The Making of the Civil Society Person: Civil Society and Personhood of Female NGO Workers in the Context of Post-Socialist Transition in Vietnam

Binh Thi An Trinh

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Leeds

School of Politics and International Studies (POLIS)

May, 2020

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

The right of Binh Thi An Trinh to be identified as Author of this work has been asserted by her in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

© 2020 The University of Leeds and Binh Thi An Trinh

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the support of many special people. I want to express my gratitude to all those who provided me with the opportunity to complete this thesis. I thank my supervisors, Professor Caroline Dyer and Dr Jörg Wiegratz, for their invaluable advice and guidance throughout the research process. I am thankful for the support of academic staff in the School of Politics and International Studies (POLIS), especially Helen Philpott, Caroline Wise and Matthew Wilkinson, whose work behind the scene has helped to make my PhD journey possible and achievable. I am appreciative of the POLIS scholarship, which allowed me to complete my PhD research programme in a resourceful academic environment at the University of Leeds.

I thank my colleagues, my friends and my informants at home for their heartfelt support during my fieldwork in Hanoi. I am grateful to my colleagues at Plan International Vietnam, the Empowerment of Women in the Public Sector project, and my friends Duong Doan and Ngoc Nguyen for helping me to connect with the informants in their networks. I am thankful for the support of my working colleagues in local NGOs who have spent their precious time in their busy schedules to participate in this research. I am grateful for their generosity to share with me their life stories for the research purpose. I am thankful for Grab-bike drivers who were great companions with insightful stories about the changing life in Vietnam. My motorcycle accident before the fieldwork study accidentally made my fieldwork less than a solo journey for having great companions on the dusty and busy roads in Hanoi.

I am grateful to my friends in Leeds who shared joys and worries in our student life. I want to thank my housemates, especially Andria Charalambous, Jack Tobin, Amber Denton, Alba Alvarez Suarez, Carlos Montaña Garcia and Daniel Pérez Ruiz, who have been patient listeners to the stories of my life and PhD research journey. My PhD colleagues, Petra Destová, Rungchai Yensabai (Paul), Alex Prior, Ben Fermor, Dan Poprdan and Nawawi, were wonderful companions who have enriched my knowledge about the British (drinking) and international culture, politics and Brexit. My warm thoughts are with my close Vietnamese friends in Leeds, Ni Nguyen, Van Nguyen and Chung Pham who shared with me

good meals and food for thought. I am grateful for the voluntary support from my friends back home in Hanoi, Dung Tran and Hue Tran, who helped me with the logistics and note-taking of the fieldwork when I could not write with my right hand broken from the motorbike accident. My heartfelt thanks to my friend, Dr Dung Cao, who read and gave me helpful advice on several chapters of the first draft of the thesis; my Japanese professor Takeshi Kohno who has always extended his generous support on my educational and professional endeavour, and Professor Susan Bayly and Dr Nicolette Makovicky who have provided me advice and reading references for my research. I also want to thank my new friend, Peter Traynor, who helped me to improve my writing in English.

I am grateful for the unconditional love and support from my family: my older sister for her diligence and talent in business, which releases my financial burden; my younger sister for her prayers for my emotional and physical well-being; last but not least, my parents, to whom I owe my life and unconditional love. Without their love and support, I could not be able to dream and to fulfil my dream by going this far on this academic journey.

Abstract

About 35 years ago, Vietnam started economic reforms, known as *doi moi*, to develop a market-oriented economy. The economic reforms involved a proliferation of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which shaped an emergent civil society annexed to the system of mono-organisational socialism. The research investigates this emergent civil society with an examination of the personhood of Vietnamese female NGO professionals, by using Foucault's theory of governmentality and the Gramscian notion of civil society.

A qualitative research study using multiple data collection methods was implemented to generate 36 narrative interviews, three focus group discussions, written accounts of participant observation, and 30 concept maps. The narrative analysis was used to construct social narratives collectively and to identify themes.

The research reveals a cohort of NGO middle-class women whose status is dependent on their acquisition of material and professional resources in the market. The findings relating to the women's performance in the economy, particularly in the NGO sector, suggest their economic activities were meant to fulfil the reproductive responsibility, accounting for women's prestige in Vietnam. The research reveals that NGOs that have been professionalised towards care functions have become a distinctive realm for Vietnamese women to regain a role in public life. In this realm, the women demonstrated the morality of the "socialist woman" towards economic maximisation, to care for both the family and the community. Women's self-government in the role of carers illustrates a mode of governmentality operated by the socialist state to shape women's conduct with the moral and ideological appeal of women's reproductive role in Vietnam's socialist tradition. In this mode of governmentality, NGOs bear a resemblance to an autonomous civil society with the vested interests of women in the caring role, which has not challenged but rather renewed the hegemony of socialism with a good sense of economic efficiency.

Table of contents

Acknowledgements .... **ii**
Abstract .... **iv**
Table of contents .... **v**
List of tables .... **viii**
List of figures .... **viii**
Abbreviations .... **ix**
Chapter 1 - Introduction **1**
1.1 Overview of the research 1
1.2 Methodology and Data collection 8
1.3 Structure of the thesis 9
Chapter 2 - Market-oriented socialism in Vietnam after *doi moi* **14**
2.1 *Doi moi* to develop market-oriented socialism 14
2.2 The pluralisation of the social realm after *doi moi* 17
Chapter 3 - Personhood, civil society and mono-organisational socialism **25**
3.1 Introduction 25
3.2 Personhood: technologies of the *homo oeconomicus* 27
3.3 Civil society: intellectuals, knowledge and ideological domination 34
3.4 Mono-organisational socialism vs civil society 42
3.5 Conclusion 48
Chapter 4 - Insider status and methodological approach **51**
4.1 Introduction 51
4.2 The constructivist approach 52
4.3 The insider-outsider positionality of the researcher 54
4.4 The research design 59
4.4.1 Snowball sampling 61
4.4.2 The informants 65
4.4.3 Narrative interviews 66
4.4.4 Focus group discussions 69
4.4.5 Participant observation 72
4.4.6 Concept-mapping 74
4.5 Data analysis 77
4.5.1 Data and data corpus 77

4.5.2 Data analysis 79
4.6 Ethical issues of insider research 88
4.7 Conclusion 94
Chapter 5 - Performance of the middle-class 96
5.1 Introduction 96
5.2 Learning to sacrifice 97
5.3 The moral of the NGO middle-class consumers 112
5.4 Optimise with “Bolshevik” moral 121
5.5 Conclusion 135
Chapter 6 - Self-optimisation for “care”: the moral subject of collectivism 137
6.1 Introduction 137
6.2 The intellectuals who know how to care 138
6.3 The heroic mothers who sacrifice for the care of the family 149
6.4 The ethical subject of collectivism 162
6.5 Conclusion 169
Chapter 7 - Optimising in the people’s realm 172
7.1 Introduction 172
7.2 Civil society as people-oriented organisations 174
7.3 Building solidarity for the care work 185
7.4 Defending the space for care 193
7.5 Optimising for professionalism 201
7.6 Conclusion 209
Chapter 8 – Conclusion– personhood and civil society: making the *homo-oeconomicus* with the socialist soul 213
8.1 Introduction 213
8.2 Key research findings 214
8.2.1 Governing from afar: making the *homo oeconomicus* with the socialist soul 214
8.2.2 Civil society: (re-)making the power of Vietnamese socialist women 220
8.3 Methodological contributions 226
8.3.1 Contributions from insider research 226
8.3.2 The generation of visual and textual narratives 228
8.3.3 Narrative analysis and the construction of themes 229
8.4 Implications for further research 230
8.5 Learning experience 234

Bibliography 237
Appendix A Map of Hanoi 255
Appendix B List of informants in pseudonyms 256
Appendix C Interview and Focus group Guide 259
Appendix D Members of Vietnam Fatherland’s Front 262

List of tables

Table 1 - Denotations of freedom and happiness from the concept-maps...84

List of figures

Figure 1 - The structure of mass organisations in Vietnam..........................19
Figure 2 - Examples of concept maps...75
Figure 3 - Examples of concept maps collected from the field.....................76
Figure 4 - Organisation of the data corpus...79
Figure 5 – Coding interview data into major categories 81
Figure 6 - Analysis of focus groups data..83
Figure 7 - Thematic maps 87
Figure 8 - Main themes and subthemes...87
Figure 9 - Hannah's Three-Bubble Model 180

Abbreviations

CBOs	Community-based organisations
CSOs	Civil society organisations
GONGOs	Government-Owned Non-Governmental Organisations
IFIs	International Financial Institutions
INGOs	International non-governmental organisations
NCP	National Party Congress Meeting
NGOs	Non-governmental organisations
NI	Narrative interviews
SEDP	Socio-Economic Development Plan
SOEs	State-owned Enterprises
VCP	Vietnamese Communist Party
VNGOs	Vietnamese (or local) non-governmental organisations
VUFO	Vietnam Union of Friendship Organisations
VUSTA	Vietnam Union of Science and Technology Associations

Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Overview of the research

This research explores the personhood of Vietnamese female professionals working in the sector of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the context of Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation, by examining their self-government using the Foucauldian notion of *governmentality*. The research specifically looks at the moral and ideological appeals of the self-government of the women in the context of Vietnam's post-socialist market liberalisation to explore the transformation of a cluster in society, particularly in the emergent NGO sector in Vietnam, and after *doi moi*. The examination of the proliferated autonomous and self-governing activities in NGOs, in parallel with the pre-existing system of the state-owned mass organisations, is also aimed at exploring the consent and contestation of civil society within the single-party political system despite market liberalisation.

After adopting *doi moi* policy (often known as economic renovation[1] or reforms) in the late 1980s, the Communist leaders of Vietnam started to develop a market-based economy by gradually withdrawing direct interventions in production, giving room for the private sector to develop. Some observers suggest that the success of the economic reforms has saved the Vietnamese Communist leadership from the political collapse which put an end to communist rule in Eastern Europe by the late 1980s (Vandemoortele and Bird, 2011). The market reforms of the *doi moi* policy of the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) account for increased direct foreign investment (FDI) inflows, steady economic growth and poverty reduction performance (Vandemoortele and Bird, 2011; Fforde and De Vylder, 1996; Hayton, 2010; Beresford, 2008). The World Bank has highlighted Vietnam's rapid economic transformation as a successful example of market liberalisation derived from renowned structural adjustment prescriptions for

[1] Vietnam's *doi moi* policy is often referred in English as economic renovation (see Luong, 2003; Beresford, 2008) and in the combined phrase *doi moi* economic renovation (see further explanations in Chapter 2).

economic restructuration in formerly socialist economies (Hayton, 2010; Gainsborough, 2010; Fforde and De Vylder, 1996; World Bank, 1996). However, as several scholars have well noted, Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation is far from the World Bank's prescription of a transition from socialism, considering the country remains a socialist country (Hayton, 2010; Gainsborough, 2010; Beresford, 2008).

Unlike many communist regimes in Eastern Europe, which were replaced in the process of developing capitalist market economies, Vietnam, following China, remains under a socialist state despite implementing extensive measures of market liberalisation. The state, while having withdrawn substantially from direct interventions in production and supplies, still has a profound role through its stronghold of state-owned enterprises (SOEs), which account for a major sector of the economy (Bui, 2015; Hayton, 2010; Gainsborough, 2010; Fforde and De Vylder, 1996). Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation, thus, bears features of market liberalisation of the structural adjustment programmes but remains under the totalitarian rule of the Communist Party, which claims to develop the market economy to serve its vision of socialism (Hayton, 2010; Dinh, 2003; Gainsborough, 2010; Fforde, 2016; Fforde and De Vylder, 1996).

In general, the economic growth in Vietnam over the past three decades accounts for the legitimacy and supremacy of VCP which still exercises a dominant role in the economy (Hayton, 2010; Beresford, 2003, 2008; Bui, 2015; Luong, 2003). However, as several writers have noted, changes in the economic sphere were not initiated by the top leaders, but forged from repeated and widespread "fence-breaking" (*pha rao*) practices at the grassroots level (Hayton, 2010; Luong, 2003; Fforde and De Vylder, 1996; Vasavakul, 2003; Kerkvliet, 1995). When writing about "fence-breaking" in Vietnam, Fforde and De Vylder (1996, p. 138) claimed that local officials and cooperative managers continually broke out of the plan to engage in autonomous transactions in the free market to cope with the resource scarcity allocated within the state system. Beresford (2003) also wrote about proliferated transactions of state-owned production materials in the informal economy of the state cadres to cope with the supply shortages of the subsidised economy. The fence-breaking practices of microeconomic activities in the informal economy without the approval of the state created contestation within the political system which finally formalised the economic reforms known as *doi*

moi policy in the late 1980s (Beresford, 2003; Fforde and De Vylder, 1996; Kerkvliet, 2003a).

Evidence from studies of the fence-breaking practices suggests that the dynamism in the microeconomic activities is capable of influencing changes in the state's macroeconomic policy, despite the totalitarianism of the socialist state (Vasavakul, 2003; Kerkvliet, 2003a). Lessons learned from the grassroots microeconomic movements before *doi moi* economic renovation inform the dynamics in the social realm in the market economy. For example, Fforde and De Vylder (1996) suggested that the transition was pushed for from below because of the failure of the centralised economy. They wrote: "The planning system's failure in 1978-79 to maintain control over resources forced economic agents - individuals as well as agricultural cooperatives and state-enterprises - to engage in the process of 'reform from below'" (Fforde and De Vylder, 1996, p. 12).

However, after nearly 35 years since *doi moi*, there has been little or almost no change in the social and political system (Thayer, 2009). Despite the development of the multi-sectoral economy, the Communist Party leaders declared their intention to develop market-oriented socialism, which confirms the leadership of the Party in the process of economic transition (Gainsborough, 2010; Hayton, 2010; Dinh, 2003). Thayer (1995, 2009), who has published several research reports about the social system in post-reform Vietnam, stated that there had been little change in Vietnam's mono-organisational socialism in which the VCP continued to lead the system of social associations within the party-state apparatus. Several studies of Vietnam's civil society after *doi moi* found little evidence of an autonomous civil society, despite the reporting of a vigorous development of individual and private-owned organisations resembling NGOs, without the provision of associational rights or official recognition of independent civil society (Thayer, 2009; Wischermann et al., 2016; Salemink, 2006; Drummond, 2000; Wischermann, 2010; Vasavakul, 2003; Kerkvliet, 2015; Sidel, 1997, Beaulieu, 1994). There is ample evidence of the state's repression against independent civil society organisations, especially politically oriented organisations and human rights activists (Thayer, 2009; Kerkvliet, 2015; Bui, 2015). Observation of the constrained civil society institutions in Vietnam, despite the expansion of the multi-sectoral economy, raises a question about the

reconfiguration of the state-civil society relations in the post-socialist market economy, i.e. how did the state govern a vigorous multi-sectoral economy without altering the monolithic system of mono-organisational socialism? And why has the proliferation of voluntary organisations and associations representing interests of the stratified population in the economy not challenged mono-organisational socialism?

In this research, I continue the effort to unravel the dynamism of the civil society in Vietnam by looking at the character of post-socialist personhood in the context of Vietnam's *doi moi* post-socialist economic transition. In particular, with the use of Foucauldian government theory, this research explores self-government based on the notion of the *personhood* of Vietnamese women working in the NGO sector in the process of marketisation and privatisation. This research will look at the aspirations, dreams and beliefs of the Vietnamese post-socialist women, and their freedom and economic maximisation in the market economy. This study of personhood will build on findings of the neoliberalisation process in post-socialist economies. The examination of personhood, using the Foucauldian notion of *governmentality*, which rests on the power of self-government, will reveal how the state has governed the autonomous economic activities of individuals in society from a distance. Governmentality allows the state to govern individuals in society, not by coercion but by "habits, aspirations and beliefs" in Tania Li's proposition of the voluntary "will to improve" or Foucault's proposition of self-government as the *conduct of conduct* to mobilise voluntary self-governing practices to realise the priorities of neoliberal market reforms (Li, 2007, p. 5; see also Leshkowich, 2012; Bui, 2015).

The study of personhood in this research focuses on women in post-socialist economic transition. Women in socialism are considered the subject of emancipation from the exploitation of capitalism and colonialism (Gal and Kligman, 2000; Pettus, 2003). Socialist states often construct women's participation in the labour force as the symbol of women's advancement in socialism (Gal and Kligman, 2000a, 2000b). Unlike the notion of equality in a Western society, which is based on equal rights, women in socialism are dependent on the state's socialist welfare (e.g. provision of free childcare or communal kitchens) and on the socialist ideology of the socialist worker, to derive the idea of equality and advancement (Gal and Kligman, 2000a; Pettus, 2003).

The socialist ideology of women as socialist workers accounts for women's freedom to produce and reproduce for the collective economy. Studies of women's policy in the process of marketisation and privatisation in Vietnam suggest that the state continues to promote women's reproductive responsibilities in the economy with freedom in the market, and with the renewed socialist ideology of emancipation (Nguyen, 2018; Pettus, 2003; Rydstrøm and Drummond, 2004; Drummond, 2004; Nguyen-Vo, 2008). As Bui (2015) argues, the socialist state in Vietnam has operated a form of governmentality to govern individuals in society with moral and ideological devices to gain consent in society in the process of economic reforms. Like Bui, several researchers of post-reform Vietnam also suggest that Foucault's theory of government technology with the conduct of conduct for the realisation of economic maximisation has been optimised by the socialist state to reconsolidate its rule with the consent of the masses for the market reforms and economic growth (Bui, 2015; Drummond, 2004; Nguyen-Vo, 2008). This research continues to look at governmentality through the examination of the self-government of Vietnamese women working in the NGO sector in the context of Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation. Specifically, I will explore the extent to which the state has motivated the self-governing practices of women in the market. The examination of the self-government of Vietnamese female NGO professionals will explain the consent and contestation of women (with or against the socialist state or the market) in the emergent civil society in the process of post-socialist economic restructuration in Vietnam.

It is noticeable that, whilst neoliberal proponents, with World Bank as a leading example, often repeat the phrases "post-socialist" and "economic transition" to highlight the passage of socialist authoritarianism to liberal capitalism (World Bank, 1996; Fukuyama, 1992), I do not intend to use these terms to reflect this logic. Though acknowledging the pervasiveness of the neoliberal market restructuration worldwide after the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, I agree with Hann and Dunn (1996) and Burawoy and Verdery (1998) that the research of post-socialism should not neglect the legacy of socialism which has been deeply rooted in the cultural and social practices of post-socialist societies. Also, I wish to recall Harvey's (2005) proposition of neoliberalism as a doctrine which was neither universally nor scientifically contested. Harvey (2005) argues that

neoliberalism has become the dominating force in the global economy because of the ideological appeal of "freedom", which is mainly used to support governments and capitalist elites' interests in market expansion. Zhang, (2010, p. 17) proposes neoliberalism as "a set of malleable governing technologies" so that socialist states can conduct socialism from afar. Also, according to Zhang and Ong (2008) and Ong (2006), post-socialist authoritarian states have initiated economic reforms with forms of governmentality to renew the legitimacy of socialism with economic supremacy. These propositions can enable researchers to look at neoliberalism not necessarily as a facilitator of change, but rather as a tool to reinforce the domination of rulers, liberal as well as authoritarian regimes, through economic efficiency. The notion of neoliberalism as "governing technologies" suggests that knowledge of neoliberalisation process in post-socialist economies needs deconstructing and reconstructing in the inherent post-socialist cultural and social tradition in order to construe the mutual relations between socialism and the free market in the post-socialist economic transition.

In this research, I also acknowledge the genealogy of civil society, which is inherent to the Western liberal culture of capitalist development. Propositions of civil society often highlight its value in terms of autonomy and independence from the state to substantiate free rights and property rights (DeWiel, 2008; Ferguson, 1767; Diamond, 1994). On the other hand, Vietnam is a post-colonial and socialist country with a weak capitalist culture and with no precedent experience of liberal freedom (Nguyen, 1974). Recent research of post-socialist socio-economic transformation in Vietnam has nonetheless found constrained liberal practices in the nascent civil society under the system of mono-organisational socialism (Gray, 1999; Hannah, 2007; Thayer, 1995, 2009; Sidel, 2010; Kerkvliet, 2015). Therefore, the deployment of the Western notion of a standard civil society as a legally protected realm is not useful to unravel the transformation of the emergent civil society in Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation. Moreover, the imposition of an understanding of civil society in Western liberal culture might mitigate the chance for the research to explore and present knowledge of the emergent civil society in a non-Western and non-liberal context. To explore the dynamics of civil society in Vietnam' post-socialist economy, I will deploy the Gramscian notion of civil society to unravel the cultural and power relations between the state and civil society in the process of post-socialist economic transformation in Vietnam.

Civil society in Gramsci's proposition is not separate but fulfils a function of the state for the mutual interests in ideological domination (and the economic interests of the capitalists). Gramsci suggests that the consent of civil society for a dominating economic regime contributes to the ideological hegemony of the state. For example, neo-Gramscian theorist Stuart Hall (1988), suggests that consent in British society for capitalism has contributed to the hegemony of neoliberalism in the UK. According to Hall (1988), the deeply rooted market practices in British society have reinforced the common-sense of market liberalisation of the Thatcherism project. Harvey's (2005) proposition of the domination of neoliberalism also highlights the common-sense in Gramscian tradition, which generates the consent of the wider society for being deeply rooted in social and cultural tradition. He stated: "Cultural and traditional values (such as belief in God and country or views on the position of women in society) and fears (of communists, immigrants, strangers, or 'others') can be mobilized to mask other realities" (Harvey, 2005, p. 39). The Gramscian notion of civil society, which suggests seeing civil society in the historical and cultural formation process of the state, therefore, is useful for this research to explore the dynamics of civil society in the process of post-socialist economic transition. It is noticeable that the socialist political system remains unchanged despite market reforms which have rather renewed the legitimacy of the socialist state in Vietnam (Bui, 2015). The use of Gramsci in this research, therefore, is useful to explore the consent of civil society with the hegemony of socialism in the configuration of Vietnam's market-oriented socialism.

By positioning the study within a theoretical framework which combines literatures of civil society and governmentality, I conduct this research to explore the answers for the following research question and sub-questions:

Main research question: What does the examination of the personhood of the post-socialist female professionals working in the NGO sector reveal about the dynamics of civil society in Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation?

<u>Sub-question 1:</u> How does the self-government of these women in the context of the marketisation and privatisation of *doi moi* economic renovation demonstrate the prestige of Vietnamese female professionals in the NGO sector?

Sub-question 2: How does the self-government of these women in the NGO sector and specifically their role as carers demonstrate the morality of the post-socialist market economy in Vietnam?

Sub-question 3: How do Vietnamese female professionals working in the NGO sector perform an autonomous civil society in mono-organisational socialism?

To answer the above questions, I implemented a qualitative research study. I briefly explain my epistemological approach to selecting the methods of qualitative data collection and data analysis in the following section.

1.2 Methodology and Data collection

To answer the research questions, I implemented a qualitative research study to collect interview and other qualitative data from the informants. The data collection was aimed at generating personal narratives of the life-stories of the informants, to make inferences of the social and cultural context of Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation. The collection of narrative data was aimed at constructing the studied social phenomenon from the account of the informants.

I adopted the constructivist epistemological approach to unveil the knowledge about the transformation of civil society in Vietnam through the examination of the post-socialist personhood. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), the construction of knowledge involves the interaction between the researcher and the informants to construct reality (Lee, 2012). The constructivist researcher explores knowledge in the natural setting and constructs knowledge using interpretive techniques in dialectical fashion (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Lee, 2012; Williamson, 2006). In addition, I had the advantages of being an insider researcher, being both a Hanoian woman and a member of the subject community after having worked for several years in the NGO sector in Hanoi. I maximised the advantages of my insider status to gain natural access to the community and to generate the narratives of life stories of the informants. With my insider status, I immersed myself in the field and utilised the trust and acceptance of the informants to maximise the opportunities to talk, watch, listen, record, write and collect the data in my fieldwork study (Williamson, 2006; de Sardan, 2015).

I used multiple data collection methods to collect data for the research. To generate both visual and textual narratives, I implemented four data collection methods: narrative interviews, focus group discussions, participant observation and concept maps. I organised my own data corpus, including all field data for the data analysis. In total, I collected verbatim transcription of 36 interviews and three focus group discussions; field notes recorded from the participant observations in workshops and conferences, and 30 concept maps.

To maximise the richness of the qualitative data, I implemented an inductive thematic data analysis to find themes from the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). For the analysis of the narratives, I coded the interview data and focus group discussions, and compared the codes with findings across the data set. The purpose of the narrative analysis was to construct social narratives with the logic of the multiplicity of narratives in society (Shenhav, 2015). Specifically, I searched across the data set for repetition and variation in the accounts of the informants of their values, aspirations, fulfilments and sacrifices. I also maximised the variety of data types collected from the multiple data collection methods to generate essential discrepancies for triangulation purposes.

The inductive thematic analysis allowed me to maximise the richness of the qualitative data generated from the fieldwork. As already noted, my insider status allowed me to maximise the opportunities to collaborate with informants to search for their account of their reality. I periodically moved out of insider status to critically reflect on the biases associated with having an insider knowledge to make inferences from the information received from the informants. The use of reflexivity techniques by adopting the flexible insider/outsider positionality helped me to improve the methodological and ethical issues associated with my insider status, whilst maximising the strengths of this in terms of the trust and rapport I experienced with the informants.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

This thesis aims to explore the dynamics of civil society in Vietnam in the context of post-socialist economic transition from plan to market. With the examination of personhood using Foucault’s proposition of subjectivity and subjectivation, as the process of self-making, the research will present a perspective of the self-

government and self-optimisation of Vietnamese people in Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation. The research specifically focuses on female professionals working in the NGO sector in Vietnam. With Foucault's theory of governmentality, the study of women's self-government in the post-socialist context examines the transformation and continuity of the notion of the "socialist woman" in the context of post-socialist market liberalisation. The examination of the self-government of individuals, particularly women, in the era of neoliberalism will further elaborate on the process of neoliberalisation in Vietnam's post-socialist market economy.

This thesis consists of eight chapters. Following the Introduction, I briefly present the context of the research in Vietnam after *doi moi* in Chapter 2. In this chapter, I will present the context of market-oriented socialism in Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation within the framework of changing discourses of the state of market reforms and the new generation of socialist workers. I will also briefly introduce the overall picture of civil society organisations in Vietnam with the newly proliferated NGOs and voluntary and community-based organisations, following the state's socialisation policy after *doi moi*. In Chapter 3, I will explain the notion of personhood with Foucault's theory of governmentality within a neoliberal configuration. I will elaborate on the notion of personhood which is shaped by the conduct of economic maximisation in the private realm of free choice, self-interested calculation, decision-making and risk-taking which is represented in the idea of *homo oeconomicus*. I will also present the mode of governmentality in the post-socialist economic restructuration to offer a comprehensive perspective of personhood in the global neoliberal era. In this chapter, I will discuss the notion of civil society in the Gramscian notion of civil society and consent. I will differentiate the notion of civil society in Western liberal culture and the Soviet model of mono-organisational socialism. The literature review offers a theoretical framework to guide the data collection, and the data analysis, of the research of personhood and civil society in the context of Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation.

Chapter 4 introduces the notion of insider status and the methodological approach I adopted. I will present the constructivist approach to generate qualitative data and to implement the data analysis to draw out appropriate themes and sub-themes. In this chapter, I will critically reflect on my experience of doing insider research to maximise the opportunities to generate the richness

of the qualitative data. I will describe how I have collected data with the multiple data collection methods and analysed the data with the thematic inductive data analysis approach to find themes from the narratives of the informants. I will present the reflexive techniques which helped me to identify critical methodological and ethical issues associated with the insider status and how I used the flexible insider/outsider positionality to address and mitigate these risks.

The next three chapters present the key findings of the research. Each chapter was aimed at answering a specific research question and sub-questions. The findings in Chapter 5 will answer sub-question 1: *How does the self-government of these women in the context of marketisation and privatisation of doi moi economic renovation demonstrate the prestige of Vietnamese female professionals in the NGO sector?* This chapter will present the findings on the self-government of the female NGO professionals as the middle-class for the educational, professional and economic performance to possess privileged products and services in the market. The women's performance in the economy to care for the well-being of the family and the vulnerable community illustrates the morality of the new socialist person (through the symbol of *dan tri*) in the context of marketisation and privatisation. The findings on the performance of the women in the middle-class status in the chapter illustrate how the socialist state continues to dominate the middle class with the moral and ideological appeals of socialism. Chapter 6 will present the findings to answer sub-question 2: *How does the self-government of these women in the NGO sector and specifically their role as carers demonstrate the morality of the post-socialist market economy in Vietnam?* This chapter will present the findings on the performance of women in the role of carers of the family and society in the context of the state's reduction from the provision of social services. Findings in the chapter will contribute to the knowledge of the government from afar of the socialist state with the conduct of self-reliance and economic optimisation of Vietnamese women in the market for caring responsibilities in the context of the socialisation of public services. The research will reveal a mode of governmentality operated by the socialist state which mobilises individual responsibilities with the moral and ideological mandate of socialist workers to care for collective well-being. The chapter will present findings of the self-sacrificing labour of the Vietnamese female NGO professionals in both productive and reproductive activities to reclaim for

themselves a role in public life. The findings in Chapter 7 will contribute to the answers of the third research sub-question: *How do Vietnamese female professionals working in the NGO sector perform an autonomous civil society in mono-organisational socialism?* In this chapter, I present the findings of the research on women's performance in the role of carers for the well-being of the vulnerable and the poor in the people's realm. I will present the account of women's freedom which is associated with caring responsibilities in society. I will show that, in the role of carers, Vietnamese female NGO professionals have claimed the "right" to care for the collective well-being in the collectivist and socialist tradition, which is inseparable from the socialist state's general responsibility of care. The chapter will present findings of the professional performance of the female NGO workers in relation the caring functions, which contributes to an apolitical and non-confrontational civil society rather than the capacity of opposition and resistance. The findings in this chapter reveal the intermediary position of the Vietnamese NGO professionals in the governance of care in which they accumulate political support from both the state and society to remain active in the politically repressive and authoritarian environment under the socialist regime.

In the final chapter, Chapter 8, Conclusion, I will present key findings of the research of personhood and civil society in the context of Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation. The findings of research contribute to the knowledge of governmentality, which allows the socialist state to continue its rule, not by coercion but by the will to improve. I will present findings on the *ethical citizenship* in the context of Vietnam's post-socialist economic reforms which operates in compliance with the system of morality embedded in Vietnam's Confucian and socialist culture and with the mentality of economic efficiency in line with the discourse of the state of the new socialist person. I argue that women's self-government flagged with ethical citizenship continues to renew the hegemonic position of the socialist state in the process of market reforms. I also will show how a civil society was formed, not by the liberation of individual rights or the creation of a legally protected space, but by the voluntary and autonomous economic activities of individuals in society with the common sense of collective well-being in the socialist and collectivist tradition. The performance of women in

the role of carers and in the intermediary position of NGOs in the governance of care illustrates the "sphere of consent" in the Gramscian notion of civil society.

I will also highlight the theoretical and methodological contributions of this research to the theories of governmentality and civil society, particularly from the implementation of the qualitative research of the narratives of life stories of Vietnamese female professionals working in the NGO sector in Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation. I take this opportunity to offer implications for future research by discussing the findings that were produced by this research. I will conclude the PhD thesis with a brief reflection on the learning experience that I have accumulated from doing this research, which has not only enriched my knowledge and skills of doing independent research but has also satisfied my personal interest in making an inquiry about Vietnamese women in the historical episode of Vietnam's post-socialist economic transition.

Chapter 2 - Market-oriented socialism in Vietnam after *doi moi*

2.1 *Doi moi* to develop market-oriented socialism

In this section, I will present the context of *doi moi* economic renovation. Specifically, I will describe how the socialist state has redefined the vision of socialism within the model of market-oriented socialism. In this model, the state declares its intent to develop a market-oriented economy to lead the country towards the vision of socialism (Dinh, 2003; Chinh phu, 2011). By removing the central plan, the state has highlighted marketisation as a key measure to fulfil the ideals of socialist welfare (Nguyen, 2018, 2019; London 2004, 2008; Nguyen and Chu, 2016). The state's vision of market-oriented socialism delegates to individuals the responsibility for economic efficiency to realise collectivisation goals. Market liberalisation in the configuration of market-oriented socialism does not promote individualism and economic maximisation in the configuration of capitalist development but rather reflects the new vision of collective well-being capacitated by individual entrepreneurship and market facilities. The Communist Party retains a leading role in working on the vision of market reforms though having withdrawn from its production role in the economy.

At the Sixth National Party Congress in 1986, the Communist leaders of Vietnam declared *doi moi* policy (usually known as renovation or renovation policy) to implement a market-based economy to replace the command economy which had existed for over 35 years in the North and ten years in the South (Vandemoortele and Bird, 2011; Beresford, 2008; Luong, 2003; Kerkvliet and Selden, 1998; Fforde and De Vylder, 1996). *Doi moi* in Vietnamese means renovation, and the *doi moi* policy is associated with a package of economic reforms to transform the centrally planned economy to become a market-based economy (Beresford, 1999, 2008; Fforde and De Vylder, 1996). Unlike the collapse of the socialist states in eastern Europe, Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation did not result from a political revolution but rather a state-led economic transition process which was aimed at renewing the leadership of VCP (Vandemoortele and Bird, 2011; Gainsborough, 2010). Despite economic reforms, Vietnam remains a single party rule country under the leadership of VCP (Thayer, 2009; Sidel, 2010; Nørlund, 2007a; Gainsborough, 2010).

Vietnam's *doi moi* policy involved measures of privatisation and market liberalisation to transit the economy from plan to market (Fforde and De Vylder, 1996). The process is often described as a transition from a centralised to a market-based economy with a reduction in the state's intervention in the economy (Fforde and De Vylder, 1996; Beresford, 1999; Gainsborough, 2010; World Bank, 1996). From the early 1990s, the government abolished the central plan and the subsidy mechanism (*co che bao cap*). The state has also implemented several legal reforms to develop the market economy. New laws on business and foreign investment were promulgated to enable the development of the private sector and to attract foreign investment in the economy (Beresford, 2003, 1999; Luong, 2003; Fforde and De Vylder, 1996; Fforde, 2009, 2016).

The economic reforms after *doi moi* have followed several prescriptions of the structural adjustment programme promoted by International Financial Institutions (e.g. World Bank or IMF) in developing economies to develop a market economy (Fforde and De Vylder, 1996; Gainsborough, 2010). The programme is well known for its emphasis on minimisation of the state's control in the economy to maximise the efficiency of the free market (Harrison, 2010; Fforde and De Vylder, 1996). Similarly, the economic reforms in Vietnam have adopted several measures of privatisation, marketisation and price liberalisation which were aimed at reducing the role of the socialist state in the economy (Fforde and De Vylder, 1996; Gainsborough, 2010; Beresford and Dang, 2000). Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation has involved the massive privatisation of state-owned economic entities, including the state-run collectives and cooperatives with a growing private sector (Beresford, 2003, 1999; Beresford and Dang, 2000; Luong, 2003; Gainsborough, 2010; Kim, 2008). Marketisation was also implemented in the area of public services after the state retreated from the subsidy mechanism. Besides the state, private providers started to deliver several key public services, for example, education and health care, with the ability to collect fees at the market price (Nguyen, 2018; Nguyen and Chu, 2016). Marketisation has become the key instrument for the state to withdraw from the responsibility as the main supplier and producer of the economy.

The development of the market economy, nevertheless, has not altered the unique leadership of VCP in the economy (Nguyen and Chu, 2016; Gainsborough, 2010). Vietnam remains a socialist country despite marketisation.

As the Communist leaders declared, the economic reforms were aimed at developing market-oriented socialism. The VCP stated: “[at the IX VCP Congress (2001)], we concluded that a market economy with a socialist orientation was the general model for Vietnam during the whole period of transition to socialism, a long-term strategy of the VCP and the country” (9th NPC Report, cited in Dinh, 2003, p. 4). According to the VCP’s declaration of market-oriented socialism, the aim of developing a market economy is to realise the vision of moving forward to socialism (Hayton, 2010). In other words, the market economy does not replace the leading role of the VCP. Rather, the VCP continues to demonstrate its unique role in “the market economy with a socialist orientation” (Dinh, 2003, pp. 4-5; Beresford, 2003, 2008).

It is noticeable that socialism has also been revived with the spirit of *doi moi* (renovation) to maximise economic profits with the market facilities. Specifically, the VCP has repeated the socialist tradition to call for individuals’ responsibilities to *doi moi* by making them employable and successful in the market rather than being dependent on the state (Nguyen, 2018; Dinh, 2003). By emphasising the inefficiency of central planning, the Party has highlighted the market as the (new) method to realise the collective well-being with the economic prosperities. The VCP declared:

> *The renovation period is marked by a new thinking and working method: each employable person must, in accordance with the law, seek employment by himself or herself in the market economy while the government would create favourable conditions and provide appropriate assistance (9th NPC Report, cited in Dinh, 2003, pp. 145-146).*

The VCP’s description of *doi moi* evokes the moral of self-reliance and economic maximisation within market opportunities. Specifically, recalling the tradition of the Vietnamese’s hard-work and sacrifice for the national interest, the success of the entrepreneurs in the market was considered as a symbol of patriotism in the *doi moi* period (Pettus, 2003; Dinh, 2003). Under the rubric of *doi moi*, individual success in the market is regarded as the duty and aspirations of the Vietnamese socialist people to contribute to the country’s prosperity, which is considered “most correct and fine”. The Party’s report said:

> *As and when necessary, the Vietnamese, their young generations of today are ready to sacrifice themselves for the country. But in conditions of peace, it should be their duty and aspirations to engage in entrepreneurship, in production and business, in order to enrich*

> *themselves, to contribute to the wealth of their localities and the country. Such a change is most correct and fine (9th NPC Report, cited in Dinh, 2003, p. 166).*

The Party's official discourse on individual responsibilities for the reliance on the market reveals how the state has rearticulated socialist ideology in the context of market development. It is clear from the statement that market-oriented socialism implies not only the state's interests but also individual aspirations for wealth and success in the market. Moreover, the state has reframed people's aspirations for economic success into the interests of the socialist state for collective well-being. As revealed by the statement, socialism does not dilute in the market but exists in individual successes in the market economy. The state's re-articulation of entrepreneurship was derived from Vietnam's socialist and collectivist culture so that market-oriented socialism does not exist as a meaningless symbol in the state's rhetoric but is interpreted into the imperative of individuals' self-reliance and self-optimisation in the market for wealth generation (Nguyen, 2018; Nguyen-vo, 2008; Nguyen, 2018). The way the state has framed socialism in individuals' performances in the process of market development reveals how socialism has been renewed to encompass individuals into the process of transformation for wealth creation with entrepreneurship and market facilities. It is clear in the state's discourse of market-oriented socialism that the state highlights patriotic entrepreneurs and businesses for their contributions to the country, by highlighting their fulfilled responsibilities to the family and community, in line with the socialist vision of collective well-being (Nguyen, 2018). When recalling the patriotic tradition of the Vietnamese people for the sacrifices for the country, entrepreneurs and businesses continue to be constructed in the state's vision of the socialist workers for sacrifices and contributions to the collective well-being of the family, society and the country rather than individualistic maximisation (Nguyen, 2018, 2019; Pettus, 2003; Leshkowich, 2012; Jellema, 2005).

