably, they often lack the necessary practical training and skills to migrate successfully, while they also have to deal with uncertainties in their lives during mobility. The young migrants could barely sustain livelihood security for themselves. Therefore, they could not transfer

remittances to their left-behind family members in the locality initially planned. The study of Ngan (2010) investigated not only the migration but also the remigration processes of the Khmer people in An Giang province of the Mekong delta, Vietnam – has revealed similarly tricky situations. Without being able to adapt to the living and working conditions in the destination, mainly due to high costs for daily needs, unstable income, language barrier, and working time pressure, some of the Khmer migration group returned home (Ngan, 2010).

In the research of Ngan (2010) regarding the Khmer migrant returnees, their livelihood strategies have been unsustainable in the long run because most are unskilled workers. They had to work hard, but their salaries were low. Furthermore, they have faced insecurity regarding incompletely covered insurance allowance and the unavailability of social welfare for them in the workplace. The reason behind it is their short and unstable working time; thus, when old age comes, they cannot continue the present work but are not given a pension or social benefit.

On the other hand, the dispute over power relations should have an essential role in the discourse about migration (Yuko, 2011). In Harima's (2003) work, the valid argument is that most ethnic migrants are highly vulnerable to various forms of exploitation and abuse in many respects. Although the migration process does have its positive impacts, its drawbacks are also considerable. Firstly, the trafficking of women and children has become a severe problem in modern society that leads to undocumented females being sexually exploited. Secondly, there is no job security for unskilled and undocumented migrants. They have no written employment contract, which makes them vulnerable to exploitation. Thirdly, immigrants typically suffer from unfortunate living circumstances, with overcrowded and unhygienic housing. These are causes of high stress, poor mental health, and even acute HIV and other infectious diseases (Harima, 2003). Still, as Hislop (2013, p.187 cited by (Heizmann & R.Olsson, 2015) argues that "discussions of power are typically marginalized, if not completely absent".

To comprehensively analyze what general factors and specific causes make the ethnic Khmer group members living in the Vietnamese Mekong delta migrate to other places, the push-pull theory will be applied as a part of the analytical framework in this research. In my research aiming at the driving forces of the Khmer's migration flow, I will rely on the earlier mentioned theoretical concepts and empirical works. I will focus on the Khmer people's perception regarding environmental changes and their impacts on their livelihood and agricultural practices. On the other hand, from my viewpoint, the social risk of Beck is also relevant to the context of my research site. This research aims to point out how the Khmer migrants perceive the risks of migration both in the destination (risks they face) and their homeland (risks that their left-behind family members face). Furthermore, it aims to reveal how migrants and their family operate their social networks to cope with their risks. This study emphasizes the role of social networks and visualizes their social and cultural interactions with various groups of people.

2.5. Social networks in mobility practices

The idea of social capital was originally conceptualized from three sociological perspectives based on the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman, and Robert Putnam. In the viewpoint of Robert D. Putnam, it is derived from the economic transaction as "features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions" (Putnam, 1993). While economic capital is measurable, social capital refers to social networks that can serve as resources and assets. According to Field (2003), social networks are the fundamental idea of social capital, which is a valuable asset. "Networks provide a basis for social cohesion

because they enable people to cooperate– and not just people they know directly-for mutual advantage" (Field, 2003):12). Bourdieu has explained that "...social capital as the sum of resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu & J.D.Wacquant, 1992):119). The approach of Coleman (1994) (cited by Gauntlett (2011)) on social capital is the resources of family relations and community social organization that are useful for the cognitive or social development of family members. Corresponding to my research context, through the lens of Coleman, he highlights the functions of social capital as part of potential measures for poor, marginalized people regarding its norms, networks, and relationship (Gauntlett, 2011). In so doing, this research also considers the broader view of Coleman on social capital, which supposed that "where it is not seen only as stock held by powerful elites, but notes its value for all kinds of communities, including the powerless and marginalized" Gauntlett (2011):3.