2.2 The pluralisation of the social realm after *doi moi*

The organisation of social entities in Vietnam resembles Soviet totalitarianism in which the social and political systems are organised in the state apparatus under the overall leadership of the Communist Party (Thayer, 2009). Like other state agencies, key social organisations representing major groups in society are

organised hierarchically within the state's administrative system, from the central (*trung uong*) to communal (*xa*) levels. These organisations are often led by members of the VCP to ensure the dominance of the Party in the social system (Nguyen et al., 2015).

Thayer (2009, 1995) has used Rigby's (1991) notion of mono-organisational socialism to differentiate Vietnam's socio-political system in the Marxist-Leninist doctrine with the Western conception of the autonomous civil society. In mono-organisational socialism, the VCP leads the state apparatus by appointing the Communist cells to key positions in the government, the court, the army and the system of social organisations as a way to maintain totalitarian control of the Party in the party-state system. In Vietnam, the social system is organised under the umbrella of the Vietnam Fatherland's Front (*Mat tran to quoc*), which was established by the Party's Committee to form the main umbrella of social organisations in the Marxist-Leninist political system (Thayer, 2009; Rigby, 1991). The Vietnam Fatherland's Front administers dozens of member associations/organisations representing key social segments and interest groups in the multi-sectoral economy (See Appendix D).

Additionally, in the Marxist-Leninist political system, mass organisations (*to chuc doan the*) have a role in strengthening the leadership of the Party among the masses (Nguyen et al., 2015). Mass organisations in the socialist system have a monopoly on organising the groups in their own fields (Kornai, 1992). Mass organisations in the Leninist theories are the "transmission belts" of the Communist party's policy to society as a whole (Nguyen et al., 2015). Kornai (1992, p. 40) described the traditional role of mass in organisations in the socialist system as follows:

> *The mass organizations' main function ultimately becomes one of conveying the ideas and intentions of the party to "target" sectors of society (the workers, youth, women) corresponding to the sphere of each organization. As Lenin put it, they are "transmission belts" between the party and the masses.*

In Vietnam, there are six major mass organisations. They are the Fatherland's Front, the Peasants Association, the Youth Union, the Vietnam Women's Union, the Vietnam Labour Confederation and Vietnam Veteran Association. Several mass organisations in Vietnam were established at about the same time with the VCP in early or late 1930s, to mobilise the masses in society to join the

Communist party-led revolutions against foreign domination (Nguyen et al., 2015). Some of these mass organisations operate within the law of their own organisations for the special functions of the party-state (Nguyen et al., 2015). These organisations operate within the state's budget under the regulation of the Law on State Budget (Nguyen et al., 2015; Beaulieu, 1994). Figure 1 illustrates the coordination between the VCP and these mass organisations.

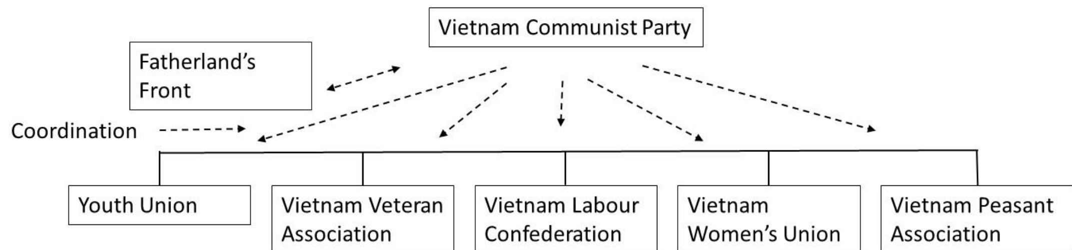


Figure 1 - The structure of mass organisations in Vietnam

(Source: Nguyen et al., 2015, p. 18)

Mass organisations are also legalised for the functions to defend the interests of the social groups they represent (Nguyen et al., 2015). For example, the Vietnam Women's Union was initially established in 1930 to mobilise the women's movements to support the Communist-led revolutions during the anti-French and anti-American wars. The Women's Union is also known to mobilise political support for the benefits of women under socialism. For example, Eisen (1984) wrote about the Women's Union's role in the political system to boost the rights of women in production as well as reproduction. The role of the Women's Union in the socialist system was described as follows:

> *The union represents women to the government and the government depends on the advice of the union to defend women's rights, to design new laws and serve as a watchdog to ensure the implementation of all policies to protect women (Eisen, 1984, p. 124).*

According to Eisen, the Vietnam Women's Union's traditional representation in the collective farms and cooperative factories used to have a practical role in monitoring and defending women's labour rights at the workplace (Eisen, 1984). The Women's Union's hierarchical system from the central to the lowest grassroots levels demonstrates the strategic position (either from both the top-down or the bottom-up) to muster political support both in the political system and wider society for policy-making and dissemination (Nguyen et al., 2015; Eisen, 1984; Pettus, 2003). At the grassroots level, members of the Women's Unions in

communes or villages organised regular meetings or cultural activities with households in their local communities to tackle challenges against women (Eisen, 1984; Pettus, 2003). The example of the Women's Union's relations with the society at large reveals the influence of mass organisations in society for their practical role in caring for and defending their members' interests in society (Gray, 1999; Vasavakul, 2003; Eisen, 1984).

Besides mass organisations, there is a growing number of private and voluntary organisations established outside the mono-organisational system after *doi moi* economic renovation. Several organisations were established as science and technology organisations following a decree in 1992 by the government for the privatisation of science and technological activities (Sidel, 2010, 1997; Kerkvliet, 2003). Many of these organisations mobilised funding from international donors or the private sector to carry out projects in the area of community development and poverty reduction (Beaulieu, 1994; Sidel, 1997). According to several research reports, science and technology organisations are often regarded as local NGOs and civil society organisations which were established to raise their own funds to do their own things (Beaulieu, 1994; Gray, 1999; Kerkvliet, 2003; Vasavakul, 2003; Nørlund, 2007b).

According to Beaulieu (1994), the non-governmental status of these organisations stands for their self-finance rather than being independent of the state. As several authors also highlight, these local NGOs are not completely autonomous from the state, though they are financially independent of the state (Beaulieu, 1994; Gray, 1999; Kerkvliet, 2003; Salemink, 2006; Thayer, 1995; 2009). For example, Thayer (2009, 1995) argues that there is no independent realm for civil society in mono-organisational socialism. As Thayer points out, the state still strictly controls the registration of private organisations within the state's umbrella organisations. These newly established organisations are allowed to work in particular research and humanitarian services, which are encouraged by the state's socialisation policy, while being restricted or punished for political orientations which are considered as a rival or threat to the state (Thayer, 2009, 1995; Sidel, 2010; Kerkvliet, 2015). Rather than representing an autonomous sphere from the state, the term non-governmental organisation or the more popular shortened term NGO has become an accommodating title for various organisations, regardless of their being established inside or outside the state

apparatus, to align with donor's programmes to raise funds for social services (Beaulieu, 1994; Gray, 1999; Kerkvliet, 2003; Salemink, 2006). In this respect, Gray (1999) has rightly pointed out that mass organisations are not much different from other smaller and private NGOs in their recent focus on delivering services to help the poor at the grassroots level.

Scholars on Vietnam also suggest that mass organisations have recently performed a more social function with resources for social services mobilised outside of the state (Pettus, 2003; Nørlund, 2007b). For example, as reported by Pettus (2003), with the funding from foreign NGOs, the Women's Union's programmes have focused more on developing microcredit programmes to improve women's economic and social conditions, besides the traditional role of mass mobilising for the central planners' targets. In addition, to compete for foreign funding, mass organisations tend to demonstrate a stronger competence and capacity for community development projects employing participatory approaches, with their traditional relations and experience in working with local communities (Gray, 1999; Salemink, 2006). Several researchers suggest that the transformation in the social realm, in which resources are mobilised for social services, has resulted from the socialisation policy (*chinh sach xa hoi hoa*) of public services, considering the limited budget of the state for social services (Nørlund, 2007b; Gray, 1999; Beaulieu, 1994; Sidel, 1997).

Sidel (2010, 1997), who has written about the legal framework of civil society in Vietnam after *doi moi,* suggests that the proliferation of NGOs and voluntary organisations resulted from the privatisation of science and technology activities and social services. Particularly, according to Sidel's observation, several legal regulations have been promulgated since the early 1990s to encourage organisations to establish for the provision of social and humanitarian services. As Sidel points out, many private science and technology organisations registered under the 1992 Decree on Science and Technology and the revised Decree 81 (2002) have aligned with the state's priority to improve social services. In addition, the 1995 Civil Code and the 1999 decree on social and charity funds have enabled many voluntary and charitable organisations to establish. In 1994, Carole Beaulieu also reported on the proliferation of NGO-like organisations which were motivated by opportunities to deliver social services allowed by the state's socialisation policy. According to Beaulieu (1994), these organisations

were voluntary and free to raise fund for social services and "their own thing" though there is no legal provision for independent NGOs or civil society in the existing legal framework. Beaulieu wrote:

> *They are raising money for the handicapped, lobbying for more environmental protection, giving assistance to street children, getting involved in charity work, training business and government leaders, researching the impact of economic reforms on women, opening new schools (Beaulieu, 1994, p. 4).*

The proliferation of local NGOs after *doi moi* seems to illustrate the commitment of the organisations to the socialisation policy rather than the improved autonomous sphere for civil society. In addition, noting Beaulieu's observation, this pluralisation in the social realm did not result from the relaxation of the legal framework for an autonomous civil society from the state, but from the aspirations to do "their own thing" in these organisations for the good of society. The growth of these organisations established for the socialisation policy seems to illustrate the way the state controls the social sphere for certain prioritised areas.

Irene Nørlund's report (2007b) on the civil society in Vietnam after *doi moi* suggests that the socialisation policy seemed to separate the social function of the Party from the state. As the state withdrew from the broad-based provision of public services, social organisations have had a greater role in the social realm when participating in the provision of social services. In this respect, Nørlund (2007b) suggests that socialisation policy has mobilised the social functions of social organisations of all kinds to improve the provision of social services. In other words, the socialisation policy has contributed to a more plural and greater civil society. She argued:

> *Although it gives the Fatherland Front the lead role for cooperating with authorities, associations and mass organisations at all levels, the SEDP [Socio-Economic Development Plan 2006-2010] also encourages humanitarian activities by "all non-governmental organisations, social associations and unions to develop social security networks and provide effective assistance to the vulnerable" and "to engage in managing and monitoring some public fields". In this space, the CSOs have a potentially much larger role to play (Nørlund, 2007b, p. 6).*

Despite a more plural civil society associated with social functions, there is little improvement in the deregulation of associational activities for political orientation. According to several researchers, the state still controls the social realm strictly, despite liberating economic activities (Thayer, 2009; Kerkvliet, 2015;

Gainsborough, 2017; Sidel, 2010). According to Sidel (2010, p. 2), the state maintains a firm control "over their formation and operations, using the traditional mechanism of dual control by a government management agency and by a government ministry or agency working in the particular substantive field of the fund (such as health or education)". Thayer (2009) also reflected on the restrictions of the state, including the use of repression and arrest, on political civil society organisations which have attempted to promote a political agenda of pro-democracy, political pluralism or human rights which are considered a challenge to the leadership of the Party in mono-organisational socialism. Several authors have also highlighted the continued delays to the implementation of the Law of Associations, which is expected to ensure a greater autonomy of voluntary associations in society (Thayer, 2009; Sidel, 2010). Since its first draft in the mid-1990s, the law has yet to be completed and is without a clear prospect for the future (Thayer, 2009; Sidel, 2010; Vietnamnews, 24/10/2016).

Despite the more plural social realm that resulted from marketisation, the party-state retains the monopoly on the social organisations/associations within the system of mono-organisational socialism. The proliferation of voluntary organisations and NGOs seems to illustrate that operations of private organisations are still closely linked to the state's priorities to mobilise resources for socialisation policy rather than a more autonomous and plural policy. According to Thayer (2009), the emergent civil society organisations in Vietnam are aligned with the state's policy rather than opposing it. He wrote: "They work as partners in implementing state policy in the provision of welfare, social services and poverty alleviation measures" (Thayer, 2009, p. 18).

The proliferation of private interests in the voluntary sector in Vietnam after *doi moi* suggests the relationship between the growth of NGOs and the socialisation policy. The proliferation of NGOs associated with the provision of social services seems to illustrate the dilemma of the emergent civil society in the context of marketisation. On the one hand, their diverse activities in the social realm seem to illustrate the dynamics of "fence breaking" practices in the informal economy against the institutional constraints (Vasavakul, 2003). On the other hand, the proliferation of organisations for social services seems to contribute to the legitimacy of the Party in the social realm (Nørlund, 2007b). Considering the state's disapproval of an independent civil society, civil society is still considered

limited within the restricted fields enabled by the state (Thayer, 2009; Kerkvliet, 2015; Gainsborough, 2017). This situation seems to pose an intriguing question about the dynamics and prospects of the civil society in Vietnam after nearly 35 years of marketisation. Especially, considering the pluralisation of interests in the market economy, how does the state continue to govern the increasingly plural social realm within the system of mono-organisational socialism?

This research explores the dynamics of civil society through the examination of the personhood character of women working in the NGO sector in Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation. Based on the examination of the post-socialist personhood in Foucault's theory of governmentality, the research will explore the transformation in the social realm with the self-government and optimisation of Vietnamese female professionals working in the NGO sector. By looking at the self-government of these women in the economy, the research explores the hegemonic ideology which governs the agency of the market in the post-socialist society. Findings from the research aim to contribute to unravelling the consent of civil society for *doi moi* economic renovation. Particularly, with the Gramscian notion of ideological hegemony, the research will explore the ideological appeal of the self-government of these women in the post-socialist economic reforms in Vietnam. The research also aims at generating knowledge of the mono-organisational system in the context of Vietnam's post-socialist economic transformation.

Chapter 3 - Personhood, civil society and mono-organisational socialism

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will present the theoretical framework which is developed to explore the dynamics of civil society from the examination of the post-socialist *personhood*. I will examine this personhood based on Michel Foucault's proposition of governmentality or government technology with the conduct of *self-government*. I will discuss how self-government in Foucault's proposition is considered moral for economic maximisation. By engaging with the literature on the neoliberal government technology, I will develop a theoretical framework to explore the self-government of Vietnamese female professionals working in the NGO sector in Vietnam's post-socialist economic transition. The examination of the self-government of these women in the context of post-socialist marketisation is aimed at exploring the moral and ideological appeals of the self-government and self-optimisation in the process of marketisation and privatisation. The Gramscian notion of consent in civil society for the hegemonic ideology of the state will be used to explore how socialist hegemony was reproduced with the self-government of Vietnamese women in the context of Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation.

This chapter consists of four parts. After the introduction, the second part of this chapter presents Foucault's proposition of government technology. By discussing the moral of the *homo oeconomicus* for economic maximisation, this section is aimed at unravelling the government technology used by post-socialist authoritarian states to mobilise the economic efficiency of the self-government and self-optimisation of individuals in the context of marketisation. The third part of this chapter explores the Gramscian notion of consent (and contestation) of the intellectual based on the hegemonic domination of knowledge, culture and ideologies. The final part will engage with the literature of Vietnam's mono-organisational socialism to provide a background understanding of the civil society situation in Vietnam. The research looks at personhood and civil society

with the approach to neoliberal governmentality to explain the exception case of the neoliberalisation process in Vietnam's market-oriented socialism.

Neoliberalism is often envisaged as a doctrine to achieve the economic maximum from the technology of self-government in the population with a reduction of the state's power (Foucault in Rabinow, 2000; Ong, 2006; Harvey, 2005). According to Ong (2006), neoliberalism can be seen as a set of government technologies based on knowledge and the rational calculation of individuals for economic maximisation. She suggests that "neoliberalism considered as a technology of government is a profoundly active way of rationalizing governing and self-governing in order to "optimise" (Ong, 2006, p. 3). Ong's study of neoliberalism as exception suggests that authoritarian governments also mobilise the market-driven calculative characters to renew the state's power in the economic domain. Ong proposes that authoritarian governments govern with the sovereign principles in which bodies and souls are self-governed for the power of the economic maximisation while still submissive to authoritarian power. Zhang also suggests that neoliberalism can be defined as "a set of malleable governing technologies and economic practices, [so] then any political regime can adopt and reconfigure such strategies according to its specific social conditions without radically altering its overall state apparatus" (Zhang, 2010, p. 17). The proposition of neoliberalism as government technology suggests how authoritarian states have activated the economic rationalities of individuals in society without liberating individual freedom.

Several authors suggest that neoliberalism has dominated the global economy, with the rise of the capitalist West, after the collapse of the Soviet Bloc in the East, and with the inauguration of the neoliberal doctrines such as Reaganomics and Thatcherism in the West (Harvey, 2005; Keane, 1998; Makovicky, 2014). Harvey (2005), for example, once critically argued that neoliberalism was rather a fragmented compilation of theories and practices developed from the liberal culture of the capitalist West which yielded a hegemonic position without sufficient contestation from an alternative hegemonic power. According to Harvey (2005), the rise of neoliberalism does not reflect an optimal economic system but rather results from the coercion from neoliberal leaders and the global network of International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and US-backed funding agencies to protect and promote the interests of capitalist elites. Also, Harrison (2010), who

writes about the process of neoliberalisation, proposes that IFIs and neoliberal donors have enforced neoliberal practices by means of conditional loans and grants. Since the end of the Cold War, neoliberalism has become the hegemonic economic doctrine which has been employed pervasively by economies and individuals worldwide in the race for economic performance (Harvey, 2005; Carroll, 2006; Comaroff and Comaroff, 2000; Ong, 2006; Venugopal, 2015).

In this research, I continue to explore the process of neoliberalisation in the context of Vietnam's post-socialist economic transition with the use of Foucault's neoliberal governmentality. The examination of the consent of the self-government of post-socialist women in Vietnam's post-socialist economic reforms will reveal the inauguration of neoliberalism against the background of Vietnam's socialism. By scrutinising the idea of *homo oeconomicus*, I will construct a framework to characterise the personhood characters of post-socialist women in the context of Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation.

3.2 Personhood: technologies of the *homo oeconomicus*

In this section, I will present how the neoliberal person was "made" in the process of neoliberalisation. Particularly, I will look at the idea of *homo oeconomicus*, or the economic man, which has become a prominent way of being in the context of the global market expansion. We might decipher that the "making" here is only metaphoric. The claim of "making the person" seems radical, to the idea of how a person can be made, in particular, other from his/her birth parents, from his/her birthplace, and his/her (historical) cultural practices (including forms of education). Yet, studies of neoliberal undertakings worldwide reveal that this process of making was so true as humans, bodies and souls, seem to be morally, psychologically, biologically, and philosophically "made" with market functions as the irrevocable evidence of the extraordinary domination of neoliberalism (Martin, 1997, 2000; Ong, 2006; Rose, 1996; Beck, 2001; Makovicky, 2014). It is noticeable that this very idea of personhood often evokes an imperative of self-government for economic maximisation which is inherent to the era of neoliberal market expansion rather than merely reflecting the general life passage of a human being, such as through childhood, manhood and womanhood (Makovicky, 2014; Rose, 1996; Ong, 2006; Gammeltoft, 2014). These terms, when viewed

through the lens of neoliberalism, relate to "technologies of living" for the optimal economic accomplishments, which are supposed to be the means and ends of individual well-being (Miller and Rose, 2008, Rose, 1996).

The idea of personhood was embraced in Michel Foucault's compiled lectures of power and government technologies in the 1970s. In these lectures, Foucault proposes the theory of governmentality by emphasising the moral appeal of self-government to realise desirable personhood. Foucault's notion of self-government was underpinned by the conduct of economic rationality and self-calculation for the consciousness of the care of the self (Li, 2007; Ong, 2006). In Foucault's discussion about subjectivity and truth, Christian morality and ritual procedures have been instrumental to the individual consciousness of "the care of one's self" as well as to rejuvenate the self in "moral" and "correct" manners which are recognised as human conduct (Foucault in Rabinow, 2000, pp. 87-92). Specifically, according to Foucault, this consciousness of self-care has been imperative for individuals to acquire knowledge (the will to knowledge), to reflect on the self to continually self-improve, and to acquire power. The self is, therefore, a subject of *biopolitics* rather than the subject of ideological domination (Foucault in Rabinow, 2000, pp. 74-75; Ong, 2006).

According to Foucault, there is a virtue in the limitless capacity of the generation of the self to the extent that it is beyond the subject of ideological domination but through the process of subjectivation that one maximises the guidance from external pedagogic sources (churches, schools, hospitals, prisons, etc.) to make the power of the self. The self or the subject, in this analogy, is the product of the technology of subjectivity in which individuals are free to pursue self-interested economic maximisation with market facilities and resources (Foucault in Rabinow, 2000; Ong, 2006; Rose, 1996). As Foucault argues, subjectivity is (rather) the product of freedom which is aimed at realising the economic maximisation that is aspired to by both individuals and the state in neoliberalism. He stated: "Liberalism is to be analyzed, then, as a principle and a method of rationalizing the exercise of government, a rationalization that obeys – and this is its specificity – the internal rule of maximum economy" (Foucault in Rabinow, 2000, p. 74).

Self-government is highlighted for the morality of economic maximisation which is well presented through his proposition of *homo oeconomicus* or the

enterprising-self (Foucault, 2008; Read, 2009; Makovicky, 2014; Dunn, 2004). The idea of *homo oeconomicus* highlights the morality of entrepreneurs who are experts in choice-making and economically rational calculation for the self-interested economic maximisation (Foucault, 2008; Rose, 1996; Ong, 2006; Makovicky, 2014; Read, 2009). Rose (1996), for example, emphasises the ethics of self-government as an enterprise in calculating and making the (right) decision to make the "better" self. He said:

> *The enterprising self will make an enterprise of its life, seek to maximise its own human capital, project itself a future, and seek to shape itself in order to become that which it wishes to be. The enterprising self is thus both an active self and a calculating self, a self that calculates about itself and that acts upon itself in order to better itself (Rose, 1996, p. 154).*

Inventing or re-inventing the self with the enterprising apparatus has become the principle of the government technology for economic maximisation in the neoliberal doctrine (Rose, 1996; Dunn, 2004; Read, 2009). Writers on neoliberalism suggest that individuals are compelled to invent and re-invent the self, physically and psychologically, to adapt to the volatile market (Beck, 2001; Martin, 2000). In other words, bodies and souls become the subject of self-government or the self-entrepreneurs to maximise economic opportunities with market facilities (Makovicky, 2014; Read, 2009). For example, Makovicky (2014) argues that individuals in neoliberal contexts have become experts of subjectivity in the project of Me, Inc. in which they know how to calculate and make the decision wisely about the necessary transformation to match the rapid changes in the market. She stated:

> *As the entrepreneur of his or her own life, the individual is called to propel themselves forward through the continual exercise of life-style and consumer choices, while subjecting themselves to frequent de and re-skilling exercises, 'personal development techniques', and self-audits in public and private life (Makovicky, 2014, p. 7).*

Writers on neoliberalism found the moral appeal in self-making with market facilities and entrepreneurial mentality, which is envisaged as ethical citizenship in the process of neoliberal economic restructuration. For example, Andrea Muehlebach (2012) writes about the ethical citizenship embodied by the social workers in Italy through the figure of unpaid and low waged voluntary caregivers to receive in return a sense of self-worth in public life. According to Muehlebach, these social workers, mostly found in the "passive" or "dependent" population,

who mobilised social affection from the voluntary unpaid care work, represents an ethical subject of neoliberalism. The optimisation in the figure of the unpaid voluntary caregiver of the dependent populations illustrated the morality of the neoliberal person for the creation of relational value for the capacity of empathy and care. As she highlights, the participation of the dependent population in the voluntary sector in response to the state's reduction of welfare to provide disinterested love and care for others in society evokes the idea of the ethical citizenship in the context of neoliberal economic austerity and restructuration. The ethical citizenship represented through the figure of the voluntary and altruistic caregiver becomes highly desired by a part of the population to gain a sense of belonging and a role in the public life in the context of reduced social cohesion and solidary in the process of economic restructuration (Muehlebach, 2012; Nguyen, 2018).

Governmentality, which rests on the moral and ideological appeal of individual self-government, allows the state to operate a mode of government from afar with the conduct of conduct (Li, 2007; Ong, 2006; Nguyen-Vo, 2008; Bui, 2015). Foucault's proposition of the technology of subjectivity emphasises the process of *subjectivation*[2] in which the self is optimised in desirable fashions to realise sources of individual happiness (Foucault in Rabinow, 2000, p. 225; Miller and Rose, 2008; Read, 2009). According to Foucault, subjectivation is the process of subject-making in which one engages with the (capitalist) pedagogic support from the economy or civil society to gain "truth" about his/her becoming and voluntarily act upon for a desirable outcome (Foucault in Rabinow, 2000, p. 195). Foucault's examples of the role of hospitals, prisons and churches suggest how civil society has become merged with the state to guide individual conduct in economically rational manners. In other words, subjectivation is also key for the government to govern the population from afar, by shaping people's conduct with knowledge and calculative means to achieve economic development priorities (Miller and Rose, 2008; Ong, 2006, Li, 2007).

Authoritarian states in post-socialist economies also govern individuals from a distance to achieve economic development targets (Ong, 2006; Miller and Rose,

[2] In the translations of Foucault's lectures, subjectivation is also translated as subjectification or subjection (see Aihwa Ong (2006) for example). In this research, I am consistent with the translation in Paul Rabinow's edited book (2000): The essential works of Michel Foucault, 1954-1984: Vol.1, Ethics: subjectivity and truth.

2008; Harvey, 2005). Aihwa Ong's study of neoliberalism in post-socialist authoritarian China as exception suggests that the Chinese state has governed the population with sovereign principles to maximise the morality of the *homo oeconomicus* with the capacity of free choice, risk-taking and economic rationalities in the sovereignty of the market, in parallel with the sovereignty of the nation-state (Ong, 2006, p. 6). According to Ong, the Chinese government has created special economic zones for economic maximisation targets in which people are subjected to the sovereignty of profit maximisation. In these special zones, individuals are governed by the sovereignty of the market to fully optimise the capacity of free choice, risk-taking and autonomous decision-making to achieve the economic maximisation. She wrote:

> *Technologies of subjectivity rely on an array of knowledge and expert systems to introduce self-animation and self-government so that citizens can optimize choices, efficiency, and competitiveness in turbulent market conditions(…) Technologies of subjection inform political strategies that differently regulate populations for optimal productivity, increasingly through spatial practices that engage market forces (Ong, 2006, p. 6).*

Ong's (2006) proposition about the government based on sovereign principles is useful to understand how neoliberal reforms for economic maximisation were achieved when individual freedom is still restricted in post-socialist authoritarian China. Ong's study of the special economic zones in China suggests that individuals are free to respond to the sovereignty of the economy to maximise economic profits. Moreover, as Ong (2006) and Zhang and Ong (2008) point out, the state does not completely withdraw from economic sovereignty but continues to play a key role in reproducing the ideological symbol of economic success with "China characteristics" to govern the desirable subject of the economy.

According to Tania Murray Li (2007, p. 5), rather than using coercion and repression, the state operates a mode of governmentality to govern people with the will to improve from a distance. Based on Foucault's proposition about the conduct of conduct, Li argues that the ruler governs the population from afar by conducting the conduct of individuals who are trained to become teleological, hence become the malleable subject of the dominant knowledge (Li, 2007; Leshkowich, 2012). Li's study of governmentality in post-colonial Indonesia suggests that the ruler governed the masses with the "habits, aspirations and beliefs" to become desirably "modern", and so they acted voluntarily to improve

with the "correct" conduct (Li, 2007, p. 5). She wrote: "It (government) sets conditions, "artificially so arranging things so that people, following only their own self-interests, will do as they ought" (Li, 2007, p. 5). Li's proposition of the will to improve has explained the power of spatial government which is exercised by the ruler from a distance with the dominating knowledge and calculated means and without the use of coercion. She stated: "When power operates at a distance, people are not necessarily aware of how their conduct is being conducted or why, so the question of consent does not arise" (Li, 2007, p. 5).

Studies of neoliberalisation processes in late socialist economies in China and Vietnam suggest that socialist states have governed the society from afar with self-calculated means for economic maximisation with the ideals of individual accomplishments in line with the state's reconfiguration of nationalism and socialism (Zhang, 2010; Leshkowich, 2012; Ong, 2006; Pettus, 2004; Drummond, 2004; Nguyen, 2018; Bui, 2015). For example, Nguyen (2018) writes about the Vietnamese businessmen and women in the waste disposal industry who present themselves as people with *dan tri* (intellectual level) in the same logic of the new prudentialism for economic performance. Zhang (2010) has written about the urbanites in Kunming who aspired to possess a private and exotic living space, which was considered a quintessential symbol of the upper or middle-class or *suzhi* (people of quality) category. Both notions stipulate forms of becoming a desirable citizen which is inseparable from the state's vision of collective well-being. It is noticeable that such guidance on the desirable personhood in terms of *dan tri* in Vietnam's or *suzhi* in China's late socialist economic restructuration has become the moral instrument for the socialist states to conduct individual maximising activities in the economy. By controlling the vision of appropriate forms of economic maximisation, the state still has a stronghold in the market to keep economic activities in line with the state's guidance and priorities (Nguyen, 2018, 2019; Anagnost, 2004; Zhang, 2010; Ong, 2006; Leshkowich, 2012). As Nguyen (2018, 2019) points out, *dan tri* does not merely indicate the educational level of individuals but rather involves a system of subjectivity which is embedded in the socialist culture for the state to conduct people's conduct among proliferated autonomous activities in the market economy. Because of the cultural and symbolic appeal, this notion has "naturally" embedded into self and autonomous calculation of individuals to build subjectivity

for desirable becoming (Nguyen, 2019). Gammeltoft (2014, p. 186), for example, has presented the idea of becoming a person "*thanh nguoi*", which is different and beyond from being a human "*lam nguoi",* to remind one to be economically successful to contribute to society. As Nguyen (2018, 2019) and Gammeltoft (2014) have pointed out, such notions of "*dan tri*" or "*thanh nguoi*" have become a guiding vision for Vietnamese people to optimise in the market, and a means to govern individual self-government with forms of stigmatisation and outcast for those who fail to become (Nguyen (2018, 2019; Gammeltoft, 2014)

Anthropological research on the *homo oeconomicus* character in the post-socialist market economy in China and Vietnam shows how the proliferation of entrepreneurship is associated with the ideals of becoming which was conducted by the state from the afar. Moving away from measures of coercion, the government technology (from afar) operated by post-socialist authoritarian states also seems to illustrate Ferguson and Gupta's (2002) proposition of the spatial governmentality. According to Ferguson and Gupta (2002, p. 981), the state governs with "imaginative and symbolic devices" to exercise the power of the state on the top to encompass the society below in a spatial scale in the context of neoliberal globalisation. This mode of governmentality allows the state to effectively conduct as well as to have surveillance on individual activities through the self-governing mechanism.

In Vietnam, there is growing evidence of the economic reforms which have become involved with governmentality to promote personhood with the *homo oeconomicus* character (Nguyen-Marshall et al., 2012; Pettus, 2003; Leshkowich, 2012; Jellema, 2005; Bui, 2015). Without liberating free rights, the socialist state seems to operate a mode of government from afar to project the desirable form of personhood in the market. Propositions of post-socialist governmentality suggest a knowledge of the government (technology) from afar which is optimised by authoritarian states to govern individual aspirations and freedom in the market for the maximisation of economic gains (Zhang, 2010; Leshkowich, 2012; Nguyen-vo, 2008). Nevertheless, little is known about the power to govern the consent or "will to improve" of actors in the domain of civil society. Particularly, through the governmentality theory, I am interested in searching for the answer to the question: how has the state governed the emergent civil society neither substantiating free rights nor continuing economic subsidy? This research will

explore the transformation in the domain of civil society through the examination of the *homo oeconomicus* character of the Vietnamese female professionals working in the NGO sector in the context of post-socialist marketisation. Especially, through the examination of the self-government of the female NGO professionals, I will demonstrate how the socialist state has governed a civil society from afar with the renewed hegemony of socialism.

3.3 Civil society: intellectuals, knowledge and ideological domination

The idea of civil society has developed with the history of capitalist development. The earliest notion of civil society appeared in Aristotle's proposition of *koinonia politikē, which* has developed as the natural right of men to engage in public affairs (DeWiel, 2008; Alagappa, 2004). Civil society, in the early discussions of the Scottish Enlightenment scholars, is considered as an essential realm autonomous from the state for the proliferation and protection of the economic interests of the capitalist (Alagappa, 2004; DeWiel, 2008; Shils, 1991; Howell and Pearce, 2001; Harvey, 2005). More recent works on civil society, for example, Alexis de Tocqueville's writings, suggest civil society as a domain for the democratisation and pluralisation which is essential for capitalist development (Howell and Pearce, 2001; Ishkanian, 2007).

Classical theories often highlight the economic interests in civil society for capitalist prosperity. Marx's work on class has provided key understandings about the interests of the bourgeois society in the capitalist system in the interests of capital over those of labour (Shils, 1991; Patnaik, 2012; Levine, 2006). However, Marx's proposition of the two opposing classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, deriving from the relations of production, does not account for the middle position of white-collar professionals and intellectuals who are neither capitalists nor waged workers (Liechty, 2003). As Levine (2006) has rightly pointed out, in the economy with proliferated commercialised activities, the society has become stratified with the expansion of strata of non-manual white-collar professionals. Marxist theories about the bourgeois/proletariat exploitative relations within capitalist firms show limitations in explaining the relations between upper and lower strata of the managerial class and the quasi-managerial

relations among the public servants who are neither manual workers nor capitalists. In addition, Wright Mills (1951) when writing about the white-collar middle class suggests that white-collar professionals whose salaried status is not different from the waged workers share the class prestige with the capitalist as the ruling class.

In this respect, Konrád and Szelényi, in the book *The intellectuals on the road to class power* (1979) argue that intellectuals share interests with the ruling class for the knowledge transcendence in the economy. According to Konrád and Szelényi (1979), intellectuals are teleological in the production of knowledge for economic and political domination. Their analysis of the class position of intellectuals points out that intellectuals who are neither capitalist nor labour owners are not capable of forming their own class but depend ideologically and intellectually on the ruling class to gain economic and political dominance in society. Their proposition of the production of knowledge of the intellectual for the economic and political dominance of the ruling class also reflects Gramsci's notion of the intellectual functions of civil society for the ideological hegemony of the state.

Gramsci looks at civil society as the intellectual function of the state. Gramsci highlights the consent of intellectuals in civil society to produce the ideological hegemony of the state. Rather than class, Gramsci's proposition of civil society has offered a framework to look at the ideological hegemony of neoliberalism in the context of neoliberal globalisation. A growing number of studies have employed Gramsci's notion of civil society to understand the phenomenal domination of neoliberalism in various political settings in the global economy (Hall, 1988; Harvey, 2005; Patnaik, 2012; McNally and Schwarzmantel, 2009). David Harvey (2005) in his book "The brief history of neoliberalism", has provided valuable insight into the ideological appeal of freedom to explain the unprecedented domination of neoliberalism in the global economy. By using Gramsci's notion of civil society as the domain of consent, Harvey (2005), has explained the domination of neoliberalism from the ideological appeal of freedom which is appropriated by both capitalist elites and authoritarian states to expand their economic interests from market deregulation in the context of neoliberalism.

Gramsci's notion of the ideological hegemony of the state suggests the state power to govern the society not only with the legitimate use of violence but also

the consent in society to implement the state's policy (Bui, 2015; Landau, 2008). Ferguson and Gupta's (2002) study about spatial government in the neoliberal context suggests that the state possesses imaginative and symbolic attributes of the nation-state which allow the state to position itself above society to encompass individuals and society vertically in the spatial scale. They argue that the state's image is rooted deeply in repetitive and bureaucratic practices to be "imagined in some ways rather than others" (Ferguson and Gupta, 2002, p. 984). Their proposition of the state's hegemonic position also uses Gramsci's notion of the consent of the masses with the top-down government, in which the state from the top performs the power to encompass the society vertically in a spatial scale (Ferguson, 2006; Ferguson and Gupta, 2002).

Gramsci suggests civil society as subordinate to the state, which plays the intellectual function to produce the consent to the ideological hegemony of the state (Gramsci in Hoare and Nowell-Smith, 1971; Ferguson and Gupta, 2002; Buttigieg, 1995). According to Gramsci, the political society and civil society are formed through a historical process in which the intellectual society is mature, with a division of labour in which the state plays the political and ideological functions. The strata of professional (or traditional) intellectuals form layers of civil society, whose intellectual and professional practices produce the social order and "spontaneous" consent to the ideological hegemony of the state in the economic system (Gramsci in Hoare and Nowell-Smith, 1971, p. 166; Hall, 1988).

According to Gramsci, consent in civil society is more powerful than the use of violence for the voluntary will and freedom in civil society, representing the spontaneous consent to the hegemonic domination of the state without the use of force, which tends to be associated with resistance (Gramsci in Hoare and Nowell-Smith, 1971; Buttigieg, 1995; Landau, 2008). Civil society represents the "sphere of consent" with the ideological domination of the ruling groups over others for their prestige, positions and functions in the economic system (Gramsci in Hoare and Nowell-Smith, 1971, p. 12; Buttigieg, 1995, p. 30). In other words, intellectual strata in civil society play the moral and intellectual functions of the state to defend the hegemonic position of the ruling class in the economic system (Patnaik, 2012; Eagleton, 1991). Regarding this, Gramsci proposes the state as the "state spirit" for the ideological hegemony (Gramsci in Hoare and Nowell-Smith, 1971, p. 146). As Patnaik (2012, p. 579) has further elaborated, civil

society, as the intellectual and moral functions of the state, rationalises the hegemonic political order of the "class-state" and the "ethical state".

Gramsci's notion of the "ethical state" rather explains the hegemony of the "class-state". According to Gramsci, the state appears ethical and cultural but rather represents the culture of the ruling class. He argued:

> *[E]very State is ethical in as much as one of its most important functions is to raise the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level, a level (or type) which corresponds to the needs of the productive forces for development, and hence to the interests of the ruling class (Gramsci in Hoare and Nowell-Smith, 1971, p. 258).*

Gramsci's discussion of the consent of civil society suggests the interests of the bourgeois in reinforcing the ideological domination in civil society. Patnaik (2012) argued that civil society tends to normalise the hegemonic culture in society for the benefits of the ruling class. He stated: "It [civil society] receives class instincts, class interests, and class struggle and tries to normalize them through family, religious associations, cultural groups, and networks of social capital" (Patnaik, 2012, pp. 579-580). Civil society when representing the moral and intellectual functions of the state also plays the pedagogic function for the consent of the masses to the political order in society (Gramsci in Hoare and Nowell-Smith, 1971, p. 259).

The Gramscian notion of consent in civil society explains the domination of neoliberalism in the capitalist society. Gramsci argued that the ideological hegemony of laissez-faire liberalism enforced by the consent of civil society was produced and reproduced for the interests of the capitalist in the economy (Gramsci in Hoare and Nowell-Smith, 1971). According to Gramsci, intellectuals in civil society plays the role of (re-)articulating the consent in the great mass for the moral and economic predominance of the capitalist with a common sense (Eagleton, 1991; Patnaik, 2012).

A civil society which is embedded in the historical process does not produce estranged knowledge of the ideological hegemony but produces a "common sense" of it with coherence and unity in the society (Gramsci in Hoare and Nowell-Smith, 1971, p. 328). Harvey (2005, p. 39) argued that "common sense", which "is constructed out of longstanding practices of cultural socialization often rooted deep in regional or national traditions", has been re-articulated by intellectual

elites as “good sense”, thus can be “profoundly misleading, obfuscating or disguising real problems under cultural prejudices”. Of the same view with Gramsci about ‘the common sense’, Eagleton (1991, p. 120) suggests the work of the intellectuals in the “construction” of “a new common sense and with it a new culture and a new philosophy”. This process of new culture production suggests the constructive role of intellectuals in renewing the “common sense” to restore the hegemonic position of the ruling class but not necessarily altering the political system. In this respect, Hall (1988, p. 170) argued that: “To construct a new cultural order, you need not to reflect an already-formed collective will, but to fashion a new one, to inaugurate a new historic project”.

For example, Hall (1988) suggests that Thatcherism had the consent which formed “unity” in British society for the neoliberal project. According to Hall, Thatcher’s neoliberal agenda has constructed a “unity” of the society in the name of “the nation”, recalling the memories of “the Great Empires”, appealing for “Great Britain Unlimited” and projecting the vision of Britain as “be[ing] great again” (Hall, 1988, p. 167). Particularly, the neoliberal reforms have renewed the ideological hegemony of the capitalist which has united the society under the same cause against “the loss of identities” and disappearance “of a people”. The explanation of the success of Thatcherism in the post-Gramscian notion suggests how the hegemonic ideology of the capitalist has been renewed with the collective consent in British society.

Thatcherism and Reaganomics were neoliberal projects which were considered as having renewed the hegemony of the capitalist with the consent of the masses in society for capitalism (Hall, 1988; Harvey, 2005). According to Harvey (2005) and Hall (1988), civil societies (including both public and private institutions such as universities, schools, churches, professional associations, think tanks, etc.) have played an indispensable role in reproducing rhetoric on the cultural and traditional values of laissez-faire liberalism. Furthermore, Harvey has rightly pointed out that neoliberalism is rather a cultural project, by articulating political objectives in cultural language. He argued: “In seeking to understand the construction of political consent, we must learn to extract political meanings from their cultural integuments” (Harvey, 2005, pp. 39-40). In other words, the ideological consent of the hegemony of the capitalist in terms of individualism and

liberalism has forged a "unity" in society for the self-government and individualisation for the neoliberal reforms in the UK and US economies.

Post-socialist authoritarian states also govern the "unity" in society for the implementation of state-led economic transformations. For example, Zhang and Ong's (2008) proposition about "socialism from afar" suggests that China's authoritarian state has governed the unity in society for economic efficiency. The neoliberal post-socialist state seems to appear as the ethical state in Gramsci's notion, to encompass the consent of the masses for the economic performance in the market economy to realise the state's vision of "socialism with Chinese characteristics" (Zhang and Ong, 2008, p. 14). Zhang and Ong's (2008) proposition of socialism from afar with the image of "Chinese characteristics" also supports Ferguson and Gupta's (2002) proposition of the spatial government in which the state posits on the top to encompass the masses vertically to realise ideals of socialism in the process of post-socialist economic restructuration.

It is also noticeable that rather than mobilising the values of individualism and liberalism, post-socialist states mobilise unity in society with the moral and imaginative attributes of socialism. In this respect, socialism also plays the imaginative and symbolic devices of the state. According to several post-socialist studies, despite the rising market forces, socialism still exhibits in forms of entrepreneurship and economic maximisation. For example, Hann (1990, 2002), Verdery (1991) and Gal and Kligman (2000a, 2000b) have described how men and women in different economic sectors continued to demonstrate the moral subject of the socialist worker and (class) emancipation. The traits of the socialist worker are still found in the performance of the entrepreneurs and managers in the post-socialist economic entities (Makovicky, 2014; Nguyen, 2018). For example, Elizabeth Dunn (2004) has studied the remaking of Polish workers to become self-entrepreneurs to adapt to the flexible management system in a state-owned dairy factory which was acquired by a multinational company. Dunn's study (2004) reveals that the workers often demonstrated the morality of socialist workers for the capacity to manoeuvre in the economy of shortage, rather than becoming flexible workers who are accustomed to choice-making, risk-taking and resilience to employment insecurity to meet the flexible production requirements. As she argues, socialism contains ideals and realities that produce

"different notions about work, individuality, choice, production, and power" (Dunn, 2004, p. 23).

Findings of the interests in the symbolic and ideological power embedded in the socialist culture suggest how the new economic elites have rationalised self-government in post-socialist economies. Literatures of post-socialist economies, particularly anthropologies of post-socialist societies, have provided burgeoning evidence of the enterprising-self which was inseparable from the socialist culture. For example, Gal and Kligman's studies (2000a, 2000b) of the socialist ideology of femininity suggest women's optimisation in the informal and secondary economy (besides the formal or the state economy) as evidence of their indispensability and usefulness in the public life. Zhang and Ong's work (2008) about "the rise of a self-project and self-staging subject in the post-Tiananmen era" suggests that subjectivity was no longer a product of "private thought and behaviour" but of "rising China" (Zhang and Ong, 2008, p. 1). Leshkowich (2012), Nguyen-vo (2004, 2008), Jellema (2005), and Drummond (2012) also recorded evidence of the Vietnamese middle-class women who have optimised in consumption, economic activities and physically attractive appearance to present the Vietnamese-ness in Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation in terms of modernity and civilisation. Anthropological research of subjectivity in the context of neoliberal post-socialism, particularly in post-socialist economic restructuration projects, has illustrated how the hegemony of the (socialist) state has been renewed with the vision of socialism and collectivism rather from the culture of liberalism and individualism.

Gramsci's notion of ideology is powerful in exploring the class interests of the ruling elites for the ideological hegemony. Especially, the use of Gramsci in the research of civil society helps to explain the renewal of the ruling power of neoliberal states in the context of neoliberal globalisation (Harvey, 2005; Patnaik, 2012). Gramsci's notion of ideological hegemony is also crucial for the understanding of the domination of the West in the context of neoliberalism in the post-Cold War period. It is noticeable that the rise of the West followed after the collapse of the Soviet Bloc in the East tends to assume the disappearance of post-colonial or/and post-socialist culture (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1999). Hann et al. (2002) have highlighted the "cultural dimension" which was neglected in social science studies about the post-socialist transformation. The ignorance of

this socialist culture in the studies of the post-socialist transition process, as they pointed out, might miss opportunities to explore the particularities and unity in civil society. Also, Harvey has pointed to the weakness of the neoliberal doctrine in both cultural and theoretical soundness. When pointing to the weakness of neoliberalism both as a doctrine and cultural practice, it seems clear that the liberal discourses contain some limitations to explore the role of the intellectual in the production of the consent in the domain of civil society for the hegemony of the state in post-socialist contexts. Chris Hann and his colleagues have critically addressed the bias in liberal discourses as the result of the Cold War legacy. Hann stated: “There was a tendency in much of the social-science literature on socialism to construct an ‘other’, corresponding to the ‘savage other’ of colonial anthropology” (Hann et al., 2002, p. 9). Considering this bias, the privileging of neoliberal knowledge about civil society without looking at the cultural and socio-political backgrounds of the post-socialist societies might prevent the opportunity to explore the social dynamics adequately in the transient process to neoliberalism within the socialist legacy.

By acknowledging the bias involved with the dominant knowledge of civil society in the liberal discourses, I avoid taking a prior conception of civil society but explore its dynamics in relation to the political structure of Vietnam’s mono-organisational socialism. In this research, I deploy the Gramscian notion of civil society in the production of consent and contestation for the ideological hegemony of the state in the context of marketisation. Specifically, I will explore how Vietnamese NGO professional women, through self-government, have reproduced the ideological hegemony of the socialist state in the process of marketisation. The examination of the post-socialist personhood is aimed at revealing the contradictions and/or tensions in the performance of the female NGO professionals for profit maximisation which is simultaneously constrained by the socialist ideology of women’s sacrifice and reproductive responsibility in Vietnam’s Confucian and socialist tradition. The use of governmentality theory will explore the mode of governmentality which the socialist state operates to regain the consent of as well as to coerce this mass to replicate the desirable personhood in the context of post-socialist economic restructuration.

In the following section, I will present the literature of mono-organisational socialism in the Soviet model. I will highlight the contradiction between the liberal

and autonomous civil society in Western neoliberal notion and the system of mono-organisational socialism in the Soviet model of social organisations. I will also introduce how the proliferated forms of autonomous NGOs have been managed within the system of mono-organisational socialism in Vietnam. The coexistence of the two contradictory systems illustrates a distinctive feature of the civil society situation in Vietnam's market-oriented socialism.

3.4 Mono-organisational socialism vs civil society

In the earlier sections, I have proposed to use the governmentality theory to examine the civil society dynamics in Vietnam in the context of *doi moi* economic reforms. This research on personhood is aimed at exploring the consent of the Vietnamese female NGO professionals for the self-government in the context of market development in Vietnam after *doi moi* policies have been implemented. In this section, I will describe how the notion of civil society has been developed in Vietnam's mono-organisational socialism. Rather than conceptualising a theoretical framework of civil society, this section is aimed to configure a notion of civil society which contains contradictions and hybridity inherent to the configuration of Vietnam's market-oriented socialism.

Despite reforms in the market, the political system in Vietnam remains unchanged, with the state apparatus organised in the Marxist-Leninist totalitarian model which contains the government, the court, the army and social associations (Thayer, 1995; Rigby, 1991; Hann, 1996; Keane, 1998). In the Marxist-Leninist political system, social organisations are monopolised by the state and organised into the state apparatus (Kornai, 1992). Gramsci describes the totalitarian policy of the state which involves disconnecting people from other organisations/associations outside the state and destabilising non-state organisations to ensure the state's role as "the sole regulator" in the social realm (Gramsci in Hoare and Nowell-Smith, 1971, p. 265). According to Gramsci, this totalitarian policy is aimed at coercing the ruler's culture in society by destroying the old and preventing the new influence from the competing power.

Socialist totalitarianism is considered a contradiction with the notion of civil society in the liberal tradition wherein the autonomy in civil society is a prerequisite to protect and promote capitalist interests. This tradition is known

through the propositions of the Scottish Enlightenment scholars, prominently those of Adam Ferguson and Adam Smith, who suggested civil society as "a market-organised sphere of production and competition, came to be viewed as a distinct, legally protected realm, separate from family and state" (Alagappa, 2004, p. 27). Civil society in this liberal tradition is comprehended as bourgeois society known in Hegel and Marx's propositions which comprises of markets, social strata, the rule of law and voluntary organisations (Kaldor, 2003; Keane, 1998). In addition, Habermas's notion of the public sphere suggests civil society as the foundation of a liberal democratic society in terms of the pluralism of voluntary associations and active engagement (Keane, 1998; Kaldor, 2003; Howell and Pearce, 2001). According to Habermas, civil society consists of the pluralism of voluntary associations which institutionalise problem-solving habits in the public sphere. He suggested:

> *Civil society is composed of those more or less spontaneously emergent associations, organisations, and movement that, attuned to how societal problems resonate in private life spheres, distil and transmit such reactions to the public sphere. The core of civil society comprises of a network of associations that institutionalises problem-solving discourses of general interests inside the framework of organised public sphere (Habermas, cited in Kaldor, 2003, p. 21).*

In contrast to the liberal tradition where civil society is defined as legally protected, autonomous, voluntary and plural realm of associations, civil society is considered non-existent in the totalitarianism of socialism, where all social activities are organised into the party-state apparatus (Kaldor, 2003; Rigby, 1991). Reflecting on the authoritarianism of socialist states, Keane suggested that civil society was "annihilated" by the VCP-controlled state apparatus. He argued: "The basic divisions between political and social power, public and private law, and state-sanctioned (dis-)information and publicly debated opinion were consequently seen to have been annihilated" (Keane, 1998, p. 21).

This "annihilation" or the monopoly of the party-state over the associational realms was the key feature of the Marxist-Leninist proposition of mono-organisational socialism wherein social organisations are organised within the party-state apparatus (Rigby, 1991). The dissolution of civil society in the system of mono-organisational socialism was considered a part of amassing class divisions into "the dictatorship of the proletariat" under the leadership of the Communist Party, members of which were considered "the ones best able to lead

the way to the new society" (Rigby, 1991, p. 111). This social section of the state was organised into the party-state apparatus and dependent on the party-state's line of command hierarchically. As argued by Rigby (1991), this system of mono-organisational socialism does not support any economic activities but only to ensure the state's control of social life. He said:

> *The system could fairly claim to be a socialist one, since all economic entities were put in public hands, but it was a socialism the most distinctive feature of which was that the whole life of society was incorporated into a single organisational structure (Rigby, 1991, p. 112).*

This mono-organisational system is known as the common feature of the party-state apparatus in socialism, including in Vietnam. Despite economic reforms since 1986, the socialist state still maintains its unique monopoly over the political and social systems. Carlyle Thayer, who has written about Vietnam's mono-organisational socialism since 1995, reflected in his 2009 report that civil society was still limited in Vietnam because of the mono-organisational system. According to Thayer, there is no autonomous civil society in Vietnam, considering the state's totalitarian control of social associations/organisations in the Leninist political system of mono-organisational socialism. In this system, the party-state organises social organisations under the umbrella of the Fatherland's Front, which was established by the revolutionary government during the anti-colonial and anti-imperial revolutions. The VCP appoints key members to take over the leadership of these organisations. In this mono-organisation system, Communist members were often envisaged as "dual role elites" for having the role both in the party-state and the social organisations (Thayer, 1995).

According to Thayer (1995, 2009), unlike the socialist counterparts in Eastern Europe, the state in Vietnam does not exercise absolute coercion over the market and social realms but adapts flexibly to the socio-economic conditions of an agrarian economy, with a tolerance of individual economic activities. In addition, the legitimacy of the ruling party was not derived from proletariat power but rather from the victories of the revolutions against foreign invaders through which the Communists had drawn legitimacy from the moral and ideological appeals of nationalism and patriotism (Thayer, 1995; Pettus, 2003; Nguyen, 1974). Several Vietnam scholars also argue that the state in Vietnam is not considered a dominating state but accommodating certain degrees of decentralisation and

flexibility which allow influences on the decision making at the central level from the bottom up (Kerkvliet, 1995, 2001; Vasavakul, 2003; Gainsborough, 2010). Kerkvliet's studies of the state-society relations in Vietnam suggest that the state in Vietnam is neither a dominating state nor "mobilisational corporatism" which allows only influences from within the state system (Kerkvliet, 1995, 2001). Kerkvliet's research has presented various practices of individuals and social groups who continually broke out of the state's policy which reveal the state's weakness in enforcing the policy-making and implementation in society. Kerkvliet suggests that the political system in Vietnam should be considered "dialogical". Through this "dialogue" mechanism, individuals and social groups are able to communicate ideas and preferences through informal channels for policy-making, which help the state to enforce its rule in society (Kerkvliet, 2001; Gainsborough, 2017). Despite various propositions of state-society relations in post-socialist economic reforms in Vietnam, most of Vietnam's studies suggest that individuals and social organisations outside the state apparatus have been aligned with the state for gradual transformation rather than opting for direct confrontational options (Vasavakul, 1996; Hannah, 2007; Thayer, 1995; Kerkvliet, 2015).

The pluralisation of the social domain in the context of post-socialist economic restructuration from plan to market in Vietnam illustrates the proliferation of NGOs following the flows of aid in Vietnam. Several writers on Vietnam's civil society have written about the proliferation of non-governmental organisations established outside the traditional system of mono-organisational socialism (Sidel, 1997, 2010; Wischermann, 2010; Vasavakul, 2003; Pedersen, 2001; Beaulieu, 1994). For example, as earlier mentioned, Carole Beaulieu (1994) has written about the burgeoning of civil society-like organisations in Vietnam which were established to deliver social services to the community. According to Beaulieu, the rapid growth of NGOs in Vietnam was neither legally defended nor representing a civil society liberated from the state. She wrote: "The Communist Party has not recognised the need of a politically independent judiciary" (Beaulieu, 1994, p. 3). Nevertheless, as reported by Beaulieu, NGO actors independently raised funding for their own activities, which were neither a part of nor oppositional to, the party-state's policy. She wrote:

> *They do not seek to challenge the state's control over the main levers of power, and, indeed, obtain their status through the tacit social contract with the authorities of the ruling party-state… But still people found ways to create what they believed were independent organizations. They felt free to decide their own agenda and to raise money to act (Beaulieu, 1994, p. 3).*

As several researchers on Vietnam suggest, the pluralism in the social domain, particularly the emergence of the NGO sector, has rather reflected the responsiveness of individuals, particularly from elite groups, for state's socialisation policy of social services (Beaulieu, 1994; Sidel, 1997; Nørlund, 2007b). Despite the limited cultural practices and legal frameworks for civil society, the voluntary engagements of local NGOs in the provision of social services removed from the state's sector also illustrates the New Agenda of NGOs which were restructured for professionalisation in service providers (Schnabel, 2012; Hemment, 2004; Smith and Jenkins, 2011). This agenda seems to fit the atmosphere of socialisation of social services in Vietnam as the state started to transfer some social services to social responsibility. Socialisation policy, in fact, involves a variety of marketisation and privatisation measures which were aimed at removing the state from the key provider of social services (Nguyen, 2018). However, as Nguyen points out, socialisation has not removed the state's general responsibility of the collective welfare but mobilises individual and social responsibilities with the imperative of collectivism and socialism. It seems clear that the restructuration of NGOs as the third sector with the professionalisation of NGOs as service providers in the international aid agenda fits perfectly into the context of Vietnam's socialisation policy, which is aimed to strengthen the state's legitimacy over the care sector (Nguyen, 2018).

Noticeably, Hannah's research on civil society actions in Vietnam also suggests that NGO professionals were limited to apolitical and technical approaches rather than opened up for oppositional or confrontational actions against the state. In other words, rather than challenging the state's oppression against civil society, Hannah's PhD research (2007) suggests that voluntary NGOs in Vietnam tended to conform to the state's policy rather than challenging the state. A case study in Hannah's research shows how an NGO professional played a role of an educator rather than a rebel, who provided advice and assistance to factory workers when keeping their civil society actions in line with the state's regulations. The professionalism in the NGO sector in Vietnam illustrates Ferguson's (1994)

proposition of the anti-politic machine of development which resembles a kind of government power to encompass the grassroots to realise donors' democratisation agenda. Yet, as Hannah points out, the Vietnamese NGO professionals also mobilised the imaginative symbol of the Vietnamese identity, to form a force of contestation against Western development ideas and approaches. This notion of professionalism in the Vietnamese NGOs reveals the double movements or contestations mobilised by the mechanism of the anti-politic machine (Hannah, 2007, p. 216). More recently, Kerkvliet (2015) has written about the democratisation movement in societies/groups outside the state's mono-organisational structure. Compared to Hannah's findings of non-political civil society actions, Kerkvliet's study reveals the development of recent social movements in Vietnam with more direct and confrontational approaches against the authoritarian political system. Nevertheless, as his research reveals, none of the approaches was aimed at violent attempts to challenge the political system (Kerkvliet 2018, p. 366). Martin Gainsborough, who has conducted a series of studies about the state in Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation, reveals the huge interests in the private sector for mono-organisational socialism. His recent research (2017) about "the Myth of a Centralised Socialist state" continues to suggest that the interests of the elites in society and foreign donors have reinforced the "mythical" power of the centralised state in the market economy. In this respect, as Gainsborough (2017, p. 130) has pointed out, elite groups both domestically and internationally have benefited from "the socialist legacy" of the state for the capacity to deliver the order which is necessary for them to delve into economic interests.

The discussions about the legitimacy of the centralised state in Vietnam's emergent civil society suggest the mode of governmentality operated by the state with ideological and symbolic resources of the socialist state (Bui, 2015). Refraining from using forms of repression, the socialist state has operated a form of government technology to conduct people's conduct from a distance with ideological and symbolic resources (Ferguson and Gupta, 2002; Fassin, 2011). Despite the growing economic interests in the market economy, socialism seems to inhabit a repertoire of moral and ideological symbols for the new elites to accumulate to gain power. This repertoire of ideological and moral symbols is the source from which the state and elite groups in civil society continue to

encompass social consent vertically (Ferguson and Gupta, 2002). Verdery (1991) also suggests the economy of shortage in socialism has created the repertoire of ideological and moral values for intellectuals to reproduce and accumulate power (to allocate) in the economy. This notion illustrates the interests of post-socialist elites, especially women, to succumb voluntary positions in NGOs as carers to regain a role in public life (Hemment, 2004, 2007; Phillips, 2005, 2008; Simpson, 2010).

This research continues to explore the ideological and moral appeal of socialism in the context of *doi moi* post-socialist economic transformation. Through the examination of self-government as the enterprising-self, this research will demonstrate how the women professionals in the NGO sector in Vietnam have reproduced ideological and symbolic power of socialism from material and professional privileges of the NGO cosmopolitanism for their transcendence in the market economy. The research on the self-government of Vietnamese NGO professional women will reveal the mode of governmentality which the socialist state has operated to govern the autonomous civil society in the context of market liberalisation with the vision of socialism.

3.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have introduced the theoretical framework to explore the dynamics of civil society from the examination of the self-government by using Foucault's proposition of governmentality theory. Following the Foucauldian notion of government technology, this research will explore the self-government or optimisation of the post-socialist women working in the NGO sector in the context of marketisation and privatisation. The examination of the personhood character of these women is also aimed at revealing their interests for the self-government in the context of marketisation. The examination of the self-government of the Vietnamese female NGO professionals will illustrate how the state has governed (from afar) women's beliefs and aspirations for the self-optimisation and self-orientation with the market facilities with the ideological and moral appeals of socialism. This research will unpack the self-government of the Vietnamese female NGO professionals in the transient process from socialism to explore the ethical subject of Vietnam's market-oriented socialism.

In this research, I also employ the Gramscian notion of civil society to explore the consent of the women for the self-government and optimisation in the civil society in the context of neoliberalism. In particular, the exploration of the enterprising-self or the *homo-oeconomicus* character is aimed at revealing the ideological hegemony which has mobilised the unity of society in Vietnam's market-oriented socialism. By looking at the consent of the Vietnamese female NGO professionals for the self-government and self-reliance in the market, the research aims at revealing how civil society has contributed to the renewal of the hegemonic power of the socialist state in market-oriented socialism. The research particularly looks at the moral and ideological appeals of the self-government in the context of the marketisation. In this research, by exploring the ideological and symbolic strategies of the Vietnamese female NGO professionals in the market, I will attempt to unravel the reproduction of the socialist ideology in the process of neoliberalisation in the context of post-socialist economic transition.

The exploration of the strategies of the women for the dominant position in society is aimed at revealing the relationship between the Vietnamese female NGO professionals and the state. The research will reveal the ideological and moral resources of socialism in the personhood of Vietnamese female NGO professionals in the context of Vietnam's post-socialist economic restructuration. Specifically, I will explore how the NGO professional women continue to rely on the state for ideological and symbolic resources to reproduce their power in the new social realm formed by the process of marketisation and privatisation. The research also looks at the self-government of the NGO female professionals in the transnational government of the humanitarian regime. Through the examination of female professionals in the NGO sector, the research will inform how NGO professionalisation has served post-socialist women to regain their pre-eminence in the economy (Schnable, 2015; Hemment, 2004, 2007; Phillips, 2005, 2008). The examination of the self-government of Vietnamese female NGO professionals in the role of carers in the context of the state welfare reduction offers an opportunity for the research to build on the knowledge of the government from afar, of the socialist state in the context of post-socialist economic restructuration. This research of civil society, from the examination of the *homo-oeconomicus* character, will contribute further to the understanding of

the reproduction of the ideological hegemony of socialism in Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation.

Chapter 4 - Insider status and methodological approach

4.1 Introduction

This research looks at the self-government of the women who took part to explore the dynamics of the emergent civil society in Vietnam. The research design was developed to maximise my insider status to implement an inquiry into the world of Vietnamese female professionals working in the NGO sector in the context of Vietnam's *doi moi* economic transition. The research design was developed to maximise the richness of the fieldwork qualitative data, and my insider status to construct knowledge of the personhood and civil society in Vietnam's post-socialist economic transition. The research is aimed at answering the following questions:

Main research question: What does the examination of the personhood of the post-socialist female professionals working in the NGO sector reveal about the dynamics of civil society in Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation?

<u>Sub-question 1:</u> How does the self-government of these women in the context of the marketisation and privatisation of *doi moi* economic renovation demonstrate the prestige of Vietnamese female professionals in the NGO sector?

<u>Sub-question 2:</u> How does the self-government of these women in the NGO sector and specifically their role as carers demonstrate the morality of the post-socialist market economy in Vietnam?

<u>Sub-question 3:</u> How do Vietnamese female professionals working in the NGO sector perform an autonomous civil society in mono-organisational socialism?

To answer the main research question and sub-questions, I implemented qualitative research to collect interviews and other qualitative data from the informants. The data collection was aimed at generating personal narratives of the life-story of the informants to make inferences from the social and cultural context of Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation. The collection of narrative

data is aimed at constructing the studied social phenomenon from the account of the informants.

This chapter is structured into five main sections. I will first discuss my constructivist epistemological approach in the research design to generate the data from the fieldwork study. Next, I discuss the flexible insider-outsider positionality to maximise the strengths and mitigate the weaknesses associated with an insider status. I will then present the research design in which I will explain the snowball sampling strategy and data collection methods to maximise the richness of qualitative data. After that, I will present the process of data analysis to identify and sequence themes to answer the research questions. Finally, I will discuss some ethical issues associated with insider research.

4.2 The constructivist approach

In this research, I adopt the constructivist approach to unveil knowledge about the transformation of civil society in Vietnam through the examination of the post-socialist personhood. According to Schwandt (1994, p. 118), the constructivist believes that: "The world of lived reality and situation-specific meanings that constitute the general object of investigation is thought to be constructed by social actors". The role of the researcher, in the constructivist tradition, is to explain reality in relation to the construction of meaning, which is embodied in the language and actions of the indigenous informants (Schwandt, 1994, p. 118).

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2008, 1994), the construction of knowledge involves the interaction between the informants and the researcher to construct reality (Lee, 2012; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Constructivism allows the researcher to explore the knowledge in the natural setting and construct knowledge with interpretive techniques (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Lee, 2012, Williamson, 2006). Constructivism, which is a qualitative paradigm, highlights the researcher's role in the search for the construction of reality in the natural setting. Williamson (2006) suggests using a constructivist framework with ethnographic techniques. She highlights the benefits of ethnographic techniques in maximising the interpretation of the researcher, specifically in "elicit[ing] the perceptions, meanings, and experiences of participants and provide rich descriptions of them" (Williamson, 2006, p. 89). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) also highlight the role of

qualitative researchers in the natural settings to "make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, p. 3). To construct knowledge, qualitative researchers engage in interpretive methods and techniques to make a meaningful interpretation of what they hear, see, or experience in the field (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Williamson (2006) suggests the use of multiple data collection methods and literature to validate the construction of data collected from the fieldwork.

In this research, I also implemented the collection of qualitative data for the research on the personhood and civil society in Vietnam. I maximised my insider status to do a fieldwork study to optimise the natural access to the real world of the Vietnamese female professionals working in the NGO sector to construct the knowledge of the post-socialist personhood and civil society in *doi moi* economic renovation in Vietnam through the personal narratives of the informants. To explore the world of the women, I used multiple data collection methods to generate and intensify the richness of the data as well as means of triangulation through the use of different data collection methods for various data types. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2008), triangulation is not merely a means to validate and objectify the knowledge claimed but a means through which the knowledge is testified by exploring competing perspectives, hence appearing more truthful to readers. In this research, the triangulation of the data from multiple data collection strategies was aimed at consolidating research findings not only through various means of data generation but also in ways where the data are generated in different settings and formats.

Also, the use of multiple data collection methods allowed me to have a flexible and reflexive position to identify, to record and to interpret what I see, hear or discover from the research process. According to Schwandt (1994, p. 17), reflexivity is important for the researcher to test and modify concepts and models for the construction of new knowledge from the background of shared practices and knowledge. In this research, I used multiple data collection methods to increase reflexivity and triangulation from different data sources for the construction and validation of the researched knowledge, generated from personal narratives. The data generated from the multitude of data collection methods provide good varieties of data for triangulation purposes. Also, the use of multiple data collection methods was to address the problem of the data

saturation in qualitative research when depending on one data generation method (Guest et al., 2006; Fusch and Ness, 2015).

4.3 The insider-outsider positionality of the researcher

In autumn 2016, I returned to Vietnam from the United Kingdom (UK) to do a six-month fieldwork study for my PhD research thesis about Vietnamese female professionals working in the NGO sector in Hanoi (See the map of Hanoi in Appendix A). I used to work in the NGO sector, both local and international NGOs in Hanoi, before becoming a PhD researcher in the UK. As a woman being born and having lived through the economic transition period in Hanoi, I have a lived experience of the changing conditions in Vietnam in the process of the marketisation and privatisation that occurred as a result of Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation. Witnessing the change in Vietnam after *doi moi*, especially the burgeoning of autonomous socio-economic activities developed with the emergent market, has motivated me to research the dynamics of civil society in Vietnam. I particularly chose to make an inquiry about Vietnamese female professionals working in the NGO sector in Hanoi, not only because of my professional interest in gender but also for the significant role of women who represent half and play a significant role in the socio-economic transformation in Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation. I was able to maximise my insider status to gain natural access to generate in-depth qualitative data. Particularly, I used my insider status to maximise their trust and acceptance as a member of the community to generate rich and in-depth qualitative data.

Insider research is often highlighted for its natural access to generate knowledge about the culture of the studied group without upsetting the natural setting (Bonner and Tolhurst, 2002; Ross, 2017; Merton, 1972). Humphrey (2013) suggests that the membership of the insider researcher helps the researcher to access and unveil implicit and sensitive details about the researched community. Proponents of insider research often highlight the notion that "you have to be one in order to understand one", which implies that insider researchers who share the lived experience with the researched group have the capacity to understand the realities of the community and to generate the knowledge that is relevant to them (Merton, 1972).

However, there are challenges involved with the knowledge generated with insider status. Insider knowledge is often criticised for lacking the objectivity to be aware of the power domination of insider knowledge (Chavez, 2008; Ross, 2017; Merton, 1972). For example, Merton (1972) suggests that insiders who claim the expertise of insider knowledge often reproduce the knowledge of the dominating group. In addition, power dynamics between the researcher and informants in the research context and the indigenous culture might result in an insider bias in the process of data collection and knowledge production (Humphrey, 2013; Greene, 2014). The insider researcher bias is often involved with the imposition of the researcher's beliefs, experiences and values in the process of data collection, analysis and writing up the research results (Greene, 2014; Ross, 2017; Humphrey, 2013). Several studies have highlighted the risks involved in the potential domination of insider perspectives over participants' views and in the process of data analysis (Greene, 2014; Ross, 2017; Humphrey, 2013; Dwyer and Buckle, 2009; Savvides et al., 2014).

Chavez (2008) has pointed to the complications between insider knowledge and researcher positionality with critical scrutiny of the power relations between the researcher and informants. From her own experience of doing insider research with the members of her family, Chavez (2008) argues that insider researcher, rather than naturalising the insider perspective, often had to engage in the "critical reflection" of the researcher's positionality to gain access and generate the data from the indigenous informants. She said:

> *Using critical reflection to navigate and negotiate insider positionality, to know where the self and the other begins and ends, implies that the use of particular qualitative methods may be more suitable for insider research (Chavez, 2008, p. 490).*

As Merton (1972) also rightly points out, there are no definite boundaries between insider and outsider knowledge, considering the multiplicity of social situations and the knowledge produced by various traditions in social sciences. As Merton (1972) points out, historians who write about their histories but are also outsiders seeking knowledge of things outside of their time or their social categories, or ethnographers who research about "other" groups are not complete outsiders when committing to seek insider knowledge. Merton suggests that researchers should transcend the insider/outsider knowledge binary to concentrate on generating knowledge of social sciences which are rather determined by the

scientific and methodological rigour of the traditions of social sciences. This notion suggests that the researcher, rather than claiming insider or outsider knowledge privileges, uses theories and research techniques to validate the quality and values of the knowledge of social sciences.

In this research, I adopt an insider status to maximise the rapport and natural access to the researched group to generate rich data for qualitative research. Being native to the socio-political environment and the community, I cannot and do not deny the insider perspective, which was part of the motivation for me to research my own country and people. As mentioned earlier, the researcher's personal perspective does not and cannot influence the whole research process, which is, rather, ensured by the researcher's methodological commitments and consolidated by the rigour of social sciences. As I will present later, the interactions with the informants and my experience as the researcher in the field have helped me to improve my knowledge alongside the progress of the research. In this respect, I agree with Merton's (1972) proposition of the researcher's indefinite insider/outsider positionality which is to satisfy the search for knowledge which is validated by methodological rigour inherent to the tradition of social sciences, rather confirming the knowledge predominance inherent to either insider's or outsider's tradition.

Using my insider status helped me to maximise the data generated from the field. As an insider researcher, I gained acceptance and trust as a member of the NGO community in Hanoi, which allowed me to generate in-depth data. Especially, my shared identities with the informants both as a Vietnamese woman and a former colleague in the NGO sector in Hanoi allowed me to access the intimate and explicit details of the life stories of the women, about their work, their lives and the trade-offs they make in life. My experience as an insider researcher seems to reflect Dwyer and Buckle's (2009) proposition of the shared identities between the researcher and informants which help the researcher access in-depth data from their membership with a community. They stated:

> *Participants might be more willing to share their experiences because there is an assumption of understanding and an assumption of shared distinctiveness; it is as if they feel, "You are one of us, and it is us versus them (those on the outside who don't understand)" (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009, p. 58).*

Similarly, being a researcher with prior relationships with the informants allowed me to access their intimate and detailed life stories. Specifically, having been recognised as "one of them", I often had the informants' acceptance and trust, and so they were able to open up with me stories of their lives. I was able to implement participant observation in the natural setting of their daily life. Several informants were my former work colleagues, university colleagues and friends. Through their introduction, I was able to conduct the interviews with other informants who also accepted me as "one of them".

As mentioned earlier, my insider status allowed me to maximise rich and in-depth data because of the shared identities and my close relationship with the informants in the NGO community in Hanoi. Nevertheless, there were dilemmas involved with the shared identities of my insider status and the informants. Specifically, I found that the shared identities between the researcher and informants in the natural context also involved specific dilemmas. Dwyer and Buckle (2009) have warned about the dominant position of the researcher's perception in interviews, which might eliminate the opportunities to explore further other perspectives from the informants. They also suggest that the shared membership of the researcher with the group might mystify informants' perspectives to deliberate their own experience.

I also encountered difficulties in dealing with an insider perspective that derived from the experience of shared identities with the informants. Specifically, I found that my insider status tended to restrict the opportunities to seek another account of the problems under investigation. For example, when dealing with the conception of NGOs, I often struggled to accept mass organisations as part of the NGO community. In Vietnam, mass organisations are a component of the VCP's system, which is also a part of the state apparatus. However, they are also recognised by Western donors and researchers as part of civil society for having functions similar to NGOs (Gray, 1999; Wischermann and Nguyen, 2003; Nørlund, 2007a, 2007b). During the fieldwork, I was often challenged by the informants on the "Western" opinion about mass organisations. Specifically, my categorisation of the mass organisations as a part of the NGO community was not accepted by many female professionals working in local and international NGOs in Hanoi. Interestingly, in the debates about this categorisation, my insider status (as one of them) was also challenged by some informants from the local

and international NGOs. For example, Ngan, a colleague from a foreign NGO, argued that I could not be a part of NGOs if keeping this opinion. In this situation, I withdrew from my insider status and reminded her of my researcher position. With the new position, I found that we were able to engage in the critical debates about the situation of mass organisations in Vietnam without distorting the trust between us. My experience seems to illustrate the insider-researcher's dilemmas described by Dwyer and Buckle (2009) about the expectations from the informants of the shared perspectives with the insider-researcher. I also found that it is necessary for the researcher to employ a flexible insider/outsider positionality strategy to keep reflecting on the biases involved with the insider status.

When moving out from the insider status, I found that the contradictions of the perspectives between me as the researcher and the informants were useful to interrogate the discussed topics beyond our shared knowledge. In addition, the flexible insider/outsider positionality did not seem to alter my insider status but offered me a necessary distance to reflect on various critical moments. Specifically, when switching out of the insider position, I was able to engage the informants in critical debates to seek in-depth and alternative explanations of the issues under investigation. Also, having enough detachment from the informants allowed me to reflect on methodological issues. Moreover, the flexible insider/outsider positionality allowed me to gain a necessary distance to testify the coherence and consistency of the information collected from the informants for the authentic account.