This research sheds light on how the migrants conceptualize and reconstruct their social networks in mobility practices. Practically, they sometimes are victimized, powerless and humanized. Thus, they usually face many problems and try to find a way to cope and negotiate for their survival. According to Yuko (2011), the idea of "art of the weak" from de Certeau (1984) is adopted as the spatial practice of social interaction between people or tactics of negotiation; social networks are commonly used by people who are moving or migrating from one place to another (Yuko, 2011). There are some objective reasons for ethnic migrants in the study of Thuy (2012), but such action has been changed. She argued that fulfilling family and social duties and maintaining a relationship with the original community might face difficulties. Due to reliance on generating an income far from home, the Khmer migrants only participate in the critical traditional festivals. They cannot return home to enjoy all the Khmer festivals, such as the fifteen-day *Sen Dolta* festival because the companies demand that they work night shifts, and if they took time off, their salaries would be deducted for the number of days absent from work. Their family, therefore, returns to celebrate some of the shorter festivals during the year (Thuy, 2012).

An illustration of (Strassen, 2007) also critically analyzed the social interaction of rural-urban migrants concerning the cultural articulation for this case. According to him, urban and rural life provided quite different and yet intermingling pictures of cultural identification schemes. In the same vein, the study of Mills (1993) on the rural-urban female migration in Thailand examined that the migrants shift through their mobility not only a physical space but also their identities and social relations. Mills finds the immigrants have encountered a conflict between two ideas of tradition and modernity for simultaneously trying to achieve both (Mills, 1993).

More to the point, besides the effects of migrant employees on social networks, cultural capital will also be concerned. Cultural capital includes three forms regarding embodied, objectified or institutionalized in the theory of Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The understanding of Cole[2] about the notion of the cultural capital of Bourdieu: "Cultural capital is the accumulation and knowledge, behaviours, and skills that one can tap into demonstrating one's cultural competence, and thus one's social status or standing in society.. this accumulation was used to reinforce class difference, as historically and very much still today, different groups of people have access to different sources and forms of knowledge, depending on other variables such as race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, religion, and even age" (Huang, 2019). Specifically applying to this study, the cultural element consists of knowledge, skills, work experience, working habit, and recreation. The cultural value would be embedded in symbolic values, socially recognized

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[2] Cole, Nicki Lisa. 2019. https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-cultural-capital-do-i-have-it-3026374

legitimization, and as the individual resources based on honour, prestige, or recognition, behaviour and functions of cultural value (Yos, 2002).

On the other hand, the social capital concept will be applied to Khmer communities that have developed and maintained their social network in a changing socio-economic environment. Based on their different social relationship, each peasant community has a diversified form of adaptation to deal with particular situations and conditions that vary according to a particular context. Their social networks include family, kinship, friendship, neighborhood, acquaintances and the relationship between employers and employees, between local authorities and villagers. This study will examine the social and cultural capitals in the context of Khmer communities with respect to understand how migrants and left behind family members influence and expand their social networks in mutual interaction within their relations. In practice, in order to access employment opportunities, generate income in the labor market, and resettle their new living location, Khmer migrants depend on not only cultural capital in relation to the educational credentials, working experiences, skills, lifestyle, religious belief but also social capital regarding to family relation, friendship, kin network, neighborhood. Hence, based on the above traditional network concerns, this research will consider what forms and functions of Khmer people's social and cultural capital during migration. It aims to reveal the homeland and their urban-based networks in their urban and homeland livelihood.

3. Conclusion

In summary, the analysis provides an overview of Vietnam's environmental situation and mobility process, drawing the links between environmental change and migration and discussing the relevant concepts. In particular, this chapter reviews the literature on migration theory, push-pull and social risk in mobility practices, and networks in the migration context influenced by climate change to demonstrate that each has provided critical new insights on migration processes. We have attempted to demonstrate the nexus between the arguments on whether and how ethnic migrants construct their social networks in destination places and how they build up their social networks, thereby contributing to a better understanding of migration and cultural change. Drawing upon the literature and empirical issue on social risks among migrants, especially ethnic migrants, this chapter shows how the Khmer migrant and left-behind family members are affected by environmental change.

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