Several authors have also highlighted insider/outsider positionality when doing insider research (Savvides et al., 2014; Dwyer and Buckle, 2009; Humphrey, 2013). For example, Dwyer and Buckle (2009) have suggested the notion of "space between" in which qualitative researchers maximise both insider and outsider positions rather than committing to either insider or outsider position alone. They argue that qualitative researchers cannot be either totally insiders or outsiders but must navigate a space between the two positions with the negotiation of the costs and benefits involved with both. Regarding this, they suggested:

> *The intimacy of qualitative research no longer allowed us to remain true outsiders to the experience under study and, because of our role*

> *as researchers, it does not qualify us as complete insiders. We now occupy the space between, with the costs and benefits this status affords (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009, p. 61).*

This notion reflects the dilemmas that I encountered being an insider-researcher. Though entering the field as an insider, I often switched between the two positions to maximise the intimacy with the community whilst having the necessary detachment to reflect on critical research issues. The flexible insider/outsider positionality also reflects Merton's (1972) proposition of the researcher positions to maximise knowledge for social sciences. It seems clear to me that there is no truer or privileged knowledge inherent to either the insider or the outsider. Rather, I optimised the insider/outsider positions to maximise the knowledge from the informants for the research purposes. In this research, I used my insider status to maximise the accessibility to the researched community while adopting the flexible insider/outsider positionality to reflect and maximise the opportunities for critical debates.

I also recognised the benefits of the insider status in maximising the collaboration of the informants in the process of constructing knowledge for social sciences. The role of participants has been increasingly recognised in the construction of knowledge in qualitative research (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009; Mishler, 1986). In this research, I adopted an insider status to maximise the trust and rapport from the informants to generate open and democratic discussions. The creation of open and democratic discussions based on trust and rapport allowed me to engage in the interpretation and construction of knowledge. When I was able to elicit the knowledge with the collaboration of the informants with my insider status, the flexible insider/outsider positionality helped me to acquire the distance to continually reflect on critical issues to improve the objectivity and avoid unnecessary biases.

4.4 The research design

The research design was developed to generate qualitative data to explore the answers to the research questions. I adopted multiple data collection methods for this research. As presented earlier, the use of multiple data collection methods was aimed at generating narratives of the life stories of the women. The selection of each method was to generate the textual or graphic data contributed to form

the themes to answer the main research and individual sub-research questions respectively.

I also adopted an inductive analytical approach to maximising the richness of the qualitative data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 83), an inductive approach is used to find themes from the data which loosely relate to specific questions asked in data collection methods. This approach is in contrast to the deductive approach in which data are generated to test the assumptions or theories earlier constructed by the researcher (Thomas, 2006, p. 238). The selection of the data collection methods was not aimed to test any presumptions but rather to generate narrative data with an attempt to make a full account the dynamics of civil society and the personhood of Vietnamese post-socialist female professionals working in the NGO sector through the Foucauldian theoretical framework of governmentality. Rather than appointing each method to answer specific assumptions, I employed multiple data collection methods to generate narrative data and discrepancies for triangulation purposes. I directed the data collection into three key topical groups to restrict the areas of findings within three main topics as follows:

- Motivation to work in NGOs
- Life and career goals
- Opportunities and risks when working in NGOs

To generate data for the research, four qualitative data collection methods were selected, they are: 1) in-depth interviews, 2) focus group discussions, 3) participant observation, and 4) concept-mapping. Among these four methods selected, in-depth interviews are considered the main method to collect personal narrative data. The other methods are aimed at collecting textual and graphic data to substantiate and triangulate data for the generalisation purpose.

When using multiple data collection methods, I also have more opportunities to maximise the ethnographic techniques through observing, recording, writing and mapping the data, which was useful for reflexivity (Williamson, 2006; de Sardan, 2015). In the interviews, I implemented open-ended and unstructured interviews with the informants. The interviews were guided, with topics aimed at exploring the answers to the research questions. I also organised focus group discussions with the same topics. The format of the group discussions was aimed at

maximising the interaction and critical debates between the participants. In the focus group discussions, I participated in and observed the interactions among the participants whose opinions were spoken, challenged, contested and confirmed in an interactive environment. At the same time, participant observation of the informants in their natural settings allowed me to reflect and validate information explained or mentioned from the stories of my informants. Finally, the concept mapping allowed me to implement an experimental task with the informants of generating personal narratives in graphs. All data generated during the fieldwork were organised into data corpus and data sets for the data analysis which is explained separately in Section 5 of this chapter.

4.4.1 Snowball sampling

I used a snowball sampling strategy to select and approach my informants. Snowball sampling is a way "to locate subjects with certain attributes or characteristics necessary in the study" (Berg, 2014, p. 52). The strategy is aimed at identifying women who have worked in NGOs in different age groups, and from different organisational types, for data collection purposes. Particularly, I approached my former colleagues in NGOs for the interviews and asked them to introduce me to other women in the NGO sector in Hanoi who possessed the characteristics that matched the research criteria in terms of age, work experience and three organisational types, consisting of local NGOs, International NGOs (INGOs) and mass organisations (A list of informants in pseudonyms is presented in Appendix B). I used this strategy not only to find the informants but also to maximise the established connections among informants to gain their trust and acceptance, to elicit narratives of their life stories (Browne, 2005). As mentioned earlier, the personal and professional connections among the informants through snowballing allowed me to optimise the insider status to generate the desired data for the research purposes.

Snowballing is a sampling method to search for the informants with specific characteristics for the research purposes (Berg, 2014). Snowballing is traditionally used to approach the hidden population through chain-referral sampling (Heckathorn, 2011). In this research, I used snowballing not only to increase the sample size but also to optimise the knowledge of the informants

about their network so as to identify other potential informants for the information which is prioritised for the research purposes. The use of member's knowledge of the group when snowballing has been considered in research on closed groups or vulnerable groups (Penrod et al., 2003; Sadler et al., 2010; Heckathorn, 2011). This type of sampling is mentioned by Heckathorn (2011) as respondent-driven sampling, which is a developed sampling method from snowballing. According to Heckathorn (2011), this respondent-driven sampling method is more advantageous than the traditional snowball sampling when maximising the knowledge of the respondents about the members in their networks. In this research, through the referrals of the informants, I also used the knowledge of the informants to select and approach the potential informants with specific characteristics that match the priorities of the fieldwork process. The chain-referral also allowed me to maximise insider status from the established connections of the informants.

In addition, I found that chain-referral sampling tended to be manipulated by the informant(s)'s knowledge about their networks. For example, when asking the informants to introduce me to potential informants in their networks, I found that the informants tended to introduce me to the people that they thought were desirable for the research. Particularly, the informants often recommended people who often shared characteristics with them in terms of age, personal/professional interests, prestige and social status. For example, the older NGO practitioners who are retired from the state sector usually have connections with people in the same generation who earned credentials and prestige from the state system. The mid-career people who have lived through the transitional period of *doi moi* economic renovation are often members of working networks with people both inside and outside of the state. Young professionals tended to maintain a close connection with the informal or underground groups outside of the registered NGOs. Earlier, I have mentioned about the problems of insiderness for the expectations of the informants of shared perspectives. This situation illustrates the insider dilemmas associated with my insider status. To avoid the presumption of shared interests, I maximised opportunities to reflect from the outsider perspective to evaluate the information provided by the informants.

For example, I did not entirely depend on the informant's knowledge but conducted a preliminary assessment of the potential informant based on the

shared attributes in their network. The preliminary assessment was also aimed at evaluating the informant's background and the data that she could provide to leverage the research progress in the fieldwork study. In this respect, I did not only increase the number of informants but also built on fieldwork knowledge through snowballing.

Also, as mentioned earlier in relation to the system of mono-organisational socialism, there is inconsistency in the knowledge of the system of social associations and organisations in Vietnam and of the Western literature of NGOs and civil society as legal autonomous protected realms. Despite the inconsistency, the informants often adopted the NGO title in a specific project context for the implementation of project outputs, e.g. civil society components, which was at the same time interchangeable with pre-existing categories of social associations and organisations in consistence with the state's regulations. There is also a blurred line between the state-owned mass organisations who also shared social functions like other individually and privately owned organisations (Gray, 1999; Nørlund, 2007b; Salemink, 2006). I often encountered the contradictions of notions of NGOs/civil society when snowballing for informants for specific categories of local NGOs, INGOs and mass organisations (which I initially classified as GONGOs: Government-Owned Non-Governmental Organisations). As mentioned earlier about informants' networks, members of each network tended to use their own categories rather than adopting the general terms of civil society or NGOs, which indicate their position vis-à-vis each other. The co-existence of a variety of identifications of organisations resembling NGOs caused difficulties in selecting the informants for the research purposes. For example, there is no organisation in Vietnam formally called as a GONGO but only mass organisations which are categorised as *to chuc chinh tri xa hoi* (socio-political organisations) in the system of social organisations of the socialist state's apparatus (Kornai, 1992). Informants working in mass organisations used to regard themselves as part of the state. However, they consented with the general name of *to chuc xa hoi* (social organisations) which is also used for other local NGOs. In this regard, I sometimes approached informants who worked in *to chuc xa hoi* rather than GONGOs or NGOs. Likewise, when I asked a leader of a local NGO whether she regarded local NGOs as a part of civil society, she preferred to use the title of her organisation registered with the Ministry of Science and

Technology as a science and technology organisation. In the category of science and technology organisations, her organisation is also considered a civil society organisation. She said:

> *What do you consider as NGOs? (Or) As a civil society? Our organisation is definitely a civil society (organisation). The civil society like us does not care about the name. We are not called an NGO. We are an organisation of science and technology. There is ridicule in Vietnam that no organisation has NGO name though there is a Department for Non-Governmental Organisations Affairs under the Ministry of Home Affairs. However, there is not a single organisation which is called NGO (Dung, interview, 6/3/2017).*

There were situations in which I encountered difficulty in switching between the normative and operational concepts to reach a consensus with the informants about the categorisation of NGOs and civil society organisations in Vietnam. In this respect, I used my distance from the community to be reflexive and flexible in making judgements and adjustments about who were and were not NGOs, in line with the local culture and knowledge of civil society. In other words, snowballing tends to work with a compromise with the local knowledge of civil society, rather than following the presumptions of civil society in the Anglo-American literature. In this respect, my research on civil society tends to reflect Lewis and Mosse's (2006) description of fieldworkers as "brokers" and "translators" of Western knowledge, whose jobs involve having to deal with interpreting, translating and compromising the contradictory notions of civil society in the non-Western context (Salemink, 2006; Lewis and Mosse, 2006).

In sum, snowball sampling helped me to optimise my insider status to approach prospective informants through the networks of female NGO professionals in Hanoi. The connections with the informants through the referrals of the informants' membership in their networks enabled me to gain trust and acceptance of the community for the maximisation of in-depth information. In addition, I also had opportunities to use the informants' existing knowledge of potential informants and their organisations from the chain-referral method when snowballing. The connections with the informants through the personal and working networks allowed me to gain the rapport with the Vietnamese female NGO professional community in Hanoi to generate in-depth qualitative data using the multiple data collection method strategy.

4.4.2 The informants

This research focuses on the narratives of the Vietnamese professional women working in the NGO sector in Hanoi during my fieldwork study between October 2016 and March 2017. The data collected for the research were the result of face-to-face conversations and interactions with NGO professional women who were aged between their early 20s and late 60s. The informants I approached represented different generations of NGO professionals, including those who were the first generation of NGO founders and the later who came to work as salaried professionals.

The female NGO professionals I interviewed in Hanoi represented well-educated strata in society who have at least completed a Bachelor's degree in a university in the country. Many founders of local NGOs used to work in the state sector as researchers or university lecturers. Some of them opened a local NGO while also owning a for-profit business at the same time. The mid-career professionals usually had completed a Master's degree abroad under scholarship schemes sponsored by governments or foundations in developed countries. Many of them returned to work in the NGO sector after completing the graduate schemes abroad. Some informants have transited to work in the government or business sector but returned to NGO professions after a year or two working in other sectors. They all expressed their aspirations of working in NGOs to care for the disabled, the marginalised or communities categorised as vulnerable in society. It seemed clear to me that professional positions in NGOs were appealing for women particularly because of the idea of *not-for-profit* and humanitarian business, through which women can find a role through the production of care for the marginalised and the vulnerable (Malkki, 2015; Bornstein, 2012).

My informants, though working in different positions, from administrative to project implementation roles, or as leaders or founders of NGOs, expressed their sense of usefulness in being a part of the supply chain of humanitarian and care services. The women I talked to during my fieldwork in Hanoi represented job holders in international organisations, state-owned and individually and private-owned organisations. Their aspirations to work in the NGO sector, though associated with different levels or categories of significance (salary, professional prestige or power), seemed to reflect the growing interest of a particular section of the population, particularly women, in specific types of domestic work which

have been created by the global humanitarian industry (Malkki, 2015) and/or the voluntary sector (Muehlebach, 2012). The performance of humanitarian aid workers from home (either through domestic work or home-based activities) illustrates a transnational phenomenon of humanitarianism produced through acts of "give and take" which are not merely driven by the needs of the needy but also the needs of the giver, in the context of the growing significance of humanitarianism in the global agenda (Malkki, 2015, p. 4). The value of care and love reveals a specific type of relational value of care in the context of economic exploitation, which is appealing to a part of the population, especially women, to gain significance in society (Muehlebach, 2012; Malkki, 2015).

This research focuses on the aspirations of highly educated women in Hanoi to care for the vulnerable and the marginalised by the process of post-socialist economic restructuration. This research of the life stories of the well-educated professional women working in NGOs aims at revealing the moral and ideological appeals of care work to the women, which also accounts for an equivalent significance of their economic maximisation in the process of marketisation and privatisation within the configuration of market-oriented socialism.

4.4.3 Narrative interviews

Interviews are conversations with a research purpose (Berg, 2007, p. 89). In interviews, the researcher asks informants questions to generate data for the research. Mishler (1986, p. 9) suggests that more than exchanging texts, the questions and answers in the interview are aimed at "eliciting information or expressions of opinion or belief" from the informant. In this research, interviews are aimed at eliciting the narratives of the Vietnamese female NGO professionals for the research questions. I conducted face-to-face interviews with an open-ended and loosely structured format.

My interview questions were not fixed but were grouped into topical clusters to give informants freedom to structure their own stories. The interviews were aimed at eliciting the stories of the female professionals working in the NGO sector in the context of the market reforms of *doi moi* economic renovation. In the interviews, I asked the informants the reason they came to work in NGOs, from which I will build on the knowledge of NGOs as an embodiment of their daily

activities and responsibilities. I also guided the conversations into three main topical groups or clusters as mentioned earlier. Rather than directing the interview questions into specific assumptions, I let the informants tell their own stories with their own reasoning. The interviews were aimed at generating personal narratives with a loosely structured and open-ended format to respect the flows constructed by the informants.

According to Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000, p. 59), a narrative interview is “a setting that encourages and stimulates an interviewee (who in NI [narrative interviews] is called an ‘informant’) to tell a story about some significant event in their life and social context”. Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000, p. 59), suggest using narrative interviews to “reconstruct social events from the perspective of informants” from the process of the meaning-making in the storytelling of the informants. They state that storytelling is an intentional product of the storyteller or the “self-generating schema” in which events are recalled, deliberated, selected and sequenced in a structure with a beginning, a middle and an end, in order to convey a meaning (or a plot) for a particular audience (Jovchelovitch and Bauer, 2000, pp. 58-59). The storytelling, therefore, involves account-making based on the informant’s experience rather than based merely on the facts (Jovchelovitch and Bauer, 2000; Atkinson and Delamont, 2006). Nevertheless, personal narratives are not personal inventions but constructed against particular cultural and contextual backgrounds to convey meaningful contents about the self to the audience (Atkinson and Delamont, 2006).

In the social sciences, narrative interviews are used to reconstruct social events through the perspectives of the informants (Jovchelovitch and Bauer, 2000). For example, Yarrow (2008) has examined the development of Ghanaian NGOs from the personal narratives of life histories of Ghanaian NGO workers. In particular, he looked at the informants’ accounts of “ideology”, “commitment” and “sacrifice” for the national development to form the arguments about the development sector and counter-arguments against popular propositions about NGO workers as selfish and accumulative actors in development programmes (Yarrow, 2008, p. 355). This example of using self-told stories in narrative interviews for social research has illustrated how the researcher has produced knowledge from the account making of the informants from personal narratives of life stories or histories.

I implemented narrative interviews to engage the informants in telling the life stories of Vietnamese female professionals working in the NGO sector in the context of Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation. Particularly, in the interviews, the informants were encouraged to make their own account of Foucauldian notions of self-government in terms of values, desires and morality when describing their performance in the market economy. To engage the women actively in narrating the self, the interviews were organised in unstructured and free-flowing conversations with an interview guide grouping guiding questions in three main topics as follows (The interview guide is illustrated in Appendix C):

- Motivation to work in NGOs
- Life and career goals
- Opportunities and risks when working in NGOs

Under each topic, I prepared key questions to guide the conversations. I often conducted interviews in casual and free-flowing conversations to make a comfortable environment for the informants to tell their own stories. With the guiding questions, I directed the conversations into the main topical groups rather than to ask them all questions, to avoid repetition and to ensure the free flow of the story-telling of the informants. Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000, p. 61) suggested that it is necessary to maintain interview conversations as "everyday communications" by keeping the interviewer's influence minimal and avoiding structuring the interview in advance.

When conducting the interviews, I played the role of an active listener by using verbal and non-verbal expressions to show the interviewees my interest, by smiling, nodding and probing with "really?" "do you?" or "don't you?" (*that a?* and *the a?*), which are common expressions in Vietnamese daily communication to show the listener's interest). I also played the role of an interactive interviewer. Apart from ensuring the narrative flows of the stories, I engaged in interactive discussions with the informants to clarify the details in their stories by deliberately opting out of my insider status. I sometimes asked further questions to seek explanations or examples of specific situations which needed further elaboration. Also, the questioning and answering activities following the narrative phase were aimed at ensuring the narrative structure, which includes the beginning, middle and end of the narrative (Jovchelovitch and Bauer, 2000).

Moreover, there are opportunities for triangulation from interactive discussions to validate the trustworthiness and reliability of the interviewing data. The purpose of triangulation was to generate a variety of explanations about the phenomenon under investigation with the representation of the informants. This strategy is described by de Sardan (2015) as complex triangulation, which is aimed at presenting "meaningful discrepancies". According to de Sardan (2015, p. 47) "complex triangulation aims at gathering a variety of information in the face of a problem to be addressed. The objective is to cross viewpoints that seem to bear a meaningful discrepancy". I found details in the interviews were repeated in other forms of the data collection. Also, by critically engaging in the interactive discussions, I was able to seek the alternative account of the issues under investigation. The use of multiple data collection and my flexible insider/outsider positionality helped me generate various data types for triangulation purposes, to improve the trustworthiness and significance of the information provided by the informants.

In total, I conducted 36 verbatim transcribed interviews with women from 23 to 64 years old in various positions in three organisational types: local NGOs, INGOs and mass organisations. The interview time ranged from 30 minutes to three hours. When transcribing, I attempted to capture the essence of the interview contents and to group them into topics of values, aspirations, fulfilments and sacrifices or trade-offs and others. These topics were noted down for the next step of coding of the interview data.

4.4.4 Focus group discussions

For this research, I implemented three focus group discussions with small groups of three to five participants in the various age groups, to elicit the values that informed their work and their lives. In contrast to personal interviews, focus groups have strengths in generating the data through the interactions among the participants. According to Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2011), focus groups are used to generate collective thinking and actions through the debates among the participants. As they highlight, focus groups are often implemented to explore the common ground for collective actions of the feminists or social activists from different backgrounds. Berg (2007, pp. 144-145) also suggests that focus groups

are discussions between participants and the researcher around certain topics which are relevant to the group participants help the researcher to unravel the life structures of the group. Focus groups often are organised complementarily with other methods, e.g. interviews, to help to "account for the persistence of (this) double elision" (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis, 2013, p. 2). Kamberelis and Dimitriadis see focus group discussions as "large interviews", to capture the social views of groups rather than individual opinions while also serving as complementary to other methods.

I conducted focus groups to generate an additional form of qualitative data and to identify discrepancies for triangulation. The organisation of the group discussions were aimed at engaging the participants in the discussion of a variety of topics in the three main topical groups. During the discussions, I also observed the interactions among informants and noted down findings from the critical discussions in my field notes. Data generated from the focus group discussions were organised in a data corpus for data analysis. Focus groups data were also used to triangulate with the data collected from other data collection methods.

In this research, I selected the participants for the focus group discussions from three age groups: between 20 and 30 years old; between 30 and 40, and, between 40 and 50. The selection of the participants based on their age groups was aimed at exploring the variation of women's attitudes and practices among different generations of Vietnamese women in the *doi moi* period. The stories from the group discussions across different generations were useful to illustrate the continuity and/or changes in the cultural and social structure of the studied group throughout the time.

From my experience, I found that a focus group discussion could turn into a simulation of real-world debate among participants who became involved both consciously and unconsciously into the discussion of matters which were relevant to their work and their lives. The social dynamics which arose from real human interactions in the focus groups informed me of some truthful moments about their real world. In focus group discussions, participants could have the same or conflicting opinions on the discussed topics. Therefore, the data generated from the interactions in the focus group discussions are considered rich and truthful. The simulated environment of the focus groups, which are similar to real-life, allowed me to observe and capture the "moment of truth" from the conscious and

unconscious interactions of the participants. This finding seems to illustrate Berg's description of focus groups as "discussion[s] about conscious, semi-conscious, and unconscious psychological and social-cultural characteristics and processes among various groups" (Berg, 2007, p. 144). The simulation environment in the focus groups enabled me as a researcher to conduct participant observation of the group.

It is also worth noticing the inter-personal dynamics among participants, which might prompt an opportunity to seek information in a non-conventional way. For example, in one focus group meeting, the participants challenged critically one opinion from a participant who suggested to run an NGO without a leader. The critical debate turned into domination of the opinions of the majority who questioned the credibility of an organisation without leadership. When observing the debate, I found that the intensity of the discussions involved with the concerns of the majority of the participants about the commitments of the NGO for the vision and missions without the direction of a leader. The discussion among the women from the local NGOs had turned into the topic of how to do things right morally. Though this topic was not in the discussion agenda of the focus group discussion, the dynamism of the discussions in unexpected ways in the focus groups opened an opportunistic window for me to observe and generate data from the contestations among the informants. Additionally, the heterogeneity of opinions produced from the group discussions seemed to reflect de Sardan's description of the "meaningful discrepancies" through the "cross viewpoints" which was essential for triangulation purposes (de Sardan, 2015, p. 47). The example highlighted illustrates how interactions in focus groups helped to generate data discrepancies from contradictory opinions presented in focus group discussions.

Data obtained from the focus group discussions are rich and truthful because they are produced from the actual interactions of the group participants. However, there are also drawbacks involved with group dynamics which require facilitating skills to work with the group of individuals from different cultural and social backgrounds. As described earlier, the variations in the personal opinions in a focus group discussion might involve unexpected emotional reactions or dominations, which affect the quality of the data generated in the focus group. When it is necessary to mitigate tensions, I also found that it is important to

maintain the natural dynamics of the debates which enabled me to conduct the participant observation in the simulation environment of the real world in the focus group discussions as also being mentioned by Angrosino and Rosenberg (2011).

Each of the three focus group discussions lasted from an hour to an hour and a half. All recorded focus group discussions were transcribed into verbatim transcription. I transcribed recorded focus group discussions after having finished the transcribing of the interviews. In the transcribing process, I also attempted to identify themes from the critical discussions of the participants and connect them with the findings in the analysis of interview data (See Figure 3 for an example of an analysis of group data). I will discuss further the analysis in Section 5 of this chapter.

4.4.5 Participant observation

In this research, participant observation was implemented as an indispensable part of the fieldwork study. The participant observation involved activities of listening, talking, watching and joining in participants' activities held at their workplaces, at conferences, workshops, meetings and at other venues for learning, shopping and leisure purposes. The implementation of participant observation was not only to generate data including field notes, transcription of recorded speeches of the informants at the conferences, workshops or meetings, pictures of events and the venues, but also to immerse in and familiarise with their daily language and activities. In this research, participation observation was a technique to acquire knowledge of the studied groups by participating in their own environment. According to Spradley, participant observation is particularly useful to unravel the tacit knowledge that is often unspoken by the informants, which requires the researcher to "listen(ing) carefully to what they say, by observing their behaviour, and by studying artifacts and their use" (Spradley, 1980, p. 11). Participant observation is also a technique for the fieldworker to learn about the culture of one group by "immersing" in their world to capture the symbols in the everyday talks and actions of group members and interpret them in the language and culture of the group (de Sardan, 2015). Given the benefits of the participant observation, I conducted the method to generate the data

complementarily with other data collection methods to enrich the qualitative data through watching and listening to the informants in their natural settings.

During the fieldwork, I participated in several meetings of NGOs. During these occasions, I conducted participant observation. With my insider status, I could join their activities in natural settings without participation (Spradley, 1980). According to Spradley (1980, p. 60), the researcher does moderate participation by "maintain[ing] a balance between being an insider and an outsider, between participation and observation". I also moved between insider and outsider positions to observe while recording what was happening simultaneously. When interacting with the informants, I maintained natural interactions with the informants as an insider while performing the purposeful observation of their routine performance either at work or out of work occasions for the research purposes. For example, when visiting my informants at their offices to conduct the interviews, I was a quiet observer who watched them working in their working spaces and doing their daily tasks. I also participated in other activities with my former colleagues in NGOs outside the working hours, for example having weekend coffees, going to birthday parties, shopping and visiting each other during the Vietnamese traditional New Year. My regular participation in the informants' activities kept me up to date with ongoing conversations about upcoming events, about their internal networks, about their interests and the worries they encountered at the workplace as well as in the daily life.

The undertaking of my participant observation during the fieldwork resembled the "immersion" of ethnographic researchers in the researched world for data production. According to de Sardan (2015, p. 26), by immersion, researchers generate the data from their experience in the field both physically and emotionally and both consciously and unconsciously. During the fieldwork, I maximised the opportunities to "immerse" through watching, hearing, talking, taking notes, taking pictures, recording, memorising and reflecting on what I have experienced and encountered in the field for the purposes of data generation, reflexivity and triangulation. The data generated from the participant observations consisted of transcriptions of the audio recorded speeches of the informants, summaries of happenings of conferences, workshops and meetings, records of personal reflections, and pictures of places or venues of my visiting during the

fieldwork. The data generated from the participant observation were incorporated in the data analysis and the write-up of the thesis.

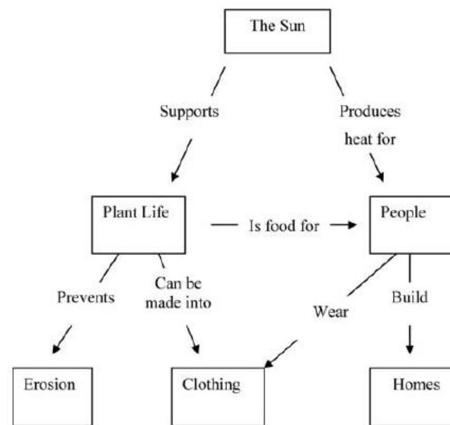
4.4.6 Concept-mapping

In this research, concept mapping was experimented with as a means of data collection to generate narratives from a mapping exercise. Concept mapping is a technique that visualises the relationship between ideas, concepts, and plans of actions for a better understanding of the connections between them (Berg, 2014, p .44; Wheeldon and Faubert, 2009). According to Berg, concept maps have been used widely in education and other applied and social sciences to involve stakeholders in developing plans or evaluations of a programme. In this research, concept-mapping was used to involve the informants in the identification of potential themes and connections between them. This method is combined with the interview process to produce both textual and visual data.

Specifically, I employed the concept-mapping method suggested by Wheeldon and Faubert (2009). Concept-mapping was used as a complementary activity to the interviews to identify and organise themes from the graphs of values developed by individual informants. According to Wheeldon and Faubert (2009, p. 69), concept-mapping is a technique which "demonstrate(s) how people visualize relationships between various concepts". A traditional concept map contains the linkage or hierarchy of the concepts and sub-concepts in the informant's perception. Wheeldon and Faubert (2009, p. 70) also suggested that a concept map in social sciences might be either a highly hierarchical or random organisation of concepts or propositions that the informant attempts to construct an understanding or relationships of concepts in his or her own experience or perception. Concept maps, therefore, are useful to identify themes by looking at the relationships between the concepts, which are later used to develop other types of data collection such as interviews or focus groups on seeking in-depth explanations (Wheeldon and Faubert, 2009, p. 71).

In this research, I deployed concept-mapping exercises to require individuals to recall and organise values they aimed to generate from their work in NGOs to contribute to one core value in their life in either a hierarchical or a free form map on a paper. I used two examples recommended by Wheeldon and Faubert (2009)

(see Figure 2) to suggest to informants how to demonstrate the values in a concept map. I did not require the informants to follow the hierarchical or the free form options in the examples but encouraged them to organise the values in the order of their preferences. The informants were additionally asked to give verbal explanations of the reasons they arrange the values in the maps. The informants' explanations of the maps were audio-recorded as part of the interviews.



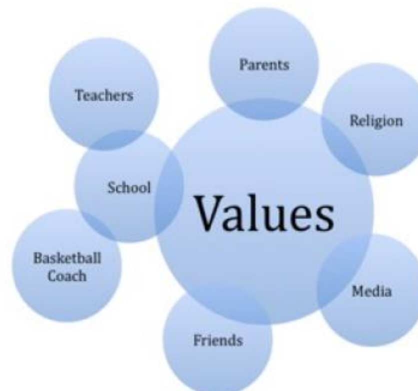


Figure 2 - Examples of concept maps

(Source: Wheeldon and Faubert, 2009, p. 70)

I encountered similar challenges raised by Wheeldon and Faubert (2009) about the usage of concept-mapping for data collection. Generally, my informants found it difficult to present their thoughts in graphs. Young people tend to draw better graphs than older people. Also, the fact that the informants were flexible in presenting the relationships of the values in their perception has made the graphing experience rather a process of thinking out loud. This "thinking out loud"

process was useful to consolidate and elaborate further the details they have earlier mentioned in the interviews. Although not every map I collected has demonstrated the relationships among values, I have maximised the participant observation and verbal and graphic texts collected from the informants' mapping process, which were both informative and concise. Specifically, I collected both the audio recorded texts and texts presented in the graphs. Some of the graphs which have demonstrated meaningful relationships of the values were used to inform themes in the data analysis process (See Figure 3).

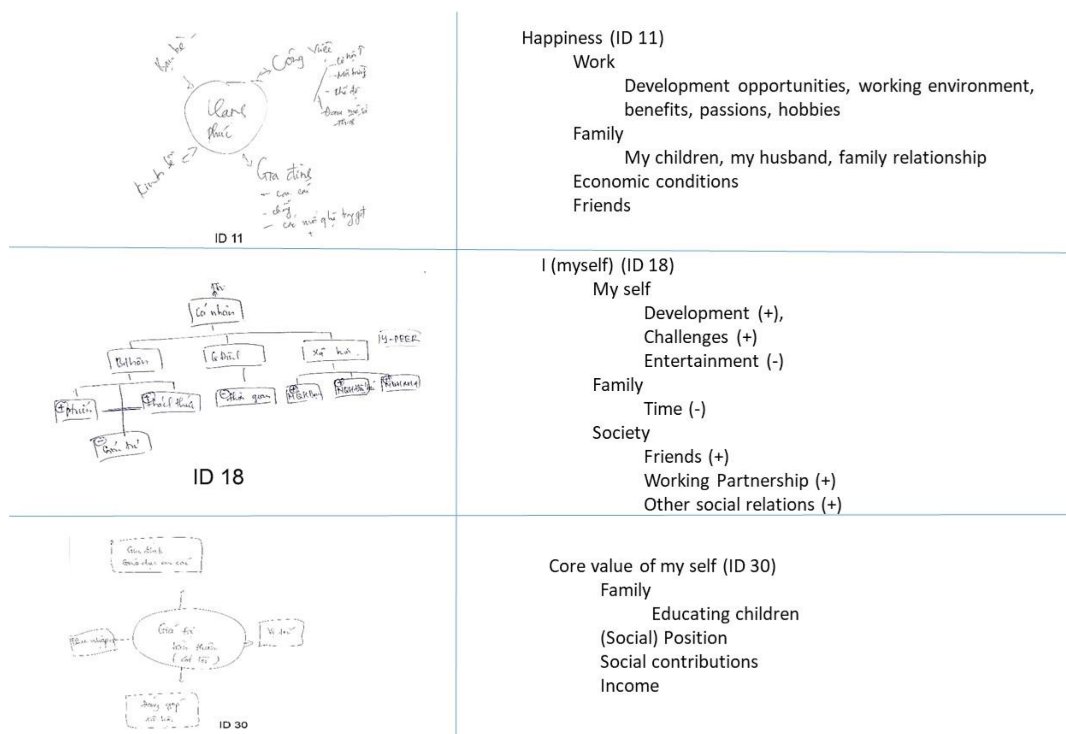


Figure 3 - Examples of concept maps collected from the field

In this research, I used concept-mapping to establish the connection between potential themes. When using this method for data generation, I found that concept maps could not be used as an independent method to reveal themes. They are best used as a complementary method with other data collection methods to search for themes when offering visual connections between potential themes. Also, I found the graphing activities useful when being combined in the interviews. The graphing activities involved cognitive processes (as I have explained earlier about "thinking out loud") which also helped to enrich the

interview data. The data generated from the graphing tasks were also useful to triangulate and validate the data collected from other methods.

4.5 Data analysis

Earlier I described the data collection approach and briefly explained my strategy of maximising the strength of each type of data to find the themes for the research purposes. Generally, after fieldwork, I generated a corpus compiled from different data sets. In this section, I will explain my data corpus, the use of data sets, and data analysis to find themes to answer the research questions.

4.5.1 Data and data corpus

From the fieldwork study, I collected 36 verbatim transcribed interviews; 3 transcribed focus group discussions; 30 concept maps and a collection of audio-recorded and hand-written (or typed) field notes; pictures and typed and transcribed speeches of my informants in conferences; workshops and meetings. All the data were in Vietnamese. I did not translate all the data from Vietnamese to English but kept them in Vietnamese to ensure the original meaning in Vietnamese language logic for the data analysis. I translated the extracted data when they were selected to illustrate the themes. Some terms and phrases are bilingual in this research to show the original meaning of the texts in Vietnamese. There are diacritical marks in the Vietnamese language. However, to reduce the risks of mistyping errors in English, I chose to write the Vietnamese language without diacritical marks.

I organised all the field data in my data corpus for data analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) have suggested that researchers can choose to treat each dataset for particular analytical purposes. They wrote: “Data corpus refers to all data collected for a particular research project, while data set refers to all the data from the corpus that are being used for a particular analysis” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 79). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), a data set can be identified for particular analytical interests which can comprise of all data in the corpus or from one source (e.g. interview data) or a combination of various sources (e.g. primary and secondary data). In this research, the data set was organised for the analysis

of personhood and civil society. I combined the interview data with the other fieldwork data for the identification and analysis of key themes related to the analytical interest of personhood and civil society.

Though the data collection had been designed to answer the major research questions, I found that the fieldwork study involved considerable modifications and adjustments with the actual situation of the research context. De Sardan (2015) rightly suggested that though the data are generated initially to answer the research questions based on the researcher's preliminary study of the literature, to address some particular topical problems, findings in the field might alter the researcher's problematic assumptions considering his or her observation and progressed knowledge from the fieldwork. As he put it: "Owing to observation, preliminary problematics maybe modified, discarded, or expanded" (de Sardan, 2015, p. 27). This notion seems to reflect my fieldwork experience. Because of changes in the fieldwork, the data no longer fit the presumptions in the pre-fieldwork stage but involved changes with the modifications and adjustments in fieldwork.

Considering changes in the fieldwork, my strategy for the data corpus was to maximise the findings informed by the data rather than to answer the research questions directly. In this respect, the knowledge associated with the data collected from the fieldwork was combined with an expanded explanatory and analytical framework to make an inference of the reality of the research context. Based on de Sardan's model (2015) of the data corpus, the organisation of my corpus and data set is illustrated in Figure 4.

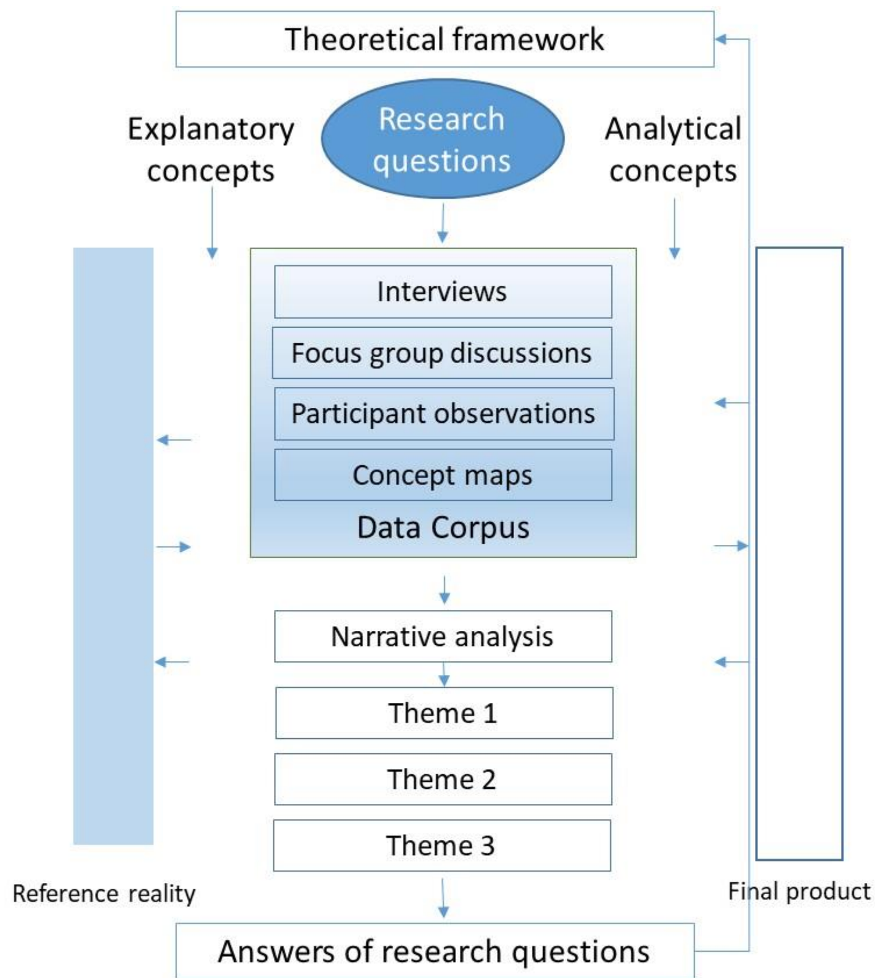


Figure 4 - Organisation of the data corpus

(An adaption from de Sardan (2015, p. 25))

4.5.2 Data analysis

In this research, I conducted a narrative analysis. Narrative analysis is an approach that treats data as stories which contain a social structure to convey meaning from the storyteller to the audience (Atkinson and Delamont, 2006; Riessman, 1993; Shenhav, 2015). The data in the narrative analysis are not examined at face value but for the account of the storyteller within the storytelling context (Atkinson and Delamont, 2006). Atkinson and Delamont (2006) argue that accounts in narratives must be analysed within a culturally and socially specific context. Griffin and May (2012) suggest that individuals often make use of social structural narratives to make sense of their reality. Shenhav (2015) suggests looking at how narratives are multiplied in society in order to draw the social structure of the collective narratives in society. In this research, I used

narrative analysis to interpret and describe the social world of Vietnamese female NGO professionals. I coded the data for the accounts which were captured from the repetition and variation of individual narratives to identify the social structure of the collective narratives.

My approach to narrative analysis was to find themes from the data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 82), "[a] theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set". The data analysis was aimed at identifying themes from the fieldwork data to construct a narrative for the answers of the research questions. Based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) proposition of the analysis steps, I carried out the four main steps to identify themes, they are: 1) coding the data, 2) finding themes by comparing the relationships among codes, 3) reviewing themes by checking the relationships among codes throughout the entire data (several times) 4) Building the story flow within each theme with support of explanatory and analytical concepts.

I employed an inductive approach to coding the data. In the inductive analysis, the codes were extracted from the data without being driven by an analytical framework (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 83). In this stage, I employed an inductive approach to open up the data rather than adapting it within any theoretical presumptions. I first coded the interview data and grouped the data extracts into major categories (See Figure 5). After that, I compared the relationships among codes across the entire data. The purpose of the comparison among codes from the entire data was to identify themes and subthemes.

Figure 5 – Coding interview data into major categories

As mentioned earlier, the first coding was implemented in parallel with the transcribing of the interviews. After transcribing the recorded interviews into texts, I coded the interview data correspondingly with the topical categories and saved the data extracts in Microsoft Word files with names to identify the major categories. I then used the NVivo software to scan through all data, revising the data extracts and checking the repetition and variation in the data sets to make meaningful connections among the codes to identify themes. After several times of coding and revising the relationships among codes across the data sets, I developed the story flow under each theme and sub-theme.

The coding of the data was initially data-driven to collect and organise data extracts into four main categories: notions of values, aspirations, fulfilment and trade-offs and a group for miscellaneous values which I categorised as “Others”. The first coding was aimed to identify patterns and values from the optimisation of the Vietnamese female NGO professionals in the market economy. When coding, I aimed at spotting the repetition in the narratives of the women. According to Shenhav (2015, p. 17), “narratives in the social domain are not merely aggregations of stories but rather the product of the multiplicity dynamic, namely the process of repetition and variation through which narratives are being

reproduced at the societal sphere". Specifically, Shenhav (2015, p. 66) suggests about the multiplicity of the social narratives because of the "core elements" which are repeated and reproduced in the narratives in society. Based on Shenhav's (2015) proposition about the repetition of core elements in social narratives, I also coded the data to construct a grand narrative.

After coding, I compared the relationships of interview codes with other data collected from other methods. I went across the data sets iteratively to refine the codes and analysed the relationships among the codes to construct the themes and sub-themes. For example, I compared the interview codes with the focus group discussions to explore the repetitions of the data across the data set. I found the relationship between non-material values with the value of the contribution to society. In addition, by comparing the participant maps, I found a strong relationship between the care work in NGOs and women's responsibility for the well-being of the family (see Figure 6). After comparing codes across the data set, I went back and coded the interviews for the accounts of women's caring responsibilities. After coding several times, I found themes related to women's self-government for care work. I went through data set several times to code the data for the repetition and meaningful discrepancies to ensure the consistency and coherence of data under each theme and across themes.

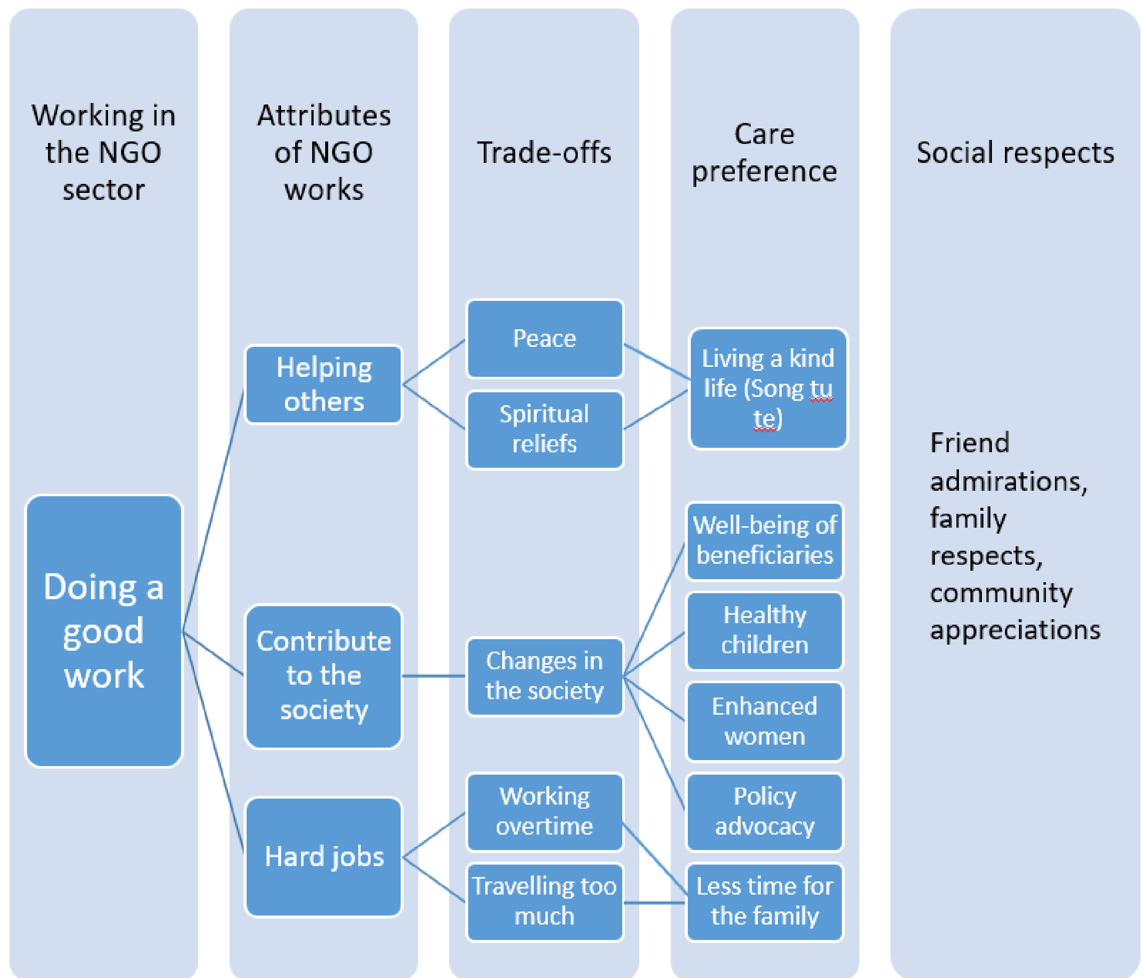


Figure 6 - Analysis of focus groups data

I also organised the texts generated from the concept maps to compare across the participants' maps for the repetition of concepts and their relationships, which is useful to prompt the themes. For example, by comparing across the participant maps, I found a strong relationship in the women's notion of happiness and freedom with the care work in the NGOs and the family. The comparison of the concept maps for the notion of happiness and freedom in relation to the work and the family is presented in Table 1.

ID.	Values	Work	Family
3	Happy	Professional working environment Enhanced knowledge and skills Learning opportunities Comfortable economic situation High income and good benefits	

6			Support from the husband Support from the families from both sides Children
9	Happy family		The health of family members Love, health of members of the big family Being free to make decisions Stable jobs of both the husband and the wife
11	Happy	My work (development opportunities, working environment, benefits, satisfy my passions/hobbies)	Family (children, husband, other relationship within the family)
12			Support of the family
14	Family		My daughter My husband
16			Family
18	Family		Time (-)
19	Giving life and knowledge		Family (parents)
20	Feeling free		Family
22			Make time to take care of the children Actively sharing with the husband about housework
29	Peace and freedom	Working partners Practice at work to transfer/to teach other people My work	Family (including the birth family and the husband's family)
30			Family (educating children)

Table 1 - Denotations of freedom and happiness from the concept-maps

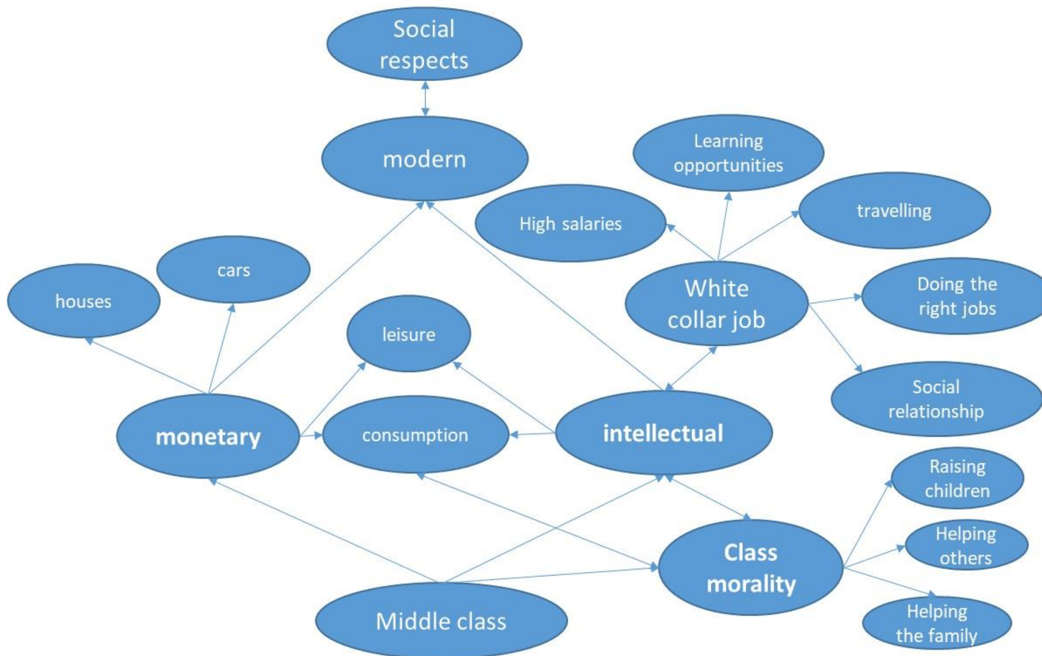
According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 89), the stage of theme searching involves the analysis of codes and the assembling of codes meaningfully to form the main theme. Similarly, to find themes, I made several attempts to assemble the codes in various ways. I also compared and contrasted the findings drawn

from the data analysis with the relevant literature. After coding several times, I finally reached three main themes. The thematic map of main themes and sub-themes is illustrated in Figures 7 and 8.

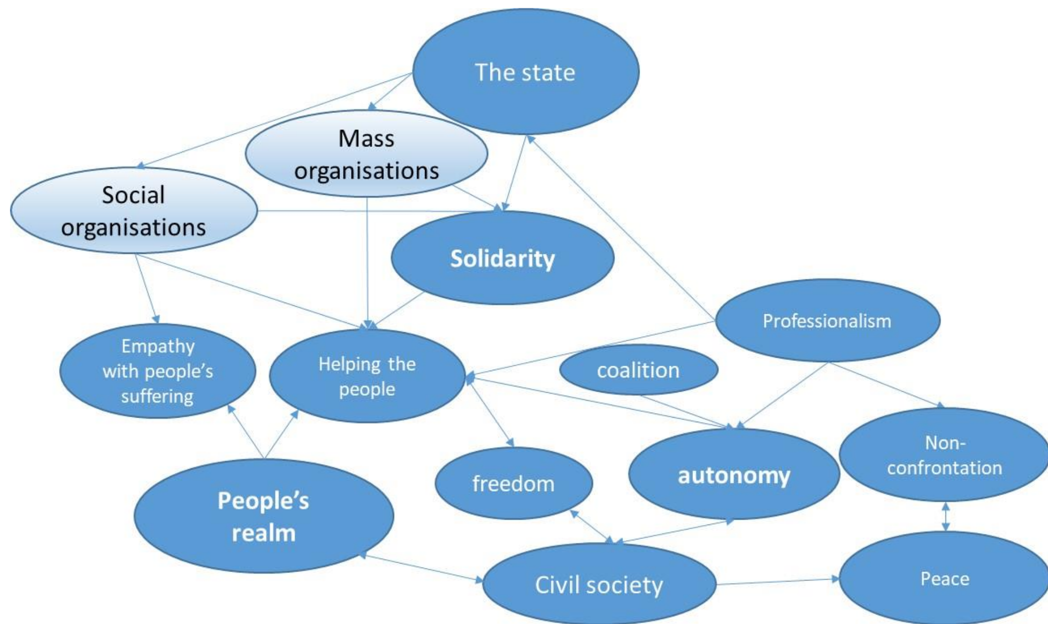
In the final stage, I developed the story flow in each theme. According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 92), this stage is aimed at capturing the "essence" of the themes. This stage involves the checking of the coherence and consistency of the data extracts to form a narrative under the themes and subthemes. When ordering the data extracts to construct the narrative under the themes, I also went through the entire data iteratively to check the consistency and the appropriateness of the data extracts used in the analysis report. The process involved rearrangements of the data extracts in an understandable and coherent order. The arrangement of the data extracts was aimed at constructing a story under the theme rather than paraphrasing (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 92). The story constructed under each theme also was aimed at answering the research questions thoroughly. The sequencing of themes and subthemes is illustrated in Figure 7.

In the data analysis, I enhanced the theoretical framework with the analogies of the findings. Rather than matching findings with the pre-fieldwork presumed problems, I searched the literature to find the answers for the questions more thoroughly. When building on the explanatory framework, I revised the problematic questions accordingly with the new research findings. When building on the explanatory framework, I contributed to the theories of governmentality and civil society correspondingly, with updated and reliable findings from the fieldwork. Also, the findings contributed to the answers to the overall research question more deeply, rather than being poorly explained in the old framework. The themes are presented in the diagrams in Figure 8 below.

Theme 1 – Freedom for self-sacrificing labour for care



Theme 2 – Middle-class performance



Theme 3 – Civil society autonomy in the people's realm

Figure 7 - Thematic maps

Theme 1: Self-optimisation for care	Theme 2: Self-government as the middle class	Theme 3: Performance in the people's realm
• **The symbols of the intellectual** • Care of others • Closer to the people • Being useful • Being happy • Knowledgeable • Active • prestige • **The symbols of heroic mothers** • Economically successful • Taking good care of the children • Intellectual performances • Respectable social positions • Gains from caring • **The ethical subject of collectivism** • Heroic women • Progressive women • Optimisation for collective care • Feeling free and happy	• **The white collar** • Social respects • intellectual • Modern • Admirable • Anxieties • **The intellectual consumers** • Intellectual • refined consumers • Morality of consumption • **The moral middle-class** • Ethics of the intellectual • Care responsibilities	• **The people's realm** • Care for the people • Being useful to the government • Defending all people's interests • **The national spirit** • Doing our things • Resisting donors' requirements • Recognition of the government • **The professionalism** • Networking • Reconciliation • Compliance • Non-political • non-confrontational • Performing care responsibilities

Figure 8 - Main themes and subthemes

The process of data analysis involved the repetition of the coding and assembling of codes meaningfully across the data set to reach a meaningful interpretation of the qualitative data. According to Cleland and Durning (2015), the researcher in

qualitative research has to engage with different possibilities of interpretation to open up the qualitative data. They stated:

> *The researcher must be open to multiple possibilities or ways to think about a problem, engaging in 'mental excursions' using multiple stimuli, 'side-tracking' or 'zigzagging', changing patterns of thinking, making linkages between the 'seemingly unconnected' and 'playing at it', all with the intention of 'opening the world to us in some way' (Cleland and Durning, 2015, p. 10).*

This process seems to reflect the journey to code the qualitative data, which is messy, but rich in information. I also had to use a variety of literatures of post-socialist gender policy and self-government in Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation to identify patterns of repetition to consolidate findings in the data analysis. In addition, I also combined manual coding with coding using NVivo software to find the repetition of codes considering the massive amount of texts collected from the multiple data collection methods. The inductive coding strategy maximised the informative value of the qualitative data while secondary data from the literature and other research archives were used to give an in-depth explanation of the findings.

4.6 Ethical issues of insider research

In this section, I will present some ethical concerns regarding insider research and researchers. According to Alvesson (2003, p. 174), insider researchers maximise their membership of the organisation or the community under study to generate data for the research. Alvesson (2003, p. 174) call insider research "self-ethnography" in which "the researcher (then) works and/or lives in the setting and then uses the experiences, knowledge and access to empirical material for research purposes". In my fieldwork, though I did not choose to work in a particular NGO, I was accepted by my informants due to my former NGO identity, either as a colleague, a friend or a working partner from which I gained trust and acceptance to participate and to seek knowledge from an insider perspective.

As mentioned earlier, the acceptance and trust provided by my insider status allowed me to elicit intimate details in the life stories from the interviews and focus group discussions as well as to participate in the daily conversations or activities of the women to conduct participant observation. Even though I have expressed clearly to the informants about my research intention to seek their consent for

specific information, I often refrained from exposing my researcher identity during participant observation to respect the natural settings of the researched group and sites. The participant observation in the natural setting is considered a technique of immersion (de Sardan, 2015). As part of the immersion, the intimacy between the researcher and the researched is considered essential for ethnographers to gain "natural access" into the reality of the researched group and to generate data from the insider perspectives (de Sardan, 2015; Alvesson, 2003). Nevertheless, there are ethical dilemmas, particularly associated with the insider status of the researcher, which might hamper the research process (Taylor, 2011; Humphrey, 2013). In this section, I will present some ethical dilemmas involved with the intimacy, particularly the friendship with the informants and how I have responded to these dilemmas during my research process.

During my fieldwork, I used my NGO identity to contact my friends who were working in NGOs, former NGO colleagues and working partners in NGOs in Hanoi. Several colleagues in NGOs accepted my invitation to become informants for this research because of our pre-established friendships. Friendship, in this respect, can be considered a kind of coercion, considering the power relations between friends, which might influence the friend's decision to participate. On the one hand, it is unethical to coerce an informant to participate in the research if she does not consent. On the other hand, with my insider status, I tend to influence my friends' decisions (either consciously or unconsciously) to participate in the research.

To help to deal with this dilemma, I always emailed instead of telephoning potential informants directly, as this was thought to help to reduce any pressure they might feel. Particularly, through emails, I explained the research activities to the informants, who were also my friends, to give them enough time to consider their participation. In this way, I am certain that the informants in the research are equipped with sufficient information and time to make a thoughtful rather than impulsive decision because of the close relationship with me. As mentioned earlier, the intimacy between friends allowed me to elicit in-depth and intimate information about personal stories from the informants. However, the friendship between the researcher and the researched in fieldwork also inhabits certain ethical challenges for insider researchers. In this respect, Taylor (2011) has

highlighted the dilemmas of the intimate insider researcher in satisfying both the researcher's responsibilities to his/her friendship and to fulfilling his/her role as a researcher.

Protection of the informants from possible harm in the research process is mandatory in scientific research, particularly in the social sciences, when the research involves human participants (Berg, 2007). Berg (2007, p. 53) has highlighted the code of ethical conduct which has become compulsory in doing social research which is to "ensure the rights, privacy, and welfare of the people and communities that form the focus of their studies". According to Humphrey (2013, pp. 572-573), disclosure of sensitive information about "stakeholders and sites" might cause "symbolic and material threats to participants or institutions". In this research, I ensured adherence to ethical conduct in terms of data protection, consent, protection of the informants' privacy by means of confidentiality and anonymity, and the use of pseudonyms (Berg, 2007). Particularly, I employed measures to ensure all data related to the informants securely stored and encrypted in the university computer and my personal laptop, both protected with passwords. In addition, the anonymity of institutions and pseudonyms for the informants' names were used throughout the research process to mitigate possible disclosure of the informants' identities. Also, all informants were asked for their consent in paper to ensure that their participation was voluntary and free from coercion and manipulation (Berg, 2007). All these necessary ethical measures have been screened and approved by the School's Ethical Committee before the fieldwork started.

Nevertheless, these measures, though ensuring compliance with the standardised codes of ethical conduct, have not effectively addressed the power dynamics or cultural influences in the actual researched environment, which tend to complicate the ethical commitments of the insider researcher (Taylor, 2011). For example, Humphrey (2013) has rightly questioned the consent of students in research in the education environment, who would be expected to obey the authority of their institution rather than to accept to participate in the research voluntarily. There are also ethical concerns in the consent process because the power relations between the researcher and the participants are not always addressed adequately. Humphrey (2013) has pointed out the ethical dilemmas in terms of the personal, professional and political, where the multiple identities of

the insider researcher in relation to particular informants associated with particular power inherent to the identity identified by the informants.

As mentioned earlier, many informants are my friends, former colleagues, or working partners in NGOs. In Vietnamese culture, we call each other as *chi* (older sister) for the older and *em* (younger sister) for the younger, or *co* (aunt) for the elder to show our respect and intimacy among the sister circle. My friendship with the informants in the field allowed me to actively engage in their everyday life activities. Outside the researching activities, we got together in coffee shops, went out for shopping or eating together in street-food stalls. We often exchanged personal opinions about our interests, of what was happening in the workplace, within the city, in the country and/or around the world. We talked about our life, work and everyday concerns. In such occasions, I doubted that there was any distinction between the researcher and informants but rather between friends.

As mentioned earlier, there are ethical problems associated with the intimate relationship between the researcher and the researched in the intimate insider research. The insider identity is often highlighted as a strategy to create a temporary intimacy between the researcher and the researched to generate in-depth data. Nevertheless, what is the appropriate way to deal with long-term friendship or pre-established friendship with the informants when doing insider research? In other words, how can we be both ethically responsible with our friends and committed to professional ethics in research? In particular, Taylor (2011, p. 8) has warned that the friendship between the researcher and the researched might influence the researcher's work and his or her positioning in the field. In this respect, Taylor (2011) highlighted the ethical problems associated with the intimacy between the insider researcher and the informants. She wrote:

> *While doing my own research, several questions and concerns have troubled me. These have mostly been in relation to professional and personal ethical conduct, accountability, the potential for data distortion and my lack of objectivity and possible insider blindness. As the literature on field-based friendships suggests, role displacement or confusion and the vulnerability of friendship are also significant concerns (Taylor, 2011, p. 13).*

According to Taylor (2011), when doing intimate insider research, the researcher, when committing to the researcher's ethics, is also compelled to ensure the ethics of her friendships with the informants. In particular, when the researcher feels obliged to defend the friendships with the informants, this obligation might hamper

her handling of information during the research process. As mentioned earlier, using my insider status, I “immersed” myself into the natural settings with the informants in which there are no clear boundaries between friends and research/informant relationships. I collected rich qualitative data which also contain sensitive information about the informants which was shared between friends. When handling sensitive information, I often had to reflect on the relevance of the information to the research purposes and about our researcher/informant relationship to consider the usage of sensitive data for the research purposes.

A researchers’ reflexivity is considered essential for the researcher to reposition themselves to identify and mitigate possible biases associated with the insider position (Taylor, 2011; Humphrey, 2013). Reflexivity is also necessary for the researcher to work out the boundaries between friends and informants when dealing with the field materials in order to mitigate the influence of the friendship. According to Taylor (2011, p. 14), the researcher’s reflexivity also requires the skills of making inferences of narratives associated with a friend or an informant positioning. This deliberation also includes the decision to omit information which involved revelation between friends rather than between the researcher-informant relations. In my research, omission is also considered to protect my own privacy. Particularly, being close friends or former co-workers in NGOs, we often have good knowledge about the personal details of each other, which were unavoidable to appear in the cross-narratives of the informants. This disclosure of information, therefore, might expose the privacy of both informants and the researcher, considering the closeness between the researcher and the researched. In this respect, it is necessary for the researcher to reflect and (re-)position accordingly his or her role in order to deliberate when the friend-informant talks as an informant or as a friend, or to what extent an omission is necessary in order to protect the identity of the participants in the research (Taylor, 2011; Humphrey, 2013). When acknowledging omission might not be the best option considering it might disturb the natural sequences of the narratives, I also used double anonymity when necessary to protect the identity of the informants when being repeated in the cross-narratives. For example, in this research, the names of NGOs were often omitted or replaced with pseudonyms in order to protect the identity of the informants.

In addition, Taylor (2011) has mentioned the situation in which as a close friend she could distinguish when a friend-informant talked to her as a friend or as an informant. The positioning of the researcher in the research process is important for the researcher to deliberate whether the disclosure of personal details among friends might be harmful to the informants in order to make a professional decision while still protecting the ethics of friendship. In this respect, Taylor (2011, p. 15) has rightly suggested that “knowing when not to overstep the line between friend and researcher is a vital skill that the intimate insider must develop”. Also, mastering this skill also helps the researcher to avoid influence from the friendship in the process of data collection, in data analysis and writing up. For example, as earlier mentioned, the close relationship or friendship between me as the researcher with the informants is also associated with particular biases which are not useful for the research purposes. In this respect, I adopted a flexible positioning strategy between the insider and the outsider to be able to reflect and make a professional decision from the necessary distance in the fieldwork as well as in the writing process.

As I mentioned earlier, I adopted a reflexive strategy in both data collection and data analysis processes. After each interview or research activity in the field, I often reflected on and took notes of my observation as an external researcher. I was also conscious of the biases associated with the insider identity in order to decide to withdraw from my insider status when necessary. Particularly, I found that the withdrawal from my insider status by posing challenging questions against shared knowledge of the insider in the group helped to evoke the consciousness of the informants of their informant role. I also found that moving between the insider and outsider positions was helpful to avoid the misassumption of the researchers’ consensus in the informant’s answers (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). In the process of data analysis, I kept reflecting on the sensitiveness of data in relation to the privacy of the informants, to consider omission or using double anonymity when necessary. The omission was considered when it did not alter the nuance of the data while protecting the privacy and identity of the informants.

In this section, I have described the ethical dilemmas involved with my insider researcher status and some actions taken to address the problems. I have engaged the problems of my close relationship and friendship with the informants

in the field to highlight some ethical concerns related to the data produced in the context of intimate insider research. The intimacy between the insider researcher and the informants helped me to immerse in the natural settings in the fieldwork. However, the ethical issues associated with the friendship between the researcher and the researched might put both informants and the researcher in vulnerable positions. I have described how I maximised reflexivity to consider the sensitiveness and relevance of the data bits. Considering the dual ethical responsibilities associated with the intimate insider researcher, I also described how I used a flexible re-positioning strategy to effectively address ethical and professional problems associated with the intimate researcher status. The adoption of insider-outsider positionality in this respect helped me as the researcher to navigate the risks as well as negotiate the strengths and limitations involved with both positions to mitigate the risks while maximising the strengths inherent in both.

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed my insider status with the flexible insider/outsider positionality to implement qualitative research on the post-socialist personhood and civil society in Vietnam in the process of economic transition from plan to market. The research design was aimed at maximising the qualitative data collection methods to generate the narratives of life stories of Vietnamese female professionals working in the NGO sector in the context of *doi moi* economic renovation. The research design was developed consistent with my constructivist ontological standpoint about reality in the real world which should be reconstructed with methodological techniques to reach for truthful interpretation of the real world. In the fieldwork, with my insider status, I maximised the opportunity to immerse myself into the world of meanings and to collaborate with the informants to construct knowledge. I selected the multiple data collection methods in qualitative research to generate rich qualitative data while generating necessary discrepancies for triangulation purposes.

I also have described how I organised and analysed data generated from multiple data collection methods. An inductive approach was employed to maximise findings revealed by the data. The data analysis involved a repetitive process of

coding and assembling codes across the data set in order to form a meaningful story from the discrete and messy details of personal narratives. I also engaged with a variety of literatures to consolidate findings from the data analysis.

I also have contributed to an understanding of insider research with my selection of the flexible insider/outsider positionality and exploration of ethical concerns related to the insider position. An insider status then, allowed me to gain trust and rapport from the community, but also exposed methodological and ethical dilemmas. In this respect, by switching out of the insider position, I was able to reflect on critical issues involved with an insider status to find appropriate mitigation. I also maximised reflexive opportunities to consider the ethical hazards associated with intimate insider research. When being reflexive about the researcher/informant relationship, I was able to identify the sensitiveness of the data involved in the friendship with the informants and using possible solutions to both ensure the quality of the data and protect the privacy of the informants from being disclosed from the research process.

Chapter 5 - Performance of the middle-class

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will present the stories of the economic performance of Vietnamese female NGO professionals in the free market after the removal of the central planning mechanism. I will show how the women's performance in the economy illustrates an idea of the middle-class which is unprecedented in the post-colonial and late socialist Vietnam where private property ownership often evokes moral and ideological tensions with socialism, which is still the ruling force in Vietnam's market-oriented socialism (Leshkowich, 2012; Leshkowich and Endres 2018; Jellema, 2005; Zhang, 2010). A middle-class emerged from the proliferation of salaried occupations in Vietnam's post-socialist economic restructuration towards privatisation and marketisation that seems to bear a resemblance to Mills' (1951) depiction of the masses of salaried white-collar middle-class emerging from the boom of employment in large-scale corporations and commercial activities. Their employment status, which is often dependent on short-term and project-spanned contracts, illustrates Mills' proposition of the precariousness of the white-collar middle-class professionals who instead extract the material and symbolic resources of their NGO occupations and from material assets acquired from consumption in the market.

Without the state's subsidy, the Vietnamese NGO professional women have relied substantially on the market mechanism to realise a source of income and acquire desirable products and services for the well-being of themselves and their families. The account of the middle-class of these women illustrates the morality of entrepreneurship and hard work for the reproductive responsibilities which indicate women's position in the socialist ideology of femininity. This chapter will present the account of class prestige by looking at the moral and ideological symbols of the women's entrepreneurial performance in the post-socialist market economy. The findings in this chapter will contribute to answering the research sub-question: *How does the self-government of these women in the context of*

the marketisation and privatisation of doi moi economic renovation demonstrate the prestige of Vietnamese female professionals in the NGO sector?

Through the depiction of the NGO middle-class in Vietnam, I will show the class privileges that these women have extracted from the NGOs' transnational working environment to demonstrate the prestige of intellectuals in Vietnam's Confucian and socialist tradition to render the idea of the upper and middle-class. Following the tradition of the Confucian intellectuals who broke the class barriers with high educational and professional performance, these women also demonstrated the prestige of intellectuals for the attainment of higher education and professional privileges in the transnational NGO working environment. I will show how the professional career in NGOs is morally appealing to Vietnamese women whose position in public life is conventionally highlighted for their expertise in reproduction. I argue that the socialist state continues to guide the women's performance in the market for caring responsibilities by recalling women's reproductive role in socialist production. The professionalisation of the NGO sector as services providers appears to be an alternative platform for the post-socialist women to regain a position in public life, yet ironically ties them to domestic responsibilities. The chapter will reveal how the cosmopolitanism of NGOs professional environment has produced class privileges which are accumulated by the Vietnamese female NGO professionals to reproduce the notion of the "socialist woman" in the context of the market reforms in Vietnam.

5.2 Learning to sacrifice

During my fieldwork in Hanoi, I visited several NGO offices to conduct interviews with the informants. In every NGO office, it is common to see the women dressed smartly, working in air-conditioned offices in newly built and high-rise and glossy-glassed buildings with personal computers, mobile laptops, wireless smartphones, and office gadgets to keep them in real-time connections with the global network. They speak the highly professional language of the NGO professions, using both English as their daily working language, and frequently using jargons from project management and other professional spheres.

NGO occupations emerged with strong inflows of international aid with hard capital and "soft" knowledge of development from the West, which have played

an indispensable part in the transition project from plan to market in Vietnam as well as in other post-socialist economies (Salemink, 2006; Sampson 1996; Phillips 2008). As many authors highlight, NGOs are often seen by foreign donors as the key instrument to channel international development aid which has played an important part in the economic restructuration in developing economies. NGOs, as the third sector, are attractive to foreign donors because of their autonomy from the state (Banks and Hulme, 2012). Also, as NGOs develop professionalism in public providers, they are supposed to substitute the state to take over this function in the process of market liberalisation and deregulation (Tvedt, 1998; Eade and Pearce, 2000; Edwards and Hulme, 1995; Van Rooy, 1998). As a consequence, the restructuration of NGOs' role in the New Agenda of international development aid towards the professionalisation of service delivery and accountability, has involved the proliferation of a cohort of NGO professionals and knowledge experts. These NGO professionals represent a privileged middle-class endowed with both material and cultural resources, in terms of high salaries, continuous education and mobility on both transnational and international scales (Narayanaswamy, 2014; Schuller 2009; Smith and Jenkins 2011; Mercer and Green, 2013). Without exception, Vietnamese NGO professional women seem to have benefited from a comfortable middle-class position within the hierarchy of cosmopolitan civil society.

After *doi moi*, NGOs have become a new sector in the multi-sectoral economy in Vietnam. Since the early 1990s, there has been an influx of foreign aid in Vietnam to assist in the economic transition process. Strong inflows of foreign assistance in Vietnam during this period resulted in a boom in the number of foreign NGOs and local NGOs which subsequently opened a variety of professional positions in community development and other development areas (Fforde, 2013; Salemink, 2006; Sidel, 1997; Wischermann, 2010; Nørlund, 2007b; Beaulieu 1994). In my conversations with the informants who had come to work in NGOs during this early period, they often recalled their jobs in NGOs as "admirable" compared to the traditional employment in the state. The women talked about the privileges of working in NGOs where they earned a higher salary and opportunities to travel to learn new skills and gain new knowledge.

Compared to the traditional occupations in the state, the informants often highlighted the professional privileges in the NGO sector with a higher salary,

travelling and educational opportunities. They told me about the admiration of the people around them for their high salary and learning opportunities that they enjoyed in NGO professional positions. My informant, Hop, who is in her early 40s, recalled how people used to admire her professional position in an international organisation after graduating from university, as follows:

> *At that time, this kind of community development job grew fast. Also, you were able to earn high salaries and using your English when working in non-governmental organisations or UN agencies. At that time, this kind of job was very admirable (long lanh). They offered opportunities to work with foreigners and great opportunities for learning. This kind of job was considered a high-ranking occupation that you can learn to work in it (Hop, interview, 03/11/2016).*

Xuan, another informant, who had worked for an international NGO (INGO) since the early 2000s, also talked about the admiration of the people around her for the high salary and learning opportunities she had in the NGO. She said:

> *I only heard people used to say that "how lucky this girl is" but they do not know what I was doing. Because most of the people in my neighbourhood were working in the state. People who worked for foreigners (Tay) were usually considered as "smart" (oach) because of the high salary. When I travelled for training courses and conferences, they said that my job was interesting and wished to do a job like that (Xuan, interview, 05/11/2016).*

More specifically, Tien, who has worked for a local NGO for almost 13 years, expressed her satisfaction of working in the NGO because of the higher income, travelling and learning opportunities in the early period, compared with her friends who worked in the state. She said:

> *In this organisation, our salary was not distinctively higher, but we had an additional income from the opportunities to travel to attend conferences. Sometimes, we went abroad for conferences, for example. I was so happy (sung suong) during the first two years (Tien, interview, 11/11/2016).*

Apart from the higher income, their participation in regular training courses which involved regular travelling within the country and overseas, also accounts for the professional satisfaction of the NGO professional women. In addition to material returns, i.e., the usage of luxurious goods and services during the trips and an extra income, the informants often expressed the higher professional satisfaction for the access to educational opportunities and training courses opened up by the professional opportunities in the NGO sector. Many informants highlighted the privilege of access to scholarship opportunities overseas for higher education.

In addition to wealth, their accomplishment in learning and education accounts for the prestige of intellectuals, which enables them to join higher salaried positions in NGOs.

The access of the NGO professional women to higher education overseas seems to account for the higher- and middle-ground of NGO professional positions in the vertical governance of the transnational NGO network in relation to the grassroots (Narayanaswamy, 2014; Mercer and Green, 2013; Ferguson, 2006; Ferguson and Gupta, 2002). As Mercer and Green (2013) argue, NGO elites in Africa often maximised the privileges of the cosmopolitan policy of the global civil society agenda to locate themselves in the same rank with local governments who play a similar role to sub-contractors in this vertical government. Like Mercer and Green (2013), who suggest the symbolic value of learning and education in this vertical government of international aid, I also found the acquisition of continuous and higher education became compulsory for women to access better employment opportunities in international NGOs or international organisations. Furthermore, the informants often considered their endeavour in learning and education as the morality of the intellectuals to differentiate themselves with the other wealthy groups in the economy, including people working in the traditional state sector. In this respect, learning and education are also associated with the moral and symbolic capital of the upper and middle-classes of the intellectuals in Vietnam's social structure.

The acquisition of the moral and symbolic values of learning and education of Vietnamese female NGO professionals also illustrates the Weberian notion of the middle-class. Weber's notion of the middle-class suggests that individuals compete for the middle-class status by possessing prerequisite goods and services which are symbolic to the middle-class culture. Liechty (2003) in his study on the middle-class consumers in Nepal, suggests that there was a careful articulation of the consumers for particular privileged goods and services considered as "fashion" to show their "accomplishments and refinement" (Liechty, 2003, pp. 73-86). His study of the middle-class consumers in Nepal's post-crisis economic restructuration suggests that the competition for the class status of the middle-class tends to reproduce the social structure of the middle-class for the class culture which is intensively commodified. This notion seems to illustrate the status competition among the newly rich in Vietnam who tended to acquire

privileged goods and services from the market to present the status of the upper- and middle-class. Without a pre-existing social system of class, the Vietnamese women's pursuit of the middle-class status seemed to reproduce the culture of Vietnamese intellectuals with the acquisition of professional and higher educational qualifications (King et. al., 2008; Bélanger et al., 2012; Nguyen, 2019).

In my conversations with the informants, they often talked about social respect for their accomplishments of professional or higher educational qualifications. Rather than talking about their level of income, they often differentiate with other higher earners or lower-waged manual workers for the accomplishment of higher education or learning endeavour. It is noticeable that the Weberian notion of the middle-class does not support the Marxian notion of class positions in the production relations (e.g. capital or labour owners) but rather highlights their capacity to consume in the market to acquire privileged goods, for example, the acquisition of occupations, education, housing, lifestyles as a representation of the middle-class culture to reinstate the class structure in society (Liechty, 2003; King, 2008). The notion of the middle-class embodied by the salaried NGO professional women bears a resemblance to Weber's notion of middle-class, not in terms of capital stock, but rather with the representation of "accomplishments and refinement" as the "moral distance" from the nakedly wealthy capitalist or propertyless waged workers (Liechty, 2003, p. 17). For the NGO salaried professionals, education clearly accounts for a distinctive accomplishment of the NGO middle-class in comparison with the other masses who have become wealthier quickly from other profitable sectors. It is also noticeable that, when comparing with the other newly rich in society, the informants often associated the possession of professional and higher educational qualifications with the prestige of intellectuals.

In general, Vietnamese professional women in NGOs attained high education levels. All the women I met in NGOs have at least a university degree. Many of them have completed a Master's degree in Vietnam or overseas. This high level of education seems to account for women's confidence to seek a desirable job in the market. Especially, without the state's subsidy of full employment, education and learning have become an essential means for women to get a good job with a high salary (King et al., 2008; Earl, 2014). Mills' (1951) proposition about the

white-collar middle-class suggests that education is the passport for people to acquire better-salaried positions to enter the world of the middle-class. Similarly, education accounts for the opportunity of women to acquire desirable jobs in the market. However, rather than opting for higher-salaried professional opportunities, many women with high education chose to work in the lower-salaried positions in NGOs.

In my conversations with the informants, many of them expressed that they chose to work in NGOs because of the variety of available educational and learning opportunities. Education accounts for the prestige of female NGO professionals in two aspects. On the one hand, learning seems to become the prerequisite of the women to find a desirable position in NGOs considering the high-educational backgrounds of the professionals in the NGO sector. On the other hand, learning also represents the aspirations of many young professional women in NGOs who wish to learn to “develop their personality” (*phat trien ban than*). Most of the informants, especially young people, talked about their aspirations to work to learn from the contributions to society. Informants in senior positions talked about the success in their career as the reward of learning from the personal development process.

Hop, 40 years old, is now working as a project coordinator in an INGO in Hanoi. Graduating from the Hanoi University of Foreign Language, she barely had any special skills or knowledge apart from English. Starting as a project assistant in a project implemented by the World Health Organisation, Hop has worked in various positions in different projects implemented by different organisations where she always aimed at acquiring new skills and knowledge in various fields to prepare for the higher positions with the better income. She has completed a Master’s degree from abroad to improve her competence for better positions in NGOs. She said:

> *Because in this job, I had to learn new skills (right?) so that I have better knowledge to develop. I will work in higher positions (right?). I always told myself that I need to aim for higher positions. For example, when I was working as a project assistant, I determined to acquire more skills to work in the position of the project officer (right?) After the project officer position, I gained more knowledge to achieve the position of the project manager (Hop, interview, 03/11/2016).*

Hop's optimisation in learning for career success illustrates how learning has become an essential means to improve her professional positions in the NGO sector. It is common that women in NGOs were conscious of the acquisition of learning and educational opportunities to improve their career prospects in NGOs. Women's acquisition of the high educational levels seems to account for their higher prospects to acquire a higher professional position for a higher salary.

In addition, the informants, especially the early-career professionals, expressed their aspirations to learn from voluntary and unpaid positions in NGOs to develop their personality. According to them, learning by doing in NGOs represents a critical process for them to develop their personality. To develop the personality, young professionals often appreciated the opportunity to contribute to the community. Rather than learning to make more profit, learners often learn to contribute disinterestedly to society, which often requires the sacrifice of individualistic and materialistic maximisation.

In my conversations with the young professionals, they told me that they prioritised the learning opportunities in the NGOs to develop their personality rather than economic benefits. Huong, who is 23 years old, has been working for the local NGO as a volunteer when she was a university student. Huong told me that she was presently happy with the lower salary in the organisation compared to other professional opportunities outside NGOs in order to optimise the learning opportunities in the organisation. According to Huong, learning contributed to her personal development (*phat trien ban than*). Like Hop, she believed that learning by doing in NGOs was the means for her to improve the skills and knowledge to get higher positions in the sector in the future. To acquire the success in an NGO career, Huong told me that she needed to learn from voluntary and unpaid jobs with the community to "develop her personality" (*phat trien ban than*). She told me that she had also engaged in multiple tasks inside the organisation in order to *phat trien ban than*. Outside the NGO, she worked with various groups in society to hold talks about sexual rights and sexual safety. With a background in public health, she volunteered to deliver free coaching of sexual health to the young people in society. According to Huong, she did not mind engaging in unpaid voluntary activities because they were opportunities for her to *phat trien ban than*. She said:

> *I want to continue to accumulate more new experience for my personal development (phat trien ban than). That is my present priority. I do not care much about the income though it is good if I earn some because I still have the support from my family. I can teach people free without payment from the learners because I can also learn from their questions when they participate in the courses (Huong, interview, 10/12/2016).*

Like many other NGO professionals, Huong also aimed at acquiring a scholarship for higher education overseas. For Huong, the high educational qualification was important for her to develop a career in the NGO sector. However, before gaining success, she is currently prioritising the accumulation of knowledge, experience and relations from the low paid within the local NGO and unpaid voluntary activities for the community. She said:

> *At this present, I prioritise to develop myself personally. I mainly concentrate on developing new skills, new knowledge or new experience and new relations. I planned to continue to study (abroad) in the coming two years (Huong, interview, 10/12/2016).*

Similarly, several young informants expressed that the NGO sector was a good environment for them to *phat trien ban than*. Besides the purpose of learning to acquire a skill or expertise, the notion of *phat trien ban than* was often associated with the sacrifice of individualistic economic interests. For example, Phuong, 26 years old, who has been working in a local NGO for four years consented with the low salary to maximise the learning experience in the NGO to *phat trien ban than*. She told me that the learning opportunities in the organisation were the reason for her to continue her low salary job in the local NGO. Phuong said that she presently prioritised to develop her personality by more contributions to society with a low salary. Having a low salary which is barely sufficient to pay for her living expenses in Hanoi, she told me how she had struggled to stay in the NGOs. The reason she stayed to work in the low salaried job was the social respect she gained from her selfless contribution to the community. She said:

> *Sometimes, I had to struggle to decide whether to change for a job with the higher income or to remain in this job, which gives me more opportunities for phat trien ban than. I sometimes struggled about it. I could not sleep at night because of it. However, after thinking about the whole process that I have worked and contributed form my work which was appreciated by my organisation and the people who worked me in the project area; they used to see me as a beautiful image in their eyes, I think I would regret if I quit this job. After that, I used this notion to motivate myself to continue this job (Phuong, interview, 11/3/2017).*

It seems clear that *phat trien ban than* is aspired to by individuals for the opportunities to gain skills, expertise and working experience which have become essential for the professionals to improve their employability and upward mobility in the NGO career. In addition, *phat trien ban than* is not only associated with gains but also sacrifices. Specifically, as revealed by the interviewed data, individuals who participated in the process often demonstrated their sacrifice of individualistic wealth maximisation for the benefits of the community. This sacrifice seems to account for the morality of the learning process to become a better person. It is noticeable that, *phat trien ban than* is also aspired to because of social respect. Rather than aspiring for materialistic wealth, the Vietnamese female NGO professionals often demonstrated the good personality for the sacrifice of individualistic and materialistic wealth for the benefits of the community which is respected by society.

Furthermore, according to the informants, though learning for *phat trien ban than* is often associated with the sacrifice of economic opportunities, it will pay back in terms of the women's career success in the long run. In my conversation with Yen, who is the founder of a local NGO, she seemed critical about young people who prioritised economic maximisation when neglecting the learning process. Yen, 53 years old, is considered a successful entrepreneur who owns many businesses besides working for the NGO. According to Yen, *phat trien ban than* is an important step for young people to sacrifice short-term profits to maximise the learning opportunities in order to gain a career success in the long term. She said:

> *Don't you think that one billion (dongs) is big! Because you are poor, you think it is worth that much. However, the worth of your labour in the long run, which is counted in the economic terms only excluding other values, is much more than that. Money is not a big deal. It is not hard to make money. The opportunities for you to spend 100% of the time on learning would never repeat because you will never have your youth back (Yen, interview, 17/11/2016).*

It seems clear that learning has accounted for the career success of the salaried female NGO professionals both in terms of the capacity to acquire high education and an income. Noticeably, learning also accounts for the prestige of intellectuals whose success was often associated with educational performance. Studies by King et al. (2008) and Bélanger et al. (2012) on the tradition of the middle-class in Vietnamese society suggest that the status of the middle-class in Vietnam was

not often associated with wealth but with high educational performance. As these studies reveal, from the feudal to the socialist era, education traditionally has been the route for poor people to break through the poverty boundary to hold important positions in the state system. King et al.'s study (2008) of the professional middle class in Vietnam after *doi moi* suggested that, young Vietnamese people continued to follow the route of education to remain in the middle-class strata. They stated: "(Clearly) education is still a route to social mobility for some, but it is also increasingly a means to consolidate one's position in the middle class" (King et al., 2008, p. 797).

The field data also show that Vietnamese female NGO professionals often demonstrated prestige from high education rather than wealth. In one interview with Ngan, who was working in an American non-profit organisation after completing a post-graduate degree in Europe, she described herself as one of the middle-class. She said: "I have a good education, but my financial condition is only moderate. Therefore, I am a low middle-class" (Ngan, interview, 28/12/2016). According to Ngan, though her salary in the organisation is lower than the income of other professionals, her profession in the NGO sector is considered an intellectual job which accounts for the lower-middle-class position in society. She said:

> *In general, I am considered myself as a low middle-class. There are many types of middle-class. No, I am in the middle but the lower middle class because there are higher middle classes, for example, the owners of small businesses or people like that. They are higher than us because they possess more wealth. Nevertheless, I am the low middle because my job is equivalent to those of the intellectuals. I mean the jobs involved with brain work (Ngan, interview, 28/12/2016).*

Ngan's account of the lower middle class has demonstrated how the intellectual is ranked in society in comparison with the wealthy. Though the lower-income illustrates their lower status compared to the wealthier, the acquisition of education seems to account for the status of intellectuals in society. Noticeably, the women's performance for higher education seems to replicate the prestige of intellectuals in the cultural tradition. Specifically, education is not only the means of maximising material assets but also the symbol of morality for Vietnamese people to break through the lower-class status to acquire the upper and middle-class positions (King et al., 2008; Earl, 2014). In this respect, the accomplishment

of high education is often highlighted for morality, which accounts for the prestige of intellectuals in Vietnam's traditional society. Similarly, in the interviews, the informants often talked about their efforts to achieve higher education to join the strata of intellectuals in society.

In my conversation with Xuan, who has recently completed a Master's degree in Australia, she expressed that education accounted for the intellectual status which was respected in society. After working in a foreign NGO, she applied for and won a scholarship for a Master's course in rural development in Australia. According to Xuan, the acquisition of higher education helped to change the social view about the lower status of her family. Xuan told me how her success in education and the professional position in the foreign NGO had improved the prestige of her parents, who were just manual labour compared to the intellectual neighbours in the neighbourhood. She said:

> *Though my parents never spoke out, they always felt inferior compared to our neighbours (right?). After my brother and I have achieved successes in occupations and education. We all have had (higher education) degrees. My parents' status was improved in people's eyes. They have had more respects from the surrounding people (Xuan, interview, 5/11/2016).*

It is also noticeable that when only a few professionals in foreign NGOs earned a high salary, the majority of the professionals in local NGOs earned much lower salaries. Other informants also said that the salary level in NGOs presently was no longer high compared to other occupations, especially those in the private sector or the state. Interestingly, despite the lower salary, none of the informants expressed an aspiration to leave the sector. Furthermore, I found that many women had returned to work the NGOs to maximise the learning opportunities or to contribute to society. For example, Quyen, who previously worked in an international NGO, has recently moved to work in a project helping people living with HIV/AIDS in a local NGO with a lower salary. Despite the lower salary level, Quyen said that she prioritised the job for the learning opportunities rather than merely the income. She said:

> *I have to consider when taking a job. I would not take a job only because of the salary. I do not know about other people's choice, but I might not choose a job only because of the salary. Sometimes, I would consider the job that offers me the opportunities to learn and to develop in that position (Quyen, interview, 23/11/2016).*

It seems clear that when learning and educational opportunities account for the choice of the majority of the professional women to work in NGOs, the purpose for the high education does not illustrate the women's intellectual prestige for wealth maximisation. Rather than wealth, education is often associated with the prestige of intellectuals, which is also regarded as the upper- or middle-class in the traditional Vietnamese society. Education used to account for the prestige of intellectuals for the sacrifice of materialistic interests for the services of the poor (Nguyen, 1974; Marr, 1984; Nguyen-Marshall, 2008) or the opportunities for the upward social mobility of the poor in the Vietnamese feudal culture (King et al., 2008; Bélanger et al.,, 2012). It also seems clear to me that the observed repetition in the narratives of the informants about learning and education illustrates morality of the Vietnamese intellectuals for their sacrifices for the collective well-being of the society rather than individualistic wealth.

As the data reveal, the aspiration for higher education of the Vietnamese female NGO professionals illustrates the prestige of the middle-class intellectuals, which is less associated with the wealth status. The informants often talked about their sacrifice of wealth which reminisces the culture of the Confucian intellectuals rather than the maximisation of individualistic wealth in the capitalist culture. Though the NGO professional middle-class status of the women is less associated with wealth, the account of education and learning for the higher income has illustrated the morality of the intellectuals to break through the poverty situation to join the strata of the middle-class. As mentioned earlier, the intellectual capacity is also expressed in terms of the women's performance in the employment market for the high salary, transnational and international mobility and higher education degrees, preferably from overseas.

Contradictions in the narratives of the economic performance of the female NGO professionals in Hanoi reveals the constraints in the ideology of the economic maximisation of individuals in Vietnam's post-socialist market economy, which seems to reflect the state's vision of correct conduct. It is noticeable that the state, though it has withdrawn from the provision of materialistic resources, continues to guide economic maximisation of individuals in the market with the vision of collective well-being (Nguyen, 2018, 2019; Dinh, 2003). Nguyen (2018, 2019) has written about the government of the socialist state with the vision of *dan tri* (intellectual level) which associates the self-reliance of individuals in society with

the prestige of the upper-class. I also found that the performance of the Vietnamese female NGO professionals for the intellectual prestige illustrates the state's vision of *dan tri* for the self-reliance and resilience of individuals in the market for the collective well-being.

Nguyen's study (2018) about the self-government of Vietnamese people for the care of self with the vision of socialisation of social services in Vietnam suggests that the state has used the notion of *dan tri* with the same logic of the new prudentialism for entrepreneurship and economic performance. According to Nguyen, *dan tri* in the state's discourse is associated with the prudence of the intellectuals for the capacity of self-reliance and individualisation for self-care with the market facilities as the state withdrawing from the subsidy of the public services. Nguyen wrote: "*Dan tri* is supposed to have a causal correlation with human development, i.e. because you have low *dan tri*, you are poor and unruly, and vice versa; low *dan tri* thus is deemed both the cause and the effect of poverty, disorder and underdevelopment" (Nguyen, 2018, p. 634). The state discourse of *dan tri* highlights the morality of entrepreneurship and economic efficiency which binds individual economic performance with responsibilities for the collective well-being. *Dan tri* is associated with the intellectual level which is measured by the economic performance to indicate the worthiness or the worthlessness of individuals in society (Nguyen, 2018, 2019).

It is noticeable that the notion of *dan tri* also repeats the quality of the socialist person "with good health, creative ways of working, and civilized way of living, a self-optimizing subject who pursued their happiness as part of collective goals" (Nguyen, 2018, p. 629). The state's vision of *dan tri*, thus, reproduces the moral of the socialist person for the economic success and individualisation of care which is resonated with the collective goal of "modernisation" and "industrialisation" of the country (Nguyen, 2018, p. 633). In this sense, *dan tri* does not only account for the education level but also the capacity of individuals to win success with the market facilities to contribute to the state's vision of modernisation and industrialisation.

The field data suggest that the informants tend to associate the middle-class status with the acquisition of material assets (which I will elaborate further in the following section of this chapter). Nevertheless, there seems to be a contestation in the narratives of the women about salary status. When the acquisition of a high

salary demonstrates the economic success of the women in the market economy, they tended to demonstrate the intellectual quality of self-reliance for economic well-being rather than merely material maximisation. As earlier mentioned in Ngan's story, Ngan's account of the middle-class status illustrates the performance of the intellectual middle-class for being successful in education and professional performance with the high salary, rather than wealth maximisation.

Similarly, Hop also differentiated her success from the materialistic maximisation. Despite earning less than other professionals, she highlighted the prestige from the optimisation in education and the professional positions. According to Hop, her acquisition of the educational and professional advances accounts for her professional satisfaction despite the lower material conditions. She said:

> *At present, people tend to evaluate you based on your successes and your wealth. They would look at the flashy look of your material assets to evaluate you (right?). When they look at them, they would say: Ah, how many houses do you have? What kind of car do you drive (right)? They are more practical now (laughed). I do not think like that. I am thinking in the old way (right?) I do not look at the value of the people like that… I will (first) look at their job, then their material assets to see whether they are successful. I am still living in my parents' house and riding a motorbike. I do not have a car (smiled). No, when you look up, there are always people who do better or people who do worse when you look down (right?) It is not simple to get to my present position (Hop, interview, 3/11/2016).*

It seems clear that there was a contestation in the account of the middle-class in terms of wealth status. Though the high salary accounts for the women's respectable professional position, wealth does not demonstrate the prestige of the Vietnamese female NGO professionals. In addition, the prestige of the NGO intellectual is often expressed as non-compatible with wealth, considering the sacrifice of wealth as elaborated in the notion of *phat trien ban than* as mentioned earlier. The performance of the Vietnamese female NGO professionals in the middle-class category has rather illustrated the prestige of people with *dan tri*, especially when their economic production in the economy was often highlighted for their contribution to the society rather than wealth maximisation.

It seems clear to me that the account of the middle-class of the Vietnamese NGO professional women has reflected the state's notion of the new Vietnamese socialist person by demonstrating both economic and moral success. I found that the informants often expressed their pride in the capacity to thrive in the market. For example, Hop told me that she had achieved the career development in the

NGO sector on her own without being dependent on any acquaintance or relationship for her success. When talking about her achievements in the NGO career, she considered her self-optimisation for career development in the NGO sector as *gioi* (excellent or bright). Hop said:

> *You need to have an acquaintance to work in the state. You need relationships or people who supported you to get promoted (right?) You need networks or to bribe someone to be the boss. In NGOs, you do not need to do those things. You only need to be gioi. If you are gioi, you will take a higher position and get a higher salary (right?) There are more opportunities. That's it! (Hop, interview, 3/11/2016).*

The account of *gioi* or being excellent seems to demonstrate Hop's respectable professional position in the economy with high salary and educational levels. In comparison with the other wealthier, the account of *gioi* also demonstrates the economic capacity of the intellectual in the economy. In this respect, the success of the woman seems to illustrate the morality of the intellectual in line with the state's vision of *dan tri*, not only in terms of wealth but also the morality of wealth maximisation for the contribution to the society. When wealth is often pre-empted from the account of women's success, the capacity to perform in the market for the high-salaried positions, for the high education levels or the self-reliance tends to account for the prestige of the intellectual in Vietnam's cultural and socialist tradition. The contestation in the selection of the symbolic representations of material assets of the informants illustrates how the performance of the Vietnamese middle-class women in the market economy was restricted by the ideological and moral symbols of intellectuals in the Confucian and socialist tradition. It seems clear that the state still plays a role in guiding the economic performance of Vietnamese women in the economy by recalling their responsibility for economic success for the collective well-being in the collectivist and socialist tradition with the example of *dan tri*. This notion seems to guide the Vietnamese women to maximise materialistic assets which are symbolic to the prestige of the socialist person rather than merely wealth maximisation.

In the following section, I will present the performance of the NGO middle-class women in consumption. I will show how the salaried NGO professional women in Hanoi dealt with the salary constraints to maximise the materialistic assets in the market. Specifically, I will present how the Vietnamese NGO professional women have articulate the symbolic value of the consumer commodities to demonstrate

the prestige of the Vietnamese middle-class women. I will demonstrate that the performance the women in consumption illustrates the socialist ideology of the socialist woman, which continues to highlight the traditional reproductive role of Vietnamese women.

5.3 The moral of the NGO middle-class consumers

The improved financial and economic condition of Vietnam after *doi moi* economic renovation is visibly presented through the lifestyles of the wealthier urbanites in Hanoi (Drummond, 2012; Leshkowich, 2012). In my research, I found that women with higher salaries also demonstrated their economically better-off conditions by the acquisition of particular assets such as houses, cars or high-end products and services. Leisure also accounts for an important part in the lifestyle of the female NGO professionals in Hanoi. In the interviews, the informants talked about their hobbies, such as travelling, dining out, shopping, fashion, sports, or photography. Their articulation of what or where to buy or to entertain to be considered "genuine" seems to demonstrate not only their wealth but also the status from the selection of commodities to consume in the mass-production market (Liechty, 2003). Consumption seems to be an essential skill of women to differentiate their status in relation to the other groups in society (Drummond, 2012; Nguyen-vo, 2008; Pettus, 2003).

In my interviews with the informants, they shared their knowledge of how to consume wisely among the varieties of commodities which have become abundant and complex in types, styles and qualities in the open market. For example, in an interview with Dong, who worked in a mass organisation, she told me her story about how she had bought a new flat in a high-rise residential tower. Dong told me with pride about her right choice to buy the flat in a high-ranged complex (*chung cu cao cap*) in a newly developed residential area outside the centre of Hanoi at a bargain price when the housing market plummeted. After buying the new flat, she leased her old flat to make an extra income for the family. She said that she was happy living in the new property because of the better living condition and the profit they had from the rising housing price in the market. She said:

> *I am very happy with my new flat because it is spacious and airy. It is located in a considerably high-ranged and civilised area with good security. I am happy with everything. We have paid around three billion dongs*[3] *for the flat, including the furnishing. The flat could be worth four billion dongs now (Dong, 24/11/2016).*

Dong's ownership of a better living environment in a high-rise building in a newly developed area in Hanoi illustrates the notion of civility (*van minh*) for the possession of higher valued and differentiated assets in the mass production consumer market (Drummond, 2012; Harms, 2014). The notion of *van minh* has been highlighted by the state's vision of socialism which is often expressed through the slogan: "Everything for the target of the rich people, and strong, democratic, equal and civilized country[4]" (Harms, 2014, p. 225). According to Harms, the notion of *van minh* does not exist as meaningless in the state's slogan but has been translated as the symbolic status of the middle-class urbanites in Vietnam for the acquisition of higher valued ranges of commodities in the market. Moreover, civility as a symbol of nobility also demonstrates a strong sense of individual consciousness (*y thuc ca nhan*) and the actions of the upper class for collective well-being (i.e. civilised society) which has become a government tool to demean the poor, unhygienic, unruly and uncivilised lower class (Harms, 2014; Nguyen, 2018). Drummond (2012), when writing about the mixing habitats in urban Hanoi, suggests the strategy of the middle-class urbanites in differentiating with the rural and poor urbanites in the city through the consumption of private homes in high-rise buildings and/or mimic goods with "genuine quality". According to Drummond (2012), the middle-class urbanites often associate the symbolic status of material assets with the knowledge and status of the middle-class to differentiate their "elite" status from the other "non-elites" (Drummond, 2012, pp. 80-81). As she argues, the acquisition of symbolic values of the middle-class from the consumption of goods and services illustrates the "retreat" of the middle-class urbanites from the lower-class masses.

My field data also reflect Drummond's (2012) notion about the consumption of high-value and high-end commodities of the NGO middle-class women. For

---

[3] One pound sterling can be exchanged for 30,000 -33,000 dongs

[4] In Vietnamese: *Tat ca vi muc tieu dan giau nuoc manh xa hoi cong bang, dan chu va van minh* (Chinh phu, 2011)

example, according to Ngan, the possession of houses or cars account for the status of the middle class. She said:

> *How do people usually evaluate you? They look at your house to see how nice it looks or looking at your car to see what style it is. They look at the "ABC" things that you have (Ngan, interview, 28/12/2016).*

Like Ngan, other informants agreed that the possession of particular assets, like houses or cars, is symbolised for the upper- or middle-class in the society. For the NGO professional women in Vietnam, the consumption of high valued assets also accounted for their higher class status. Especially, the informants often highlighted their capacity to articulate and consume particular goods and services for the family in the strata of the middle-class. For example, Dong's acquisition of the flat at a bargain price at the right time demonstrated her knowledge of the market and the skills to engage in transactions with high-valued assets. Moreover, her capacity in the economy accounts for her prestige in the family for the enhancement of the well-being of the family. According to Dong, she was respected by her husband for the knowledge and skills that she gained in public life, which helped her to fulfil the responsibilities of the wife in the family. She said:

> *My husband respects his wife because she knows how to fulfil the filial duties to both her maternal and husband's families according to the Vietnamese culture. I am neither dominating nor timid or shy. I managed every business in the family in good shape. When working outside, I had opportunities to engage in social interactions where I learned things which are quite correct about life and family. My husband has seen and trusted me for what I have done, so everything seems fine (Dong, interview, 24/11/2016).*

The account of women's participation in public life has illustrated women's liberated position in the socialist ideology of women's emancipation (Gal and Kligman, 2000a, 2000b; Werner, 1981). It is noticeable that this position is inseparable from Vietnam's Confucian notion of women's domestic responsibility which also accounts for women's middle-class status. In his book *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial 1920-1945*, David G. Marr's (1984)'s research of women's work since the pre-colonial period in Vietnam suggests that the continuity of Confucian influence on the process of women's liberation in Vietnam. Specifically, as his research points out, the notion of "proper" women in the Confucian tradition which emphasises women's four virtues (*cong*: labour, *dung*: appearance, *ngon*: appropriate speech and *hanh* (proper behaviour) and three submissions to men in the family continued to regulate the notion of the upper- and middle-class

women in society (Marr, 1984, p. 192). Especially, as his research reveals, notions of women's liberation in Vietnam in different historical periods were often associated with women's labour or "*cong*" in the four virtues which emphasises women's reproductive role for the success of the husband and the harmony of the family. Research about the women's policy in Vietnam's socialism suggests women's improved position in the public life as the result of the state's subsidised programmes for women and the need to increase the female workforce and the public sector during the two wars (Werner, 1981; Luong, 1989). However, women's labour is still emphasised for its nursing or caring nature and domestic role for which women were still concentrated in the caring sector or holding less significant positions in male-dominated sectors (Pettus, 2003). Werner's (1981) research, for example, reveals that the socialist ideology of women's emancipation has not altered the gender-based labour division in the economy and within the family. As her research points out, women's production tends to contribute to the family's economy while men's labour still dominates in the key and formal economic sectors.

Women's liberation in the socialist ideology of emancipation when emphasising women's equality for the participation in the public life thus does not change the role of women in the domestic and private realm (Gal and Kligman, 2000a; 2000b). Nguyen (2019) in her book about the waste economy in Vietnam after *doi moi* suggests the space of gender where women's economic activities (outside) often produce the status of the family (inside) to reproduce the authority of men in the family. As Nguyen's research reveals, a woman's performance in the economy is often highlighted for her labour contribution to the family for which she is often recognised as "the general of the domestic space" or *"noi tuong"* (Nguyen, 2019, p. 34). The notion of inside and outside space indicates women's mobility in the economy, which continues to confine them to the domestic realm. It seems clear that given women's liberation in the socialist ideology of emancipation, their production in public life does not account for women's equal position in Vietnam's society. Instead, women's labour (*cong*) in the economy is still highlighted for the contribution to the family which accounts for the prestige of the socialist woman (Pettus, 2003; Nguyen, 2019). Interestingly, the Confucian notion of proper women for the domestic compliant virtues is often reproduced by

the public media as the prestige of middle-class consumers in Vietnam's post-reforms market economy (Drummond, 2004).

In my fieldwork, I found that the informants often expressed their responsibilities to improve the consumption level for the family. They often talked about their consumption needs as minimal while emphasising the priority to consume for other members of their family, usually for their children and parents. The performance of the women in consumption in relation to their domestic responsibilities often depicts the women's prestige as *noi tuong* for the maximisation of material stocks. In other words, when highlighting the consumption of privileged commodities, the informants often demonstrated the capacity to care for the well-being of the family rather than their self-interested materialistic satisfaction. In this respect, the women's consumption of high value and good quality commodities illustrates not only the accumulation of the symbolic value of the commodities (Drummond, 2012) but also the morality of the consumption in relation to the women's domestic responsibility (Nguyen, 2019; Leshkowich, 2012).

In my conversation with Xuan, she said that she had spent most of her salary to upgrade her house. According to Xuan, the consumption for the house represents the prestige of intellectuals who are also successful in the market. She told me the story of her parents, who were worse off not only economically but also emotionally, because of their manual labour status, which illustrates her filial duty to be successful in the market. She said:

> *The surrounding people were professors or doctorate holders. They are "smart" (oach). They had good occupations, for example, teaching jobs while my parents were only manual workers. Some people rebuilt or repaired their houses with a beautiful look because they have earned better. Because our house was shabby, the voice or image of my parents, are they what you call?, was weaker than the other neighbours, right? (Xuan, interview, 5/11/2016).*

Like other intellectuals in the neighbourhood, Xuan also demonstrated her success by consumption for her housing condition. After working with a high salary, she equipped the house with high priced household gadgets and contributed her salary to rebuild her parents' house with a compatible look with other wealthier houses in the neighbourhood. Her consumption for the better housing conditions illustrates her responsibility to enhance the prestige of her

parents in the community. She recalled how she had used the high salary for the consumption for the family as follows:

> *I bought myself and my brother each a motorbike. I bought my brother a computer so that he could study with it. I was able to repair many things inside our house. I had our house renovated and had the kitchen repaired with my own money. I bought many home appliances like a washing machine, a fridge or stuff like that. My parents were poor. I took over that responsibility because I earned a high salary. Because I saved up, I managed to (buy) many things (Xuan, interview in Hanoi, 5/11/2016).*

Like Xuan, other informants expressed their responsibility to maximise the consumption for the family. Considering their constrained income from the salaried occupations in NGOs, the maximisation of material assets for the well-being of the family has demonstrated NGO professional women's prestige for their labour in relation to women's domestic responsibility rather than their self-interested materialistic satisfaction.

Women's consumption for the care of the family also illustrates the morality of their self-sacrificing labour for the family, which accounts for the traditional prestige of the Vietnamese women (Pettus, 2003). Moreover, when consumption involved with the upper- and middle-class status, the sacrifice of women for the care responsibility seems to reflect the morality of the middle-class women in the government's emulation campaign for the Cultured Family (*Gia dinh van hoa*) (Drummond, 2004; Pettus, 2003; Nguyen-vo, 2008). Hayton (2010) has depicted the state-initiated emulation campaign of "Cultured Families" which have been promoted strongly since the 1990s as a new mechanism to implement the state's propaganda and surveillance to regulate the masses' compliance to the state's policy when forms of control based on direct allocation started to get dismantled or malfunctioned. The "Cultured Families" campaign highlights the criteria of the "harmony and progressive family" and stipulates the husband and wife's responsibilities to meet the criteria of "culture", "civility" and "model citizen" for which a cultured family stands (Hayton, 2010; Pettus, 2003; Drummond, 2004).

According to Pettus (2003) and Drummond (2004), the emulation campaign specifically focuses on women's role in the domestic realm. Their studies of the campaign suggest that the notion of modernity and civility promoted by the campaign in the context of marketisation has evoked women's domestic responsibility for the optimisation in consumption, the middle-class housewives

and mothers, or consumers. For example, Pettus (2003, p. 82) has written about the propaganda implemented by Vietnam Women's Union, which highlights the "prosperous, egalitarian, progressive and happy family". As she argues, the idea of "modernity" (*hien dai*) and "civility" (*van minh*) has moved away from the notion of "the working-class credentials, ideological commitment or public contributions" but towards the idea of an "educated and affluent middle class". The propaganda has recalled the sacrifices of Vietnamese women for the family by recalling Vietnamese mothers' sacrifices during the wars. Women's sacrifice in propaganda is often highlighted with social respect. By contrast, self-interested materialistic satisfaction is stigmatised as the source of social evils. The propaganda highlights women's optimisation in the economy for the traditional responsibility of women to protect the harmony and tend to the well-being of the members in the family. In the Women's Union's discourse of modernity and civility, women were considered "effective household managers in an age of increasing market competition and "social evils" (Pettus, 2003, p. 83). The campaign highlighted women's performance for modernity and civility to counter "social evils" (e.g. unhappy family, diseases, etc.) which tended to associate women's performance in the market with domestic responsibilities (Pettus, 2003). Women's performance in the market, which mainly is emphasised in consumption, have become the vanguard of the happy and cultured family in the context of marketisation (Drummond, 2004).

Drummond's studies (2004, 2012) about the new notion of the middle-class women in the Cultured Family campaign in the context of *doi moi* economic renovation also suggest that the performance of women in consumption have illustrated the skills and knowledge of women to articulate specific goods and services to present the middle-class status. The public media which were controlled by the state often delivered stories and images of middle-class lifestyles which convey the ideal of the successful woman. Drummond's (2004) study of the idea of the middle-class on women's magazines suggests that the state has continued to reinforce the Confucian notion of women's reproductive responsibility, such as obligatory virtues, into the idea of middle-class consumers. As she put it: "The "traditional" domestic role of women in society is being reconstructed as natural, what women desire, what women prefer, what they are naturally good at, and this is being constantly reinforced" (Drummond, 2004, p.

167). In this respect, women's traditional reproductive role has always been an integral part of the indicators of "culture" and "civility" of the middle-class consumers in the campaign of cultured and civilised families.

The construction of middle-class women in the socialist state's campaign of Civilised and Cultured Family suggests how the socialist state has promoted women's traditional domestic role with the vision of middle-class consumers (Drummond, 2004, 2006, 2012; Pettus, 2003). The idea of the middle-class in the campaign offers a remedy for "social evils". Women's position in the domestic realm is depicted with them as heroines or "general[s] of the public space" (Pettus, 2003; Nguyen, 2019, p. 34). Meanwhile, women's consumption in the market appears to be the instrument for women to realise their aspirations to be middle-class housewives (Drummond, 2004; Nguyen-vo, 2008). The campaign which reproduces women's virtues in the Confucian tradition does not highlight the morality of consumption for women's individualistic satisfaction but the morality of women's sacrifice for the maximisation of care for the well-being of the family, which represents the prestige of Vietnamese women in Vietnam's Confucian and socialist tradition (Pettus, 2003).

In this research, I found that the women's performance in consumption also illustrates the morality of their sacrifice for the well-being of the family, rather than for individualistic and materialistic maximisation. For example, Tien, who is a mother of two, said that she has prioritised to consume for her children when considering that consumption for herself was minimal. She said:

> *When I had my children, I prioritised spending on their needs. If I spend for myself, I only want to spend on leisure activities (an choi). I have simple needs. I do not like shopping. For example, my husband buys me my mobile phone and laptop. I only buy a few clothes for myself. I do not like shopping. I only buy stuff that I need. For example, in winter, I bought a few pairs of leggings or dresses. Or if I need something in summer, I would buy more. Our salaries are now prioritised for my children's needs. Our children's needs are prioritised when parents' needs are minor (Tien, interview, 11/11/2016).*

Thao, the mother of a daughter, also told me that her consumption needs were minimal when she spent more for her daughter and her family. She said:

> *I have a child. I have my family. I have to spend quite a lot on it. I also have my needs. However, I think I am not a material person (Thao, interview, 5/11/2016).*

Similarly, Dang, another mother of one daughter, said that her consumption priority was for her daughter. Dang said that she concentrated on raising her daughter as an independent and healthy child. For this purpose, she said that she maximised her salary and her husband's to buy training materials for the healthy development of her daughter. Dang said:

> *My daughter is five years old. I do not want her to depend on me to decide what to wear or to eat. I will explain to her what is healthier to eat so that she can make her own decision. I do not have to tend her every meal or respond to her needs unconditionally. My husband and I decided that we will prioritise our salaries to buy training materials for my daughter so that she is not dependent like other children (Dang, interview, 15/11/2016).*

It seems clear that NGO professional women also have demonstrated the prestige of middle-class mothers through consumption. In general, the informants often demonstrated the capacity to acquire privileged goods and services for the nurturing of their children. Through consumption, they often demonstrated the fulfilled responsibility of mothers and daughters for the well-being of the family, which demonstrate the prestige of the NGO middle-class consumers. The articulation of the symbolic values of material assets, e.g. houses, books, nutrition, food, has linked to the idea of motherhood which is inseparable from their capacity to function in the market. In this respect, the performance of the Vietnamese female NGO professionals in consumption also illustrated the idea of the middle-class women in the cultured and civilised families campaign (Pettus, 2003; Drummond, 2004). Rather than wealth, the optimisation in consumption for more privileged assets related to women's domestic responsibility also illustrates the women's power in the family (Nguyen, 2019). Despite women's liberation in the economy, the Vietnamese NGO professional women are still reliant on their fulfilled domestic responsibilities to gain the power and prestige of the middle-class in the market economy. It seems clear that the socialist state continues to play a role in guiding women's performance in the market with the vision of emancipation, yet rather reproduces their position within the domestic realm.

As I have introduced in this section, the articulation of the prestige of the women in consumption demonstrates the position of women in the socialist ideology of women's emancipation for their participation in public life. However, the state has continued to tie the women's performance in the market to domestic responsibility. The findings of the women's liberation for the fulfilled duties of

daughters, mothers and wives suggest that Confucian notions of women's virtues and submissions continued to be renewed in the state's policy of women's emancipation. Rather than wealth, which is often associated with social evils, the state's propaganda guides women's optimisation for the modern and happy family which accounts for women's middle-class prestige in the market economy (Jellema, 2005; Leshkowich, 2012; Pettus, 2003). In the following section, I will present how the Vietnamese female NGO professionals have differentiated with the other wealthy. I will demonstrate that rather than wealth, the female NGO professionals in Hanoi continue to demonstrate the morality of their sacrifice of material wealth as a form differentiated status to other wealthy groups in Vietnamese society.

5.4 Optimise with "Bolshevik" moral

As mentioned earlier, the acquisition of material assets has become imperative to demonstrate the prestige of the emergent middle class in the context of marketisation. This finding seems to reflect the logic in Weber's notion of the competition in society for the middle-class status through access to privileged consumer commodities, i.e. professional positions, education, houses or cars (Liechty, 2003). Since material assets have become the symbolic status of middle-class society, individuals are exposed to social pressures to acquire certain material conditions to present themselves in the middle-class strata. As earlier discussed, for NGO middle-class women, the possession of material assets is not only aimed at maximisation of material satisfaction but also the morality of sacrifice for the caring responsibility. Pettus's study (2003) about the socialist policy of women in *doi moi* period suggested that the state's propaganda of women's role in the economy still binds women with the traditional responsibility to fend for the harmony and well-being of the family which requires women to sacrifice economic profits which were often associated with corruption and social evils. Vietnam's Women's Union with branches spread from the central to local levels has played a critical role in transferring women's skills and knowledge of managing the family. As Pettus's research reveals, women through public competitions and coaching opportunities are trained with knowledge and skills to support the husband and take care of children to maintain the harmony

and happiness of the family. The campaign for the Happy Family organised by the Women's Union highlights women's role in the market economy to manage the family to avoid social evils which are often associated with monetary-driven behaviour and materialistic fetishism. In state-owned public media, self-interested economic maximisation is stigmatised as strayed behaviour resultant to social evils while economic performance for the care of the family is highlighted as the morality of the middle-class women who deserve the happy family (Pettus, 2003, pp. 132-137). The ideal of the middle-class women in Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation reveals the contestation of morality between economic efficiency and traditional responsibility which put women in the pressure of sacrificing one to gain another (Pettus, 2003, p. 134).

My field data reveal that Vietnamese female NGO professionals often demonstrated the morality of desiring less for caring responsibilities. In my discussions with the informants, they acknowledged that houses and cars had become the symbolic assets of the middle-class in society. To demonstrate their upper- and middle-class status, they expressed the social pressures to acquire high-valued commodities within their limited income. For example, Ngan told me that she earned a relatively high salary in an American non-profit organisation compared to other foreign NGOs. However, Ngan considered herself as low-middle-class because she was unable to possess the requisite items, such as houses or cars, to be in the equal rank with the wealthy. She said:

> *You see, people who earn a high income, I mean the income of the middle class would be able to buy houses and cars. I am not talking about the richer. I can only afford leisure activities (an choi), like travelling. I cannot afford to buy a house or a car. I will need to save to death to buy a house or a car. (Finish, right?) Therefore I am considered myself low-middle-class (Ngan, interview, 28/12/2016).*

Also, according to Hop, the possession of a house and a car represents the success of people in society. She said:

> *Well, people, today will evaluate your success based on your wealth. Perhaps, they look at the flashy look of material assets to evaluate a person, right? When they look at you, they will find: Ah, how many mansions you are having now, right? What cars are you driving, right? People are more pragmatic today (Hop, 39 years old, 3/11/2016).*

Like Ngan, Hop admitted that she could not buy a house or a car though her salary in the foreign NGO is considered high compared to the local organisations.

When the material levels seem to account for the upper-class of the wealthy in society, the acquisition of the lower level of material assets seems to account for the undesirable lower status of the salaried NGO professionals. For example, Hop said that she was not happy for not being able to buy a house or a car. She said:

> *I am not happy because I want to buy a house and a car, but I could not afford them. I only can make ends meet. Compared to my friends, they are all successful now. They are stable (on dinh) (Hop, 39 years old, 3/11/2016).*

The pressures encountered by the female NGO professionals in Hanoi seem to illustrate the anxieties of the salaried middle-class about their class status, which is largely dependent on employment status and consumption (Mills, 1951). The account of "low middle-class" or "unhappiness" illustrates the constraint of the salaried professionals in the accumulation of desirable assets symbolic to the middle-class status. This account reflects the uncertainty of the salaried middle-class, whose status depends on the consumption of commodities, which is unstable and uncertain in the volatile market (Mills, 1951). Weber's notion of middle-class culture also suggests that the uncertainty of the class position of the middle-class, who are neither labour nor capital owners, has reduced this group to a status-driven society in which members are forced to compete for the acquisition of commodities which are considered "fashion" to present the middle-class status (Weber, cited in Liechty, 2003).

The Weberian notion of the middle class highlights the skills of the middle class as experts in articulating the symbolic values of material assets rather than owners of the capital stock (King, 2008; Liechty, 2003). Furthermore, Mills (1951) argues that the uncertainty of the middle-class status is resultant from a lack of the social system of prestige. He stated: "Claims for prestige, however expressed, must be honored by others, and, in the end, must rest upon more or less widely acknowledged bases, which distinguish the people of one social stratum from others" (Mills, 1951, p. 241). Mills' research (1951) on the American white-collar middle-class reveals that the white-collar middle-class tended to replicate the culture of the capitalist in the U.S. society to demonstrate the prestige of the ruling class.

My data also reveal the skills of the salaried NGO professional women for the articulation of the prestige of the success in the post-socialist market economy.

However, the performance of the Vietnamese NGO middle-class women illustrates the mixture in the prestige system in Vietnam's post-socialist market economy when the new middle-class women continue to assume the dominant role of socialist women in reproduction (Pettus, 2003; Phillips, 2005, 2008; Hemment, 2004, 2007). Some founders of local NGOs I know have made a profit from the market liberalisation and openness which allowed them to own not only an NGO but also some other for-profit businesses. Rather than highlighting their consumption or the high-income level, the informants tended to show the prestige of the women whose economic performance demonstrates their responsibility for the well-being of the family and the community (I will present the performance in caring responsibilities in the following chapter). The behaviour of the NGO middle-class women who avoided the wealth status seems to illustrate the anxieties of the newly rich in the post-socialist societies in Asia. For example, in China and Vietnam where the socialist states are still in power, wealth is neither legally nor morally supported in the socialist culture (Zhang, 2010; Leshkowich, 2012; Jellema, 2005). As Leshkowich (2012, p. 97) points out, wealth is traditionally known as the target of socialist punishment and incompatible with socialist morality. As she puts it: "Wealth and status in a market socialist context simultaneously signify prosperity and uneasiness" (Leshkowich, 2012, p. 97).

Despite the rapid economic growth that has led to the creation of mass materialistic wealth, wealth was often associated with corruption in Vietnamese society. Gainsborough (2010), who writes about the economic growth in Vietnam, argues that corruption is a popular means for people to extract wealth. MacLean's study (2012) about corruption in Vietnam suggests that corruption (*tham nhung*) in Vietnamese often evokes fear of moral vices such as "greed" (*tham*) and "harassments" (*nhung nhieu*). Jellema (2005) who writes about the anxieties of the middle-class in Vietnam after *doi moi* economic renovation suggests that wealth is often contested in society for fear of moral decay from greed, selfishness and corruption which deteriorate collective values. In general, wealth, when often associated with corruption, is feared for its morally disastrous consequences (Pettus, 2003; Jellema, 2005).

It is noticeable that the state still plays a key role in conducting people's behaviour and attitudes about wealth. Studies about messages of the state on state-owned public media including TV soap operas, newspapers, magazines, street banners

and loudspeakers, and regular cultural activities in the community organised by the mass organisations suggest how the state continues to intervene in individuals' lives with messages and guidance about how to accumulate moral wealth (Drummond, 2004; Pettus, 2003; Jellema, 2005). For example, Jellema's (2005) research suggests how the soap operas broadcast weekly on the national TV channel have kept sending the message of the moral problems associated with materialistic greed. Also, as Leshkowich (2012) points out, rather than challenging the wealth status which seems not to fit within the socialist system, the state keeps signalling the moral problems associated with wealth. There seems a clear message in the way wealth was communicated to the masses by the state when problems of wealth were often associated with moral issues. The way morality is communicated to the masses illustrates the conduct of conduct for the will to improve, which highlights the morality of wealth generation (Leshkowich, 2012; Jellema, 2005). As Leshkowich (2012) argues, Vietnam's socialist state continues to control economic maximisation and the freedom of the new class within the realm of moral conduct. I found that the sacrifice of wealth for the care of the family and the community of the NGO professional women in Vietnam often demonstrated the morality of the socialist women with the vision of the collective well-being.

As I have presented earlier in this chapter, the middle-class women in the NGO sector often demonstrated the morality of their economic performance in relation to reproductive responsibilities rather than individualistic and materialistic satisfactions. Interestingly, there were informants who expressed explicitly to me that they were a kind of "Bolshevik" or "proletariat" for their sacrifice of opportunities to maximise individualistic wealth so as to work, instead, in the NGO sector. Although the word "Bolshevik" has lost much of its essence with the demise of the socialist system, its association with the socialist system often evokes the morality of the self-devotion to the collective community interests, which is incompatible with individualistic wealth. As I will demonstrate hereafter, the informants repetitively recalled the prestige of the socialist women for the sacrifice of wealth and their contributions to society as a way to disassociate themselves from the stigmatised wealth status.

During my fieldwork in Hanoi, I often heard from the informants about the pervasiveness of corruption. They talked about governmental officers who

became rich quickly because of unofficial income (*lau*) despite the lower salary (*luong*). When *luong* or the salary is the official monthly income of the employee in the labour contract, *lau* is the irregular income from other activities outside the salary. In Vietnamese, *lau* is often associated with the inference of corrupt or illegal acts, for example, lau in *buon lau* means illegal trafficking. Especially, *lau* in *luong lau* (salary and extras) is often associated with the corruption of the government officials. For example, on the online *Nhan dan hang thang*, the official media of the Communist Party, *lau* was addressed as a means to accumulate wealth for individualistic satisfaction. It said:

> *There are multiple forms for lau. There is "lau" which is considered as a "legitimate" bonus, for example, the amount from the cash envelopes that "government people" received for several reasons could be larger than their salary. Though their salary is low, they dined every day in the luxurious restaurants from the corrupt money (tien chua), from other people's money (Tran in Nhan dan hang thang, 2018).*

In the interviews, the informants talked about corrupt practices of the state or businesses as a popular means for people to accumulate individualistic wealth. In my interview with Hop, she told me that many of her friends in the state became rich because they were corrupt. She said:

> *My friends who are working in the state are rich now. They have to take bribes and gifts to be rich. How can they be rich from the salary in the state? (Hop, interview, 3/11/2011).*

Nhung, who has recently returned to work in an international NGO after working in the business sector, also talked about the profit maximisation in the business environment as unethical. She said:

> *When you work in the business, you have to be brutal to make money, like there is a saying "blood money" (dong tien xuong mau). In my opinion, it is not ethical (Nhung, interview, 3/3/2017).*

Interestingly, one informant who worked in a foreign NGO said that her privileges of working in the foreign NGO for the higher income and the use of luxurious facilities provided by the NGO were also associated with corruption by the surrounding people. Dang, who was working for a Canadian NGO, said that her family often assumed that she was rich because of corruption. She said:

> *There was a stereotype with the thinking that if you go on a business trip, you will eat at the restaurants; there will be cars to pick you up, and you will receive cash envelopes. For every trip I take, I always have to explain it to them. But in their mind, they will think that no*

matter what you say, you will have cash envelopes anyway (Dang, interview, 15/11/2016).

My data also reveal that corruption is often associated with the greed of individualistic wealth accumulation. In general, corruption is considered unethical for the maximisation of individualistic profits rather than for social benefits. In my discussion with the informants, they criticised economic maximisation for individual wealth as unethical. For example, Nhung criticised corruption for the maximisation of individualistic wealth at the costs of the collective benefits. She said:

If you are corrupt in NGOs, you are not different from stealing from the poor. If you are not corrupt, you would have enough money to buy books or building schools. Are you not shame for that? If you do not have good morality, you cannot do NGO. In business, they do it all the time. It is the business culture. Morality is very important in NGOs. Because NGOs are not the place for you to generate wealth (Nhung, interview, 3/3/2017).

Noticeably, when the Vietnamese female NGO professionals often criticised individualistic economic maximisation as unethical, they highlighted the contributions to society accounting for the usefulness of a person to society. It seems to me that their optimisation for the contribution to society accounts for the prestige of the usefulness to society rather than from wealth. As earlier mentioned, when individualistic accumulation is considered unethical or corrupt, it seems that contributions to the society account for the ethics of the NGO professional women who are working for community development. In my interviews with the informants, they highlighted the morality of their contribution to society. For example, Truc said that members in her family used to call her "Bolshevik" for her aspiration to contribute to society rather than to make herself wealthy. She said:

I do not expect to be rich because in my point of view I only need enough food to eat, enough money to pay for my daughter's nursery. I do not hope to be extremely rich. I only need to feel that I am useful in society. That is enough (Truc, interview, 20/11/2016).

Thanh, a vice-director of a local NGO, also talked about the aspiration to produce values for the community. She said that she was happy with her contributions to society rather than making more money. She said:

Simply happiness is having a job that I love. In this job, I could produce the values for other people. That is my happiness. When meeting with my friends, they often asked me if I made a high salary

or if I make a lot of money. [They asked me] Why I should stick to this job. Some other friends also asked me to do the business with them to have more money. I told them that I do not think about that. I had a house. My children have to make their own efforts at school. I do not need to send them to high-class school. I am okay with having my motorbike (Thanh, interview, 17/02/2017).

Rather than wealth, the female NGO professionals in Hanoi tend to demonstrate the morality of their contribution to society. The women's optimisation in the economy seems to reflect the morality of the socialist person whose wealth generation is appealed for the well-being of society. It is noticeable that the socialist ideology of women as socialist workers also highlights women's participation in the economy as the emancipation of the oppressed class from the domination of the capitalist (Gal and Kligman, 2000a; Pettus, 2003). Women's participation in the economy was considered women's liberation in socialism. Women's participation in the labour force used be recognised by the socialist state as socialist workers whose production and reproduction were considered their contributions to the economy (Gal and Kligman, 2000a). As socialist workers, women's labour in the labour force illustrates the women's emancipation and equal status for their participation in public life (Gal and Kligman, 2000a). As Gal and Kligman (2000a) suggest, women's position in socialism was ensured by the social benefits and full employment in the state system of production rather than political rights. After the collapse of the socialist system, women's position in post-socialist economies has been weakened because of the competition in the market which hampers their full employment conditions. Many women seek low wage jobs or volunteer positions in the NGO sector to regain a role in the non-governmental sector. Research on women's participation in NGOs in post-socialist economies suggests that the career in NGOs seems to be specifically desirable for women's reproductive role. The professionalisation of NGOs, as Hemment (2004, 2007) and Phillips (2005, 2008) in separate research point out, has exposed to post-socialist women opportunities to regain their political position with the symbolic and material resources of the NGO professionalism. As Hemment puts it, in contrast to the market and the formal politics which is "masculinised" and "dirty", "the non-governmental sphere was seen to be decent, moral, and in this way peculiarly feminine" (Hemment, 2004, p. 227). In this regard, NGOs has become highly personalised space for a cohort of privileged

women to wield power from the feminised and professionalised NGOs (Hemment, 2004).

It seems to me that NGO professional women in Vietnam also illustrated the power in the public life which reminisces their position in the post-socialist system for the contribution to the community and sacrifice of individualistic wealth. The women's articulation of the contribution to collective well-being also illustrates Nguyen's (2018, 2019) proposition of the Vietnamese socialist person in the market economy for individualisation and self-government in relation to socialisation policy in Vietnam's marketisation and privatisation. Nguyen's (2018) study of the socialisation policy suggests that the self-reliance and economic optimisation of individuals in the context of marketisation and privatisation in Vietnam are mobilised by the vision of collectivisation of individual and social resources for the vision of collective well-being. In the same way, I found that the notion about individual success in the market does not merely demonstrate individualistic wealth maximisation but more importantly, the women's usefulness to society. This usefulness is inseparable from the collectivisation tradition, which is demonstrated in individual aspirations for charitable activities (*di lam tu thien*) among the wealthy urbanites who benefited from social recognition for the public virtues (*cong duc*) (Nguyen, 2019, p. 164). The sacrifice of individualistic resources for the well-being of the community also demonstrates the prestige of the upper-class for the "public virtues" (Nguyen, 2019; Leshkowich, 2012; Jellema, 2005).

In my interviews with the informants, they often expressed pride and happiness for being useful to society. It is noticeable that to be useful for society, the NGO professional women often demonstrate their sacrifice of individualistic economic maximisation interests. For example, the aspirations to be useful to society seem to illustrate the women's preferences in working disinterestedly for the benefits of society rather than making their own wealth. It seems clear to me that rather than wealth, the NGO professional women often demonstrated morality of the sacrifice of individualistic wealth for more contributions to society. For example, Nhung said that she was working in NGOs to help other people in the community. The contributions of her work to the community accounts for her usefulness for the society, which was beyond making money. She said:

Working in NGOs is beyond making money. There were times I worked not because of money but to help someone. It means when you work, you have done something kind (viec thien). I mean when I work, I truly feel that I was doing a "kind" job. Honestly! I mean that I have a feeling that when I am working, I am helping this community or this province. I am contributing to [the policy]. Certainly, I did not make the policy alone. However, when I try my best, I will contribute to change policy. Therefore, I am happy with that (Nhung, interview, 3/3/2017).

Nhung's account of "kindness" clearly highlights the morality of her contributions to society. Additionally, the action of "kindness" also accounts for her "happiness" or satisfaction at being useful for society. For Nhung, her "kind" job was desirable for the valuable contribution to the change of policy to help the community. Similarly, Ngan said that she was satisfied with the position in the NGO sector for the contribution to the benefits of the disadvantaged community. Specifically, the usefulness for the contributions to society illustrates the more desired professional position in NGOs compared to other professions. She said:

Honestly, my income is not lower than the salary in other sectors. However, I am more satisfied with my job. There are more benefits in the sense that I am always satisfied because I think I am useful for society. I am contributing to the benefits of the disadvantaged people or society in general (Ngan, interview, 28/12/2018).

As revealed by the data, the optimisation of the Vietnamese female NGO professionals for more contributions to the collective well-being by sacrificing self-interested materialistic maximisation accounts for the women's usefulness in society. It is noticeable that the "usefulness" for the contributions to society was desired for the prestige of the women in public life in the socialist tradition (Gal and Kligman, 2000a, 2000b). The replication of the prestige of the socialist worker for the contributions to society also seems to illustrate the Weberian notion of the skills of the middle-class in the articulation of the values in the market. It is noticeable that the performance of the middle-class, which is not only aimed at materialistic maximisation but also the prestige of the middle-class, is rooted loosely within the values of the market (Mills, 1951; King, 2008). The informants' articulation about the morality of their sacrifice of materialistic interests for those of the collective well-being, illustrates the virtue of *cong* (labour) of the Vietnamese women in the Confucian tradition, which was layered by the state's discourses of women's emancipation in the public life, which has rather bound

them to the traditional domestic roles (Pettus, 2003; Werner, 1981, 2002; Drummond, 2004).

The performance of the NGO middle-class for the morality of the sacrifice also reflects Leshkowich's (2012) proposition of the morality of the middle-class. Leshkowich's study (2012) of the performance of women in finances, family, fashion and fitness suggests that Vietnamese women tended to demonstrate their success in the market as the merits of their commitments to the moral work and lifestyles. The self-government of the women for morality, argued by Leshkowich (2012, p. 98), is the process of "rendering moral", in which moral has been signalled as the main problem of, and also as the solution for, the matter of wealth status. In other words, when immoral wealth is considered malign, moral wealth is encouraged in the vision of the collective well-being in the socialist tradition. In addition, as Jellema's research (2005) suggests, the socialist state by means of the public media has guided the middle-class to continue to demonstrate the morality of wealth within the state's provision of means and forms of expressions to be considered moral and correct. Considering the political and social uneasiness with wealth, the middle-class in the post-socialist economy often seek measures provided by the state to "re-moralise their wealth" (Jellema, 2005, p. 233). According to Jellema, to cope with the anxieties associated with wealth, the Vietnamese middle-class often demonstrated the morality of wealth as the merit of their paid duties for the society and the country.

Similarly, the data reveal that the female NGO professionals in Hanoi seemed to demonstrate the gains from their paid duties to the family and society. Rather than money, the informants often expressed their educational and professional success as the rewards of their moral contributions to society rather from greed. For example, Ngoc said:

> *Honestly, it is not true that I do not want to be rich, but I know how much is enough. Also, when I go to poor areas, I see poorer people. More importantly, I never think about money. I only think that I am privileged to go to many places and meet people. I do not have money, but there are people around to help me when I am in difficulty (Ngoc, interview, 26/2/2017).*

Ngoc, who is also a Buddhist, told me that she had acquired successes in her life for knowing when to stop, when it is enough. She said: "*Tri tuc* means that you know how much is enough and how much is adequate to stop at the right time" (Ngoc, interview, 26/2/2017). Ngoc told me the story of her life in which she had

learned of the benefits of having enough, which is contradictory to greed and selfishness. For Ngoc, her practice of "having enough" accounts for the happiness of her family and her success in education. Ngoc told me how she had maintained the happiness of her family from the sacrifice of materialistic wealth as follows:

> *I think that although I am not rich, I have other things that richer people don't have. For example, because I did not compete for the assets in the husband's family, our family is still surviving. Because I don't compete for the assets of my husband's family, we are still proletariat. We can prove to each other that we live with each other for being proletariat (smiled) (Ngoc, interview, 26/2/2017).*

In the interviews, the informants often talked about happiness in terms of the happy family or healthy children as the rewards from the disinterested contributions to society. In this analogy, morality from the sacrifices of wealth contributes to women's happiness and success. As earlier mentioned, Ngoc's optimisation for "having enough" seemed to account for the happiness of her family and a decent position in society. Instead of wealth, sacrifices also accounted for her prestige in society. She told me: "I have a position in society from my contribution. I am happy with it" (Ngoc, interview, 26/2/2017).

Similarly, Truc, who was doing a PhD degree in Australia, considered that ethics accounted for her success in education. According to Truc, her success in education demonstrated that she had continued the tradition of the family for an ethical life. For her, ethics were the selfless contributions to society rather than individualistic and materialistic maximisation. As earlier mentioned, Truc, who preferred to study and work as a "Bolshevik" for more contributions to society rather than individual wealth, also demonstrated her success through an ethical lifestyle. Additionally, the ethical lifestyle also accounted for the well-being of her children. She said:

> *How can I say about ethics (duc)? Until now, we are all well-educated. That was the ethics that our ancestors have passed to us. My uncle taught me one thing that when you go out, you have to live ethically. That's it. We have to be ethical so that our descendants can benefit from it. Do not only grapple the short-term benefits (Truc, interview, 30/11/2016).*

The account of the woman's success for the ethical lifestyles seems to reveal the beliefs and aspirations of the NGO middle-class women in Vietnam for contributions to collective well-being rather than individualistic wealth. It is also

noticeable that the notion of the "Bolshevik" which highlights the value of collectivism, seems to be renewed for the incompatibility with individualism. In other words, when individualism is often associated with greed and corruption, their contributions to the collective well-being often account for the prestige of people who sacrifice individualistic wealth. In this respect, the women's economic performance for the vision of collective well-being seems to account for the merit of their success in the market, which is moral.

In my interviews with the informants, they expressed the prestige of their professional status in NGOs which is reputed for non-corruption. For example, Hop, though was unhappy with the lower level of the salaried status, was proud of her NGO status which indicated that she was not corrupt. She said:

> *I have my own value. I am not corrupt. I am not working for the state where people have to flatter someone. I cannot do that. I am very straightforward (right?) Compared to people who worked in the state and the business, I am "dull" (ngo)… I am "dull" because I don't know how to cheat or trick (Hop, interview, 3/11/2016).*

Hop's account of "dull" (*ngo*) seems to demonstrate the privilege of working in a corrupt-free environment. Similarly, Ngan said that she was satisfied with her work in the transparent working environment in the NGO sector. She said:

> *I mean, I am working for the general benefits of society. Secondly, when working in NGOs, there is no corruption. Everything is transparent. I do not have to think a lot about that (Ngan, interview, 28/12/2018).*

The way the women showed the prestige of non-corruption for working in NGOs has illustrated how the salaried NGO middle-class women borrowed the reputation of transparency and humanitarianism in the NGO sector, which is intolerant of corruption. Several studies suggest that NGO professionalisation in humanitarianism specifically addresses women's aspiration to be a part of cosmopolitanism and of the greater cause (Malkki 2015; Bornstein 2012). Furthermore, I also found that humanitarianism in Vietnam's socialism also accounts for the prestige of the women for sacrifices for something bigger, like the country. Bayly (2007, 2009) proposes the notion of "socialist ecumene" when writing about the humanitarian work of Vietnamese socialist intellectuals in African countries during the economic hardship period, which was often accounted for as in the interests of the country rather than individualistic economic benefits. According to Bayly (2007), the notion of the "socialist

ecumene" especially justifies humanitarian activities in the broader discursive context of exchange and friendship in the global socialist world. The deliveries of humanitarian work of Vietnamese intellectuals in "poorer" Africa is often considered as individual sacrifices to gain the prestige of Vietnam in the world of global socialist ecumene despite its economic hardship. In the same analogy of the socialist ecumene, I also found that the Vietnamese professional women in the system of NGO humanitarianism often demonstrated the sacrifice of the "Bolshevik" who worked selflessly for the poor masses rather than their self-interested benefits.

The performance of the Vietnamese female NGO professionals of the morality of the "Bolshevik", in terms of contributing more and desiring less, illustrates how the women have continually been reliant on the socialist ideals to demonstrate the contribution to the society. It is noticeable that when the NGO middle-class continued to defy the prestige from wealth, the socialist ideology of women's production in the collective economy seemed to endorse the women's production in the market economy for wealth generation. Also, the salaried middle-class women who have the lower material status and wealth have deployed the ideological and symbolic appeal of women's reproductive role in the socialist tradition to demonstrate their prestige in public life.

Rather than wealth maximisation, the performance of the NGO middle-class women for the moral contribution to the collective well-being has illustrated the prestige of the middle-class with the "right" conduct. The "right" conduct also helped the women to cope with the anxieties of the middle-class in relation to the uncertainty of their wealth status in Vietnam's post-socialist society. It is clear that when wealth is often stigmatised as a moral problem, economic maximisation for the vision of collective well-being has been signalled as the "moral" conduct of the middle-class. The performance of the NGO middle-class women with the vision of collective-being illustrates a middle-class which is constrained by the socialist ideology of femininity and a mode of governmentality through which the state continues to control forms of economic maximisation in the free market.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented an account of the middle-class which associates with the economic performance of Vietnamese NGO professional women in the context of market liberalisation in Vietnam's *doi moi* context. Resembling Mills' (1951) notion of the prestige of the white-collar middle-class, I have shown how the women working in the NGO sector in Hanoi maximised material and symbolic resources from the NGO professional and transnational network to develop the professional prestige of the white-collar middle-class. The findings of the research also confirm Weber's notion about a status-driven society in which the white-collar middle-class are increasingly dependent on the acquisition of material assets symbolic to the middle-class strata in society. The women's voluntary decisions to work in the NGO sector to accumulate privileged commodities in the economy, i.e. the high education, transnational or international mobility, high salary or consumption of high-value assets, illustrate Weber's notion of the status competition in society for the representation of the middle-class culture which has become highly commodified. It is also noticeable that the performance of the NGO middle-class in Hanoi is not only aimed at accumulating material assets but also closely associated with the vision of the happy family conducted by the state, which highlights women's productive labour for the harmony and happy family. In this vision, women's distinctive position in society is often accounted for their reproductive rather than productive role.

Furthermore, women's voluntary participation in NGOs, to accumulate the moral and symbolic resources of the NGOs to demonstrate the prestige of carers, illustrates the state's vision of the new Vietnamese socialist people with *dan tri* (intellectual level). This vision which associates individual economic performance with caring responsibilities, has signalled the "correct" conduct of economic maximisation for collective well-being (Nguyen, 2018, 2019). It is clear that through this notion of *dan tri*, the state has operated a mode of governmentality which mobilises the voluntary will to improve with the conduct of rational and calculated means rather than with coercion (Li, 2007; Leshkowich, 2012; Bui, 2015). This mode of governmentality also conducts individual conduct with the means of the stigmatisation of wealth (Jellema, 2005; Leshkowich, 2012). The findings on corruption reveal women's fear of being associated with greed, selfishness and corruption, which are often associated with wealth status. This

fear characterises the uncertainty and anxieties of the middle-class with the wealth status which is often stigmatised for individualism and material fetishism, which is not tolerated by the socialist and collectivist traditions in Vietnam (Leshkowich, 2012; Zhang, 2010). The findings on the middle-class anxieties characterise the contradictions in the socialist ideology of economic maximisation in the configuration of market-oriented socialism. This type of anxiety is also associated with the mode of governmentality to ensure the state's control of economic maximisation within the state's guidance of correct conduct (Bui, 2015; Leshkowich, 2012; Jellema, 2005).

Leshkowich (2012) has argued that the Vietnamese government has conducted individuals with moral conduct which associates economic maximisation behaviour with morality. I also found the Vietnamese NGO middle-class women often differentiated from the other wealthier middle-classes for the morality of their sacrifice for the well-being of the family and society. Instead of wealth, the women often demonstrated the prestige of carers for the well-being of the family and community. The proliferation of professional positions in NGOs, which specialise in caring functions, has created a channel for Vietnamese women to regain the prestige inherent to women's traditional reproductive role in Vietnam's Confucian tradition, which is repeated and renewed by the socialist policy of femininity, as the prestige of the middle-class women. The women's performance in the role of carers rather than for the self-interested materialistic satisfactions illustrates how Vietnamese women continue to depend on the state's guidance of moral conduct of economic maximisation to demonstrate the prestige of the superior in society. In the following chapter, I will present the performance of the Vietnamese female NGO professionals in the role of carers. I will show how the Vietnamese female NGO professionals have demonstrated the subject of ethical citizenship in the economy with the acquisition of the caring functions in NGOs in the context of the state reduction of subsidised social services. I will demonstrate that NGOs have become a platform for Vietnamese women to demonstrate ethical citizenship in line with the moral system of the Confucian and socialist tradition, which continues to highlight the morality of women's economic production for reproductive responsibilities.

Chapter 6 - Self-optimisation for "care": the moral subject of collectivism

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will present the performance of the Vietnamese female NGO professionals in the role of carers. The examination of the women's self-government and self-optimisation for the care work is aimed at answering the sub-research question 2: *How does the self-government of these women in the NGO sector and specifically their role as carers demonstrate the morality of the post-socialist market economy in Vietnam?* To answer to the question, I will look at how women's voluntary participation in the role of care in the NGO sector in Vietnam demonstrates the moral appeal of care work in the context of self-interested economic maximisation. Muehlebach (2012), who writes about the voluntary sector in Italy, suggests the moral appeal of care work in the context of economic austerity and the state's substantial reduction in the provision of care has incentivised the participation of the dependent population to participate in unwaged caregiving positions in the voluntary sector. According to Muehlebach (2012), the performance of the unwaged labour in the voluntary sector in the context of the economic restructuration with the reduction of the welfare state has become the symbol of ethical citizenship for rebuilding social solidarity in the process of neoliberalisation. The symbol of unpaid voluntary caregivers is considered morally appealing in the context of the economic austerity of neoliberal economic restructuration (Muehlebach, 2012).

Doi moi economic renovation also involved a substantial reduction of the state's role in the provision of public services (Fforde and De Vylder, 1996; Luong, 2003; Gainsborough, 2002; Kim, 2008). The self-government of the women in the NGO sector seems to illustrate the moral appeal of the caregiving position in the context of the state's withdrawal from the subsidy mechanism (*co che bao cap*). In this chapter, I will present the performance of the women for the maximisation of care in the NGO sector in Vietnam in the context of marketisation and privatisation of *doi moi* economic renovation. I will demonstrate that women's

production of care continues to represent the relational labour of the socialist women caring for the family and the community, which is evoked by the collectivist tradition of the socialisation policy. I argue that the socialisation policy is particularly appealing to women, who bear reproductive responsibilities. Women's performance in the NGO sector, therefore, illustrates the morality of the socialist women whose individualisation and professionalisation of caring responsibilities in the context of the state welfare reduction represent a type of ethical citizenship in the configuration of Vietnam's market-oriented socialism.

This chapter is organised into three main parts. After the introduction, I will present the performance of Vietnamese female NGO professionals through the figure of the intellectual who cares for the collective well-being of society. Secondly, I will present the women's performance in the domestic role, which illustrates the morality of women's sacrifices for the well-being of the family. I will demonstrate how the sacrifice of materialistic wealth has illustrated the moral obligations of women in the Confucian tradition which was reproduced by the state through the vision of heroism. In the last section, I will present how the entrepreneurship of Vietnamese female NGO professionals has been mobilised by the moral obligations of the socialist person in the socialisation policy. I will show how women's care in the private and non-profit NGO sector has illustrated the labour of the socialist women in relation to the appeal of collectivisation of the ownership of care in the socialisation policy. In this respect, NGOs seem to resemble a welfare regime with the vested interests of women in the role of carers in the context of the reduction of public services in the process of marketisation and privatisation.

6.2 The intellectuals who know how to care

During my fieldwork in Hanoi, I talked to young women in their 20s up to women in their 60s about their choice to work in NGOs. They often expressed their aspirations to work for the benefits for the community rather than for individualistic material maximum. Especially when marketisation has opened the opportunities for women to maximise individualistic interests, these women seemed to continue their traditional responsibility to care for the well-being of the family and society. The stories of their accomplishments in the role of carers in NGOs often echo the

proud tradition of the Vietnamese mothers and wives who make sacrifices to protect the well-being of the family, the community and the nation throughout various difficult periods. The continuity of the Vietnamese female NGO professionals in the tradition of caring for the well-being of the society has vividly illustrated the moral of the selfless love and care for the nation. Especially, the production of disinterested care demonstrates the value of the labour of the NGO professional women in the context of reduction of public services in the process of marketisation and privatisation.

The value of the women's labour in the role of carers seems to illustrate Muehlebach's (2012) proposition of the relational value through acts of care. According to Muehlebach (2012), the relational value is highlighted for social compassion with the moral of the immaterial labour of unpaid social workers in the voluntary sector. Muehlebach (2012) argues that the compassion in society for the immaterial labour in the context of the heightened exploitation of the neoliberal economic restructuration has incentivised the participation of the dependent population in unpaid voluntary positions to demonstrate a role in public life and a sense of social belonging. When comparing with the *homo oeconomicus* who is talented for the maximisation of economic profits, she highlighted the expertise of the *homo relationalis* in producing and accumulating relational value through "acts of intense moral communion and care" (Muehlebach, 2012, pp. 6-8).

The professional performance of the Vietnamese women in NGOs also seems to demonstrate the morality of the women who care disinterestedly for the well-being of the poor and vulnerable who were left out from the coverage of the state's social policies in the process of marketisation and privatisation. However, the performance of the caregivers in the NGO sector in Vietnam does not simply illustrate the relational value of their exploitative status, but rather the prestige of intellectuals with the material conditions of the middle-class. In other words, rather than representing the dependent or passive population, the Vietnamese women in the role of carers often demonstrated the superior population who have accomplished the caring responsibilities for the collective well-being. Nguyen (2019) has written about the performance of women in waste businesses, whose work is often associated with the low class in society, striving for the public virtues (*cong duc*) to claim a position of prestige in society for their contribution to society.

Her description of the charity movement among the middle-class urbanites in Vietnam suggests aspirations of the newly rich to acquire a position in public life through various alternative forms of public contribution. Moreover, women's contribution to public life is still highlighted for the reproductive role. In the interviews, the informants often expressed their aspirations to work in professional positions in NGOs among other profitable professional opportunities to care for the vulnerable in society. Women's voluntary choice to work in caregiving positions in NGOs also illustrates women's traditional reproductive role which is often recognised as women's virtues in Vietnam's Confucian tradition (Marr, 1984; Luong, 1989; Werner, 1981, 2002). The following life story of one of the informants illustrates how the woman has navigated the value of "care" produced in the NGO sector to demonstrate a sense of self-worth in the market economy.

I met Cuc, my informant, in the office of a foreign NGO where she has been working for 15 years. Cuc, who is in her late 50s, told me her story of how she was capable of maximising care for the family and society when working in the NGO sector. Before *doi moi*, Cuc used to work as a researcher in a research institute under a state-run umbrella organisation for social research. Cuc had been arranged by the central planner for a job in the research institute when she was a final year student at the university. Her employment in the institute brought her the opportunities to study abroad and to conduct research in one of the leading research institutes of social sciences in Vietnam. She said: "I was dreaming when working in the research institute[5]. At that time, I was a young graduate student like you. I dreamed of inventing something for this world" (Cuc, interview, 16/11/2016).

Cuc had to interrupt her research career in order to find a better earning job outside the state after the sudden death of her husband. Cuc recalled of her life incident as the marking of the transition to the market just when *doi moi* economic reforms started to have effects on individual life. Despite dreaming to succeed in the research career, she was obliged to find a better-salaried job to raise her child, which became her foremost priority. She recalled: "At that time, I needed to work in order to raise my kid on my own. I could not survive with my salary in the

[5] The name of the institute was omitted to protect the identity of the informant.

institute, which was not enough to pay for our expenses in a few weeks" (Cuc, interview, 16/11/2016). Recalling her decision to leave the state, Cuc said: "I quit the state just because of the economic reason" (Cuc, interview, 16/11/2016).

After leaving her work with the state, she worked in the NGO sector to continue her contribution to society. Cuc told me that she wanted to maximise her academic knowledge for the work of community development. Though her choice to work in foreign organisations was to make a higher income, the care for the vulnerable people in society seems to account for the value of her work in NGOs. Cuc said:

> *Honestly, this job contributed to economic stability. Nevertheless, I think that I have worked in the area that I could contribute the best. I truly wanted to contribute my small part to help vulnerable people so that they can raise their voice so that they are more capable and confident and can make their own decisions" (Cuc, interview, 16/11/2016).*

When talking about the value of her knowledge, Cuc expressed that her intellectual labour has the value for the contribution to society. Moreover, she also demonstrated the capacity for maximisation of care in society with free optimisation in the market. Not only making a higher income in foreign NGOs, but the value of her labour also accounts for her capacity to care for the well-being of the vulnerable masses in society. Cuc said that her job in the present NGO was desirable because she could maximise her knowledge for "practical" values. Compared to her past job in the research institute which was associated with the isolated "ivory tower", she expressed the satisfaction for the "practical" contributions to society. She said:

> *When moving to this development sector, I found that "ah, there are so many different things in the real-life". I felt that I was able to use my knowledge I gained from the university, from the research institute and my graduate course abroad for the development area. I enjoyed this more because I was able to contribute to practical areas. It was my feeling when I moved to work in this sector (Cuc, interview, 16/11/2016).*

Working in NGOs, Cuc expressed that she could use academic knowledge for the work of community development. Though working in several organisations, she said that she preferred to work for organisations where she could realise her contributions to community development. With the proliferation of NGOs in the context of marketisation, NGOs have presented to women professional positions to perform the role of carers, which accounts for their value in society. Cuc shared

with me how she could realise the vision of the well-being of the community from her organisation as below:

> *When you worked for an organisation, you need to share the values and the vision of the organisation. You find from your organisation the true desire to empower the local people or the vulnerable. You share with the organisation('s vision) of the true respect of people and their ownership. There were true values you could realise from working for the organisation because of the practical methods (Cuc, interview, 16/11/2016).*

Cuc's story of her NGO professional career has demonstrated how she has maximised the value of her intellectual labour in the "practical" areas. Cuc specifically highlighted the opportunities to care for the vulnerable in NGOs, in which she could demonstrate the value of her intellectual resources with the efficiency of the market. It seems clear that she has found the professional opportunities in NGOs to maximise the value of her labour, not only in terms of the financial resources to care for the well-being of her family but also the means to care for the vulnerable in society.

Like Cuc, several highly-educated young NGO professionals also expressed their aspirations to work in NGOs to contribute their labour to improve the well-being of the poor and vulnerable community rather than individualistic wealth. In the interviews, they often highlighted the preferences to work in NGOs to contribute to society. Some informants said that they have refused better earning jobs in other sectors, including the state, to work for NGOs to maximise the capacity to care for the well-being of the poor and the vulnerable in society. As presented in Chapter 5, many women started to work in NGOs as unpaid interns or volunteers to help disadvantaged people in the community. For example, Hue volunteered to work without a salary for a local NGO for almost two years in order to satisfy her aspiration to assist poor people with legal aid since she was a law student. She said: "I started to know projects like these when I came to work in the NGO[6]. (At that time) I only thought that I could help someone but did not know how to run or manage a project" (Hue, interview, 9/12/2016).

Several studies have suggested that women particularly have found the voluntary and humanitarian professional opportunities in NGOs appealing to demonstrate the value of their knowledge or labour for the well-being of the vulnerable (Malkki,

[6] The name of NGO was omitted to protect the identity of the informant.

2015; Bornstein, 2012; Hemment, 2004, 2007). NGOs present a distinctive realm for a privileged group of women to forge power in society for the cosmopolitanism and professionalism in social service delivery (Schnable, 2015; Narayanaswamy, 2016; Mercer and Green, 2013). Malkki (2015) proposes that women are particularly encouraged by the cosmopolitanism of the transnational humanitarian system for the need to show their presence with domestic products. I also found that the informants usually expressed their aspiration to become useful through professional role of carers in NGOs despite the lower or unpaid salary. In Chapter 5, I have demonstrated that wealth does not account for the prestige of the middle-class women who often demonstrated the morality of sacrifice rather than showing their wealth stock. In addition, they often showed the prestige of the middle-class in forms of helping or giving care to members in the family or the community. The informants often expressed their aspiration to demonstrate the value of their knowledge and labour for the well-being of the community instead of individualistic wealth maximisation. It is noticeable that caring for the well-being of the community also accounts for the prestige of intellectuals in Vietnam's Confucian tradition (Nguyen-Marshall, 2008; Nguyen, 1974).

According to Nguyen Khac Vien's (1974) study, Confucian intellectuals during a pre-colonial period often performed the role of the intellectuals in society through forms of caregiving, by providing free education and literacy services, for the poor community. Rather than wealth, caring for the poor used to account for the moral obligation hence prestige of the Confucian intellectuals in society. Also, Nguyen-Marshall (2008) when writing about Confucian humanism in the feudal period, suggests that the ruler and intellectuals have the moral obligations for the care of the moral and physical well-being of the mass poor (Nguyen-Marshall, 2008). Both studies suggest that the socialist government has continued the Confucian tradition of "care" to reinforce the legitimacy of the communist rule in society. For example, Nguyen (1974) writes about how the Communist intellectuals have demonstrated the morality of attentive care for the well-being of the poor to have the power to mobilise the illiterate and poor masses into the large-scaled collectivisation projects. Nguyen-Marshall (2008) also proposes that the socialist state in Vietnam has demonstrated morality of Confucian humanitarianism for taking care of the well-being of the masses (Nguyen, 1974; Nguyen-Marshall,

2008). She stated: “Confucian humanism played a dominant role in shaping government policies and people’s expectations” (Nguyen-Marshall, 2008, p. 13).

The association of care with the ruling power in Vietnam’s traditional society suggests that the capacity for the provision of collective welfare has accounted for both the power and obligations of the ruler in Vietnamese Confucian and socialist societies (Nguyen-Marshall, 2008; Nguyen, 1974). In the Confucian system, care is also traditionally associated with the moral obligations of intellectuals who demonstrate their loyal service to the king by taking care of the collective well-being of the people in their community (Nguyen, 1974; Nguyen-Marshall, 2008). For example, Nguyen’s (1974) study has suggested that the Vietnamese Confucian intellectuals used to demonstrate the moral obligations of loyalty to the king by caring for the well-being of the masses in their local communities and defending the masses’ interests against brutal rulers. It seems clear that care, which is embedded in the moral economy of Vietnam’s Confucian and socialist tradition, accounts for the distinctive prestige of the ruler.

The socialisation policy of the state also highlights care as the capacity of the intellectual. Noticeably, the state uses the symbol of *dan tri* (intellectual level) as the indicator of individuals who demonstrate the capacity of self-reliance and individualisation of care (Nguyen, 2018). It is also noticeable that the care of others is inseparable from the vision of collective well-being. As Nguyen (2018) points out, the state’s socialisation policy has highlighted individual and private responsibilities to maximise entrepreneurial and market resources for the care of the collective well-being (Nguyen, 2018). Recalling the virtues of the socialist person, the notion of *dan tri* highlights the morality of economic performance of individuals in the market to contribute to the collective well-being (Nguyen, 2018). Similarly, the performance of the Vietnamese female NGO professionals in terms of the entrepreneurship and intellectual capacity for caring responsibilities seems to illustrate the moral appeal of the vision of collective well-being in the socialisation policy.

In the NGO sector, it is a common practice for professionals to come to work in NGOs after having worked in the state or profitable business sector. In the interviews, the informants said that they chose to work in the NGO sector where they could maximise their knowledge for the benefits of the vulnerable community. According to the informants, the contribution to the well-being of the

masses in society is more desirable than the income which only benefits individually. For example, Nhai has worked both for the state and the business sectors before working in a local NGO. After completing her Master's degree in Australia, she quit her job in the state and worked in a state-owned enterprise for one year to gain work experience in the business sector. Nevertheless, Nhai said that she did not want to work in the business sector. According to Nhai, business owners only concentrate on individualistic profits but ignore the collective benefits to the community for their own interests. She quit the job in business to apply for a post in the NGO. Nhai expressed her keen interest to work in the non-profit sector to maximise the benefits of the community rather than individualistic wealth. Especially, she had failed three times at the interview stage to get her current job in the present local NGO. When waiting for a job in the NGO, she volunteered to work in an English centre to wait for the new positions until she got hired by the organisation. She said that she was satisfied with her career choice in the NGO for the opportunity to contribute to the well-being of society. She said:

> *I am not suitable for businesses. Because our Vietnam businesses only concentrate on short-term benefits. In my view, there are other factors more important. People often think that this is exaggerated so they did not care about the ethics in doing business, the life quality of workers, or producing too much that caused pressures on the environment or too much competition in the business. That (job) was neither suitable for me nor relevant to what I learned from the university. When I found that I had gained enough work experience after one year, I return to the non-profit [sector]. (Nhai, interview, 15/2/2017).*

In another interview, Phuong said that her work in NGOs was not different from running a business; but instead of selling her “brain” for individualistic profits, she has optimised it for the benefits of the community. According to Phuong, it was more enjoyable and desirable to work in NGOs because she could sell her “brains” for the benefits of the community. She said:

> *Doing business is fun, but I do not like the business environment. In this area, I can challenge my ability because there was also so much competition that required me to come up with new ideas. (Is it) Selling our “brain” also a kind of doing business? Why do we need to change to work in another area when we could do better in our area? We are working like a business which instead of producing individualistic benefits, we generate benefits for other people in the community (Phuong, interview, 11/3/2017).*

The woman's account of her entrepreneurship in NGOs illustrates not only her capacity to generate wealth but more importantly the wealth created for the benefits of the community. Moreover, the entrepreneurial capacity accounts for professional satisfaction for the contribution to the society. In my conversation with the NGO professional women in Hanoi, they expressed pride for their contribution of labour and knowledge for the benefits of the community.

For example, Ngan expressed that she was more satisfied with the contribution to the community than other people in higher salaried jobs. Compared with the higher salaried positions in the business, she especially highlighted the value of her labour for the contribution to the social good rather than individualistic wealth. She said:

> *Spiritually, I am more satisfied than people working in other occupations. I have higher occupational satisfaction. Because people who are working for businesses, many of them are thinking that they are making wealth for the bosses. By the end of the day, they do not know if the salary is enough for their labour. However, we do not care about the higher or lower salary because we are working for the social good. I don't have to compare and think about that (Ngan, interview, 28/12/2018).*

In another interview, Duong, who had a PhD degree abroad and used to work in a foreign-funded project in a government agency, told me that she wanted to contribute to society rather than working only to make money. She decided to quit her job in the foreign-funded project to work in a local NGO to help the vulnerable in society. Duong said that she wanted to see the value of her contribution to society rather than working without any visible impact. She said:

> *I did not see my [previous] work could help anyone or what the uses of the researches were. I only see the income that I generated rather than the values or impacts of my work. Here [in the NGO], I can see immediately that "Okay, I am still working to live and also to help someone or to contribute to something". I can see it right away. Because I am working for the organisation whose vision is to enhance the quality of life for the vulnerable people. Therefore, I am happy if there is a small change in their lives. I can see it right away (Duong, interview, 27/3/2017).*

Hoang, a retired professor, has been running her own NGO to continue her research for the benefits of the community. She was once nominated for an honorary international award for her research in gender in Vietnam. Rather than highlighting the contribution to academic knowledge, Hoang said that her

research for women is valuable for its contributions to improve the life of people in the community. She said:

> *What are the values of my life? I think that I have helped other people in the community. It is my vision throughout my life. Scientific researches were not implemented to keep in a drawer or to be recognised as the top of the academic accreditation, but they are supposed to help the community in real life. Therefore, all my researches have values in both action and theoretical implications (Hoang, interview, 5/12/2016).*

The moral appeal of the contribution to the community suggests the will to improve of the Vietnamese NGO professional women in caring responsibilities. In the interviews, the informants expressed their self-worth for the usefulness to the community. As carers, they often demonstrated their entrepreneurial and intellectual capacity to generate wealth to contribute to the well-being of the community and their family. The account of social contribution through the production of care seems to illustrate the notion of public virtues (*cong duc*), which is appealing for the contribution to the society (Nguyen, 2019). The women's aspirations to contribute to the well-being of the poor and the marginalised also illustrate the recent movements of Vietnamese urbanites in charity to render acts of giving to gain a role in the community (Harms, 2018; Jellema, 2005; Leshkowich, 2012; Nguyen, 2018, 2019). Rather than wealth, public virtues account for the prestige of the newly rich urbanites in Vietnam, whose economic maximisation is still conducted by the state with the vision of collective well-being. The state has highlighted the quality of Vietnamese people with the notion of *dan tri* to mobilise the masses in economic maximisation to realise the vision of collective well-being. As Nguyen (2018) proposes, Vietnamese people have actively engaged with the notion of *dan tri* to possess a role in public life with the ability to contribute to the collective well-being of the local community and the country. Rather than a means of coercion, the notion of *dan tri* has become a means for the state to conduct individuals to optimise morally with the vision of collective well-being (Nguyen, 2018; Gammeltoft, 2014). According to Nguyen (2018), *dan tri* specifically evokes individual responsibility for economic success with the moral appeal of the socialist person for the collectivisation of care. In addition, I found that this notion delegates Vietnamese women with specific expectations and obligations of women's reproduction and care which are embedded in Vietnam's Confucian and socialist tradition.

As the data reveals, women aspire to work in professional positions in NGOs to care for the well-being of the poor and the vulnerable in the community. Rather than wealth, care seems to account for the "practical" and "visible" areas for women's knowledge and labour. The voluntary participation of the highly educated women in NGOs to care for the vulnerable and the poor has demonstrated how the vision of collectivisation is appealing to women particularly for their reproductive labour. Despite the market liberalisation for economic maximisation, women's participation in the lower-waged professional positions to realise the role of care in NGOs has demonstrated how care has become morally attractive to Vietnamese women. As carers, Vietnamese women continued to demonstrate their self-worth and a role in public life in line with the state vision of socialist women.

The Vietnamese women's voluntary participation for the provision of care in the NGO sector in the context of marketisation and privatisation, seems to reflect Muehlebach's notion of the "Lombardian model of welfare" which is the voluntary formation of the welfare regime formed in Italy for the interests of a particular population for the relational values through the acts of care (Muehlebach, 2012, p. 14). According to Muehlebach (2012), the moral appeal of care in the context of economic austerity and market reforms has incentivised the participation of unwaged voluntary workers in the caregiving positions in the voluntary sector to accumulate the relational values. The relational values were highlighted for the social compassion with the immaterial labour of the unwaged voluntary social workers who, through acts of care, demonstrate a role in building social relations and galvanising solidarity in the context of declining social sentiment resulting from the economic restructuration.

I also found that the performance of NGOs for the care work illustrates the interests of women in the value of care in the context of state reduction of subsidised social services. However, as I have presented earlier, the voluntary participation of the women in NGOs has illustrated the moral appeal of care work, which is relational to women's position in Vietnam's Confucian and socialist tradition. In this tradition, Vietnamese women's role in public life is mainly highlighted for their reproductive labour to the well-being of the family and the community (Pettus, 2003; Werner, 1981, 2009; Marr, 1984). This vision of the socialist woman has characterised the relational labour of Vietnamese women in

NGOs. In the context of the state welfare reduction, an NGO welfare regime is shaped by the legal and discursive framework of the socialisation policy, in which women's production of care continue to perform the role of socialist women who care for collective well-being.

The emergence of the NGO welfare regime in Vietnam after *doi moi* bears a resemblance to Muehlebach's (2012) notion of the "Lombardian welfare regime" for the vested interests of women in the role of care. Far from being independent of the state, the individualisation of care performed by female professionals in the NGO sector in Vietnam demonstrates the moral and ideological appeals of women's care in the socialist tradition. Specifically, the *NGO welfare regime* illustrates a distinctive realm of the Vietnamese socialist women to demonstrate a role in public life through the production of care. Women's voluntary participation in NGOs also illustrates the ideological and moral appeal of a socialisation policy which continues to evoke the responsibility of the Vietnamese women to care for the collective well-being.

In the following, I will present the performance of the Vietnamese female NGO professionals in the self-sacrificing labour for the care of the family. I will demonstrate that women's sacrifices continually reminisce the morality of the women's immaterial labour for the love of children and the care of the nation. I will show how the domestic realm has accounted for women's position in public life in Vietnam. I argue that the socialist ideology of women's emancipation continues to complicate the notion of women's liberation in public life in which women's economic performance is rather to support their predominance in the domestic realm.

6.3 The heroic mothers who sacrifice for the care of the family

Despite engaging more in income-generating activity, caring for the family remains the major responsibility of the Vietnamese women (Pettus, 2003). There seems to be no exception among the professional women working in NGOs who are considered experts in care work. In my discussions with the mothers, they usually said that one of the priorities of their lives was to ensure the happiness and well-being of their families. In my conversations with the informants, I often heard the stories from the women about their aspirations to work harder to ensure

the welfare of the family. Noticeably, their participation in the income-generating activities seems to illustrate their responsibilities to take care of their children or parents rather than to maximise their own materialistic consumption. Gal and Kligman's compiled studies (2000a, 2000b) of women in post-socialism suggest that the socialist ideology of women's participation in the labour force does not liberate women from reproductive responsibility. In the socialist vision of femininity, women are assumed capable in any productive areas, including the production and reproduction for their families (Nguyen, 2018; Gal and Kligman, 2000a, 2000b; Pettus, 2003). This notion seems to illustrate the performance of the Vietnamese female NGO professionals in the market economy whose production of care also illustrates the responsibilities to care for the family. In my discussions with the women working in NGOs in Hanoi, I found that the women were proud of their performance in the economy for the contributions to the well-being of their families.

One of my informants, Yen, was considered a successful entrepreneur. She was the founder of a local NGO and the owner of several other commercial businesses. Her NGO's office is located in a multi-storey building where she also opens a coffee shop on the ground floor. Her organisation specialises in supporting women and adolescents who are victims of gender-based and domestic violence. Formerly, the organisation was a hotline centre providing advice for victims of domestic violence. Later, Yen has registered the centre as a science and technology organisation in order to receive funding from foreign donors to implement projects for community development. Yen, in her early 50s, proudly told me the story of how she had won success in the market. She recalled how she had worked hard in both the formal and informal economy to earn more money to buy her children's food as follows:

> *In the evening, I sold papers to other organisations to make money to buy food for my children. If I stopped working one day, my children would not have rice to eat on that day. Can you imagine? Boys eat a lot of rice. What I earned from my hard work was just enough to buy them rice to eat. At that time, I was extremely skinny. I weighed only about 39 to 40 kg. I was so skinny but still cycling every day 12 km to go to work. There were days I cycled 100 km because I had to deliver papers to different places. I sold papers to the police agencies. I sold all kinds of paper like white papers, printing papers, notebooks and calendars (Yen, interview, 17/11/2016).*

Though Yen's early participation in the informal economy was to generate an income, she emphasised the mother's responsibility to care for her children's needs for whom she had determined to win success in the market. To earn more money, she had to take many extra jobs in the informal sector in addition to her official job in the state. Despite the exhausting labour, she expressed happiness for the capacity to feed and meet the other needs of her children. She said:

> *(However) I did not feel any hardship. I was happy because I was able to make money to raise my kids. It (the economy) was so difficult at that time. I had to make money to buy food for everyday meals (Yen, interview, 17/11/2016).*

It seems clear that whilst profit maximisation accounts for the informant's entrepreneurial capacity in the market, it does not account for her self-esteem for the success in the market. Rather, her labour is valued for the fulfilled responsibility to care for her children. The account of this "happiness" has clearly illustrated the vision of motherhood for the hard work, demonstrating her fulfilled duty for the well-being of the children. In other words, the woman's self-sacrificing labour seems to illustrate the morality of the woman's production in the market to fulfil domestic responsibility rather than her materialistic wealth. The performance of the woman for the moral wealth seems to illustrate Jellema's (2005) notion about the "re-moralisation" of wealth. In this situation, the woman's acquisition of wealth seems to illustrate the merit acquired by the sacrifice of a mother who has yielded in the market in order to care for the well-being of her sons rather than for her self-interested wealth maximisation. However, when marketisation seems to promote entrepreneurship with opportunities to maximise wealth, it seems Vietnamese women were driven by domestic responsibilities rather than wealth maximisation. This kind of entrepreneurship reveals the moral appeal of women's reproductive role in Vietnam's socialist tradition.

In socialism, women are recognised by the state as socialist workers for the production and reproduction in the economy (Gal and Kligman, 2000a). The socialist state recognises the women's full participation in the economy but also stressed women's reproduction as an essential contribution in the socialist economy. As Gal and Kligman argue, the notion of public life in socialism seems to recognise women's full participation in the economy, but does not differentiate between the public and private sphere. When recognising women as labourers of the collective economy, the state has changed the ownership of women's

labour from the household to the state, but does not remove women from their domestic functions (Pettus, 2003; Drummond, 2000). Gal and Kligman (2000a) propose that socialist states, though seeing women as the social worker, have never been able to enforce the full employment of women in the economy. Rather, the states acknowledge women's labour in both public and domestic realms within the ideology of women's full participation in the labour force.

This socialist ideology of femininity was illustrated well in the socialist policies towards women in which Vietnamese women are often applauded in the state's emulation campaign for being successful both in the public and domestic work (Pettus, 2003; Drummond, 2004). The national campaign *gioi viec nuoc dam viec nha (good at both public work (for the country) and housework)* was initiated by the Vietnam Women's Union to mobilise women's productive and reproductive labour to care for the family's economy in the fragile socialist economy (Pettus, 2003; Eisen, 1984). Also, as several studies suggest, in the context of marketisation, the state highlights women's success in the economy to ensure the welfare of the family (Schuler et al., 2006; Pettus, 2003; Drummond, 2004; Rydstrøm and Drummond, 2004; Rydstrøm, 2010). In this respect, Leshkowich (2012), in her study of the Vietnamese entrepreneurial women, proposes that the market liberalisation in Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation has not liberated women from domestic responsibility. Rather, women's performance in the market was still restricted by their moral obligations to maintain the harmony and well-being of the family (Leshkowich, 2012; Drummond, 2004; Pettus, 2003).

It is also important to review Vietnamese women's position in society in relation to women's reproductive role in Vietnam's history. The study of Vietnamese women through history conducted by the renowned Vietnamese historian Le Thi Nham Tuyet recalled the origin of Vietnam's matrilineal society to suggest women's distinctive position in Vietnam's society (Le, 1973). Women's reproductive role, with the representation of feminine saints who care for the well-being of the whole nation, is still prominent in Vietnam's folk literature or tradition religions (Le, 1973; Marr, 1984). Vietnamese women's reproductive role does not account for women's private realm. Women, as the symbol of the nurture of nation and country also, present a role in the public space. Vietnamese women were often highlighted as heroes with the prominent figure of the Two Sisters (*Hai Ba Trung*) who rode elephants to crush their enemies to protect the national

sovereignty and to avenge the death of one sister's husband who was killed by Chinese invaders (Le, 1973; Marr, 1984). During the feudal period, the Confucian doctrine which was the main rule of Vietnam's feudalism, emphasised women's domestic responsibility with the Four Virtues and Three Submissions. According to David Marr's (1984) historical research, ideas of women's liberation from the pre-colonial to pre-socialist periods in Vietnam often illustrated the Confucian notion of women's virtues for fulfilled domestic responsibilities. Research by Ashley Pettus (2003) on women's policy in the socialist period in Vietnam suggests that the socialist state whilst it highlights women's role in production still emphasises women's domestic responsibility to maintain the harmony and well-being of the family (Pettus, 2003). As Pettus (2003) proposes, women's sacrifice was especially highlighted in the state's propaganda as heroines for the love of their children and care for their country. Women in socialism, despite being ensured full participation in the public life, are still highlighted for their main responsibility in the domestic realm (Gal and Kligman, 2000a; Luong, 1989; Werner, 1981; 2009).

It seems clear that women have had opportunities to participate more in the economy in the context of market liberalisation to maximise employment and income prospects. However, the informants often expressed their priority to care for the family, especially their children. The women I talked to often highlighted the responsibility of caring for the well-being of their children and/or the dependents in the family. Like Yen, many expressed that they worked hard in the economy to make money to buy their children enough food, clothes or good education. It seems clear to me that women's domestic responsibility often accounts for the distinctive morality of women's performance in the market. Though coming from different family's, economic or cultural conditions, the informants often repeated the tradition of Vietnamese heroic mothers for the hard work to show the love and care of their children.

For example, Tien, who has been working more than ten years in a local NGO, said she always tried harder at work to keep her position in the organisation. Especially in the period of low funding, Tien has actively learned more new skills in order to adapt quickly with the requirements of new projects after each project finished. Tien's account of her continual improvement at work illustrates her

responsibility to ensure her family's economic stability for the well-being of her children. She said:

> *I have to think about what is the motivation for my work. I will see that: I still need this job because it provides me with an amount of money to maintain my life. Without my salary, my family will suffer, and my children still need to go to school. Therefore, I need to try. I need to work extra hours. If I am not good at something, I need to spend more time to complete that job. If the boss gives me one job which needs three days to accomplish. If I need five days, I have to work during weekends or extra time to complete the task satisfactorily. There are pressures like that (Tien, interview, 11/11/2016).*

In my conversation with the informants, they said that they were not working to maximise the wealth but the well-being of their children. The informants often expressed their consumption needs as "minimum" or "simple". Meanwhile, they expressed their concerns to generate more income to provide for their children materially and intellectually. Most of the mothers expressed that they were working to generate a stable income for their families. For example, Thao said:

> *You still need to care about that [economic benefits] because you have your family. I have a daughter. I have a family. My family consumes a large part of my income. Nevertheless, I think I do not have a high materialistic demand. For example, I only buy my clothes once a year. Honestly, I am not very happy with shopping. They [clothes] are just average to me (Thao, interview, 2/11/ 2016).*

In an interview with Dung, who was 34 and a leader of a Vietnamese NGO, she said that she has recently become more concerned about the generation of a stable income after giving birth to her children. She said:

> *I have to raise my children. When the NGO[7] was first established, I did not have to worry much because I was still single. After having my kid, I need to earn a stable income to take care of my kid. Everything is expensive now (laughed). Especially, I need a stable economic condition in order to live independently. Therefore, it is important to have a longer-term plan than only making ends meet (Dung, interview, 6/3/2017).*

In addition to the income, the informants also expressed the importance of their knowledge to raise their children properly. In a focus group discussion with the women who were in their 40s, the participants started to compare their obligations with those of their mothers' generation. According to the participants, women nowadays need to be knowledgeable to raise their children properly. Compared

[7] The name of the NGO is omitted to protect the identity of the informant.

to mothers who were traditionally responsible for caring for their children's materialistic needs, today's women seem to face pressures for the acquisition of new skills and knowledge for the proper care of their children. For example, Linh, who was 41 and a mother of two, emphasised the importance of mothers to accumulate the knowledge of care in addition to making an income. She said:

> *In society today, perhaps apart from making money, women have to equip themselves with a lot of knowledge to fulfil their obligations to take care of their children in the family. I am talking about the difference between my mother and me. Generally, in the past children in the family grew up automatically in an environment which was, in my opinion, cleaner, everything was safer [than today]. (Linh, focus group 3, 25/12/2016).*

Despite women's increasing participation in the workplace, domestic work still accounts for women's main responsibility (Pettus, 2003; Vu, 2019). In the interviews, the informants often concentrated on the discussion of how to take good care of the children. Noticeably, they talked about the well-being of their children as the merit of the care work in the NGOs. It seems to me that when the Vietnamese female NGO professionals often highlighted their professional expertise in the role of care, they also demonstrated that they were experts in caring for their own families. In our conversations, they talked about how they had improved the skills and knowledge for the better care of their children. The women often expressed their privileges to work in NGOs where they learned new and essential knowledge to care for their children properly.

For example, Vy who is working in the Vietnam Women's Union, expressed that the care of her two children was her foremost priority. Despite being busy at her workplace, she told me that she always prioritised the time at home to take care of her children from ensuring the right nutritional intake to taking care of their learning. Vy especially highlighted the privilege of working in Vietnam Women's Union, which allowed her to access to learning materials to raise her children properly. She said:

> *We (my husband and I) always make sure our children have the care of their parents. They cannot be left alone without anyone. That is the first thing. I also have to care for their education, their nutrition or other things. I rarely have spare time because I usually spend time to read teaching materials to care for our children or their nutrition. Honestly, from a person who knows nothing about how to raise a child, I always prioritised my time to learn about that knowledge. Especially, there is a publishing house in the Women's Union where there are loads of books about how to raise children or children's*

nutrition. That is how I care for my children (Vy, interview, 18/11/2016).

In another interview, Dang also expressed her priority for the care of her daughter. Dang, who is working for a foreign NGO, expressed her constraints in the time to care for her daughter. Her job in the NGO often involved trips to the project fields on weekends which prevented her to spend a whole day at home with her daughter. Nevertheless, she said that she always maximised the leave days to fulfil the caring duties. She said:

If there are weeks I am not home to play with my child, I will take a leave day in the following week or after two weeks to make up the time for her. I will try not to bring the laptop home (to work). I will prioritise that time to play with her or reading books for her or teaching her things that she loves (Dang, interview, 15/11/2016).

Despite the busy work at the workplace, the Vietnamese female NGO professionals also attempted to maximise the care for their children at home. Furthermore, the women's extolling of labour in economic, professional and intellectual realms has illustrated the responsibilities of women to improve economic and intellectual conditions for the better care of their children. In other words, the performance of the women in the economy also illustrates their responsibility for the care of the well-being of the family. Noticeably, many women chose to work in NGOs to care better for the well-being of their children.

For example, Tuyet is a single mother who suffered disgrace by her own family and the surrounding people for giving birth to her son without a husband. Having little support from the family or a husband, she had to raise her child on her own. Despite economic pressures, Tuyet decided to work in a shelter house for the victims of domestic violence at a lower wage compared to her previous jobs in a foreign NGO and a business organisation. Tuyet expressed that she could do a better job by helping victims of violence from her experience as a victim of social discrimination for being a single mother. Tuyet said: "This job is important for me because it reminds me that: Ah, I am still valuable. I am contributing to help sisters who are also victims of violence" (Tuyet, interview, 29/3/2017).

The performance of care with the capacity of empathy seems to illustrate Muehlebach's description of the work of the soul of the relational labourers in the voluntary sector (Muehlebach, 2012, pp. 17-18). According to Muehlebach, the relational labourer works with the soul which was felt (rather than intellectual value) by the society for the immaterial labour amid the heightened exploitation

by the neoliberal capitalist. The relational labourer is described as "not by self-interest but by fellow feeling, not by rational entrepreneurial subject but by a compassionate one" (Muehlebach, 2012, p. 6). Rather materialistic value, the soul work of the relational labourers is highlighted for bonding social relations and promoting social solidarity for the social compassion with the immaterial labour of the unpaid voluntary workers.

It is noticeable the capacity of empathy was also highlighted as the value of care for the vulnerable by professionals in NGOs. For example, Tuyet also expressed how she had demonstrated her value from her capacity for empathy with the victims that she had as a result of her own experience. Specifically, her being a single mother was also considered a kind of vulnerability because of social violence and discrimination. However, in the role of carers, she was able to demonstrate her value in her capacity of feeling for, understanding and helping the victims of domestic violence. She said:

> *Because I have experienced the social violence when being a single mum, I have the empathy with sisters who experienced through the violence. I have built the value of myself from what I am doing and to whom I am working for and how I am doing it. I have built the value of myself (Tuyet, interview, 29/3/2017).*

Similar to the Muehlebach's (2012) description of the soul work of the voluntary workers, Tuyet also demonstrates the capacity of empathy with the vulnerable. Moreover, her performance in feeling with the soul seems to demonstrate her value in society in terms of caring for the vulnerable. For example, she expressed how she could be more useful in helping other women and children to overcome emotional and physical traumas from her own experience as a domestic violence victim in the past. She told me how she could stay through the night to find solutions or called for police support to protect victims of domestic violence. Rather than being victimised by her own vulnerability, her transformation into, and performance of, the figure of caregiver and guardian of the vulnerable in society seems to reminisce the heroic symbol of the Vietnamese women who were capable of defeating weaknesses and difficulties to care for the well-being of the family and society. Similarly, the relational labour with work of the soul was felt for the immaterial labour of the female carers. Moreover, the soul work was not only felt for empathy with those in exploited conditions but also for the

women's self-sacrificing labour for the protection of the vulnerable in society, which accounts for the credential of Vietnamese motherhood.

It seems clear that the disinterested contribution for the community has contributed to the value and confidence of the informant, who demonstrates the relational value from the role of carers. No longer being a vulnerable mother, Tuyet's performance as a professional carer demonstrates her prestige in society and the credibility to raise her son. For example, she said that she wanted to be a role model for her son. Moreover, she wanted to teach her son to become a non-violent person. She said:

> *When working here, I know how to develop or teach a boy with good and non-violent characteristics. This job benefits me not only in terms of income generation but also the vehicle for me to demonstrate my value from this work. It also provides me with ways to teach my son (Tuyet, interview, 29/3/2017).*

It is clear that Tuyet's professional position in the shelter house is desirable for her responsibility to care for her son. The woman's voluntary participation and optimisation in the professional role of a carer illustrate the prestige of the female social worker for doing well both in public life and domestic life. As Tuyet clearly stated, her labour in this area illustrates her self-worth in relation to not only the society but also her son's well-being. Through care, Tuyet seems to demonstrate morality of a socialist woman who has done well both in the public and domestic work. It is noticeable that the domestic realm also accounts for Vietnamese women's role in public life. Nguyen (2019) has written about the permeable inside/outside space of Vietnamese women which suggests that women's economic success tends to reproduce their power in the domestic sphere for they are "general[s] of the domestic space" (Nguyen, 2019, p. 34).

It is noticeable that women used to bear the moral obligations for the well-being of the family in the traditional Vietnamese society. In Vietnam's Confucian culture, women have moral obligations to maintain harmony and happiness in the family (Pettus, 2003; Ha, 2008; Rydstrøm, 2010; Drummond, 2004). In Rydstrøm and Drummond's (2004) analysis of men's and women's roles in Confucian doctrine, men's and women's roles do not differ by public or private spheres but moral obligations. More specifically, the doctrine governs individuals with the moral obligations in the three realms: home (*nha*), country (*nuoc*) and the world (*thien ha*) which are not different in importance but only in scale (Tuong Lai, 1991, cited

in Rydstrøm and Drummond, 2004, p. 7). Rydstrøm and Drummond (2004) argue that the doctrine does not highlight individual sovereignty but social relations created by the hierarchical order between the king, men, and women, who are subjected to the superior-inferior relations within and between the respective realms of state, the society and the house. The doctrine particularly highlights the women's virtues and obligations, for example, in the Four Virtues and Three Submissions[8], to keep the harmony and happiness of the family which is the principle of the overall harmony, peace, unity and stability of the whole society (Rydstrøm and Drummond, 2004, p. 8). In this notion, women have the moral obligations to maintain harmony in the households considering the women's responsibility in the house.

This notion is also reproduced in the state's campaigns about women's (domestic) role in the socialist system. For example, Pettus (2003), when reviewing the state's campaigns during the communist revolutions to the collective period, has illustrated how women's moral obligations in the Confucian tradition have been reproduced respectively in the Five Goods or Three-Responsibilities or the post-*doi moi* Happy Family campaigns. Reminiscing the moral obligations of women in the Confucian tradition, women's responsibilities of raising children and taking care of members in the family have always been reproduced in the state's campaigns with heroic ideals. In the context of *doi moi* economic reforms, women to fulfil the domestic role were highlighted with the necessity to advance the education, profession and scientific knowledge to protect the happiness of the family (Pettus, 2003; Drummond, 2004). Similarly, writing about Women's Three-Criteria Campaign, Schuler et al. (2006) criticise the Vietnam Women's Union for repeating the women's moral obligations in the Confucian tradition to maintain the harmony and happiness of the family. It seems clear that the socialist state does not eliminate women's domestic role when liberating women's production in the economy, but rather sees them both as symbol and mandate of women's role in the socialist system.

My data suggest that the Vietnamese women in the professional role as carers in NGOs often prioritised harmony and happy family over wealth. In my interviews with the informants, they highlighted the knowledge and skills of caring for the

---

[8] See Rydstrøm and Drummond (2004) or Schuler et al. (2006) for further explanations of Four Virtues and Three Submissions in Vietnam's Confucian culture.

vulnerable in society that helped them to maintain the happiness of their family or the well-being of their children. For example, Ngoc, one of my informants, said that she was happy with her work in the local NGO because, with her knowledge of care, she could raise her children properly. Ngoc proudly told me that she was pleased to see her children growing independently and having good manners (*ngoan*). In addition, Ngoc said that she was confident in nurturing her children as good people because she had not worked for the business but a not-for-profit organisation. She told me that she was happy with the gains in NGOs which were not materialistic wealth but the well-being of the family. She said:

> *If you asked me what I have gained from this job. [I would say] I gained a lot. I do not say I have lost anything because it is my choice. I am happy with that choice. Because I only need a house to live. Why would I need more? Until now, I am happy with my life because of my contribution (Ngoc, interview, 26/2/2017).*

Like Tuyet, Ngoc's account of the voluntary work for the care work in the NGOs illustrates the desirable returns in terms of the well-being of her children and the happiness of her family. The harmony and well-being of the members in the family seem to demonstrate the merits of their performance in the non-profit instead of the for-profit sector. The way the NGO professional women in Vietnam demonstrated the merit of their performance for the morality of care, rather than wealth, illustrates the notion of the morality of wealth which was highlighted in Jellema's (2005) or Leshkowich's (2012) studies of the middle-class in Vietnam. Specifically, the women also demonstrated the happy family as the reward for their disinterested care work in the non-profit NGOs. It seems clear that when the women continue to demonstrate the sacrifice of materialistic wealth for the happy family, they repetitively demonstrate the symbol of proper women in the state's mass mobilisation campaign of the happy family (Drummond, 2004; Pettus, 2003; Schuler et al., 2006). It is noticeable that when the campaign reproduced the moral obligations of women in the Confucian tradition, it also highlights women's sacrifice as the symbol of heroism (Pettus, 2003).

It seems clear that when the notion of heroism often reminisces one's sacrifice for the nation, women's care often illustrates the sacrifice for the interests of the nation rather than individualistic satisfaction. The performance of NGO professional women for the interest of the domestic responsibility also illustrates the continuity of the heroic tradition of the Vietnamese women for the care of the

country with the moral and ideological symbol of the socialist person. Through care, Vietnamese NGO professional women demonstrate a symbol of ethical citizenship for the well-being of the nation with their reproductive labour which also is highly valued in the context of the state welfare reduction. According to Muehlebach (2012), the unwaged voluntary workers are considered relational labourers for the production and accumulation of relational values which help to rebuild social solidarity in the context of declining social sentiments in the context of intensive exploitation and economic austerity. However, as I presented earlier, women's voluntary participation in the caregiving role in NGOs is closely associated with the moral appeal of the socialist person for collectivisation of care. In the vision of the socialist woman, women are considered emancipated with full participation in public life. Women's self-sacrificing labour in the socialist vision of women's emancipation does not illustrate the symbol of the exploited. Rather, women's hard work for both productive and reproductive responsibility demonstrates the morality of the socialist women for the protection of the harmony and unity of society (Rydstrøm and Drummond, 2004; Pettus. 2003; Nguyen, 2019).

The professional performance of the women in the NGO sector in the role of care has illustrated how domestic responsibility has accounted for the moral and symbolic positions of Vietnamese women in public life. Despite market liberalisation, women's performance in the market often demonstrated their distinctive role in the domestic realm which also accounts for Vietnamese women's heroic ideals. Nguyen (2019) suggests that women's success in economic activities outside the house is often recognised for women to reclaim their power in the domestic space. The research finding on women's hard work in the economy also illustrates the distinctive role of the Vietnamese women in the domestic realm. It is noticeable that, when the state often appraises heroic mothers for their contribution to the country, women's sacrifice is often recognised for their reproductive labour in the domestic realm (Pettus, 2003).

Similarly, I also found that the female NGO professionals in Hanoi often demonstrated their hard work in the economy for the care of the family. It seems clear that the socialisation policy which mobilises all the people's optimisation for the collectivisation of caring responsibilities often evokes women's domestic responsibility. Women's voluntary and hard work to care for the family is not

separable from the socialist vision of women's participation in public life. This vision seems to suggest the permeable public/private space in relation to women's productive activities in the economy (Nguyen, 2019). Women's performance in the economy also accounts for the women's predominant role in the domestic space in which women demonstrated the power and prestige in public life. This notion is consolidated through the recognition of Vietnam's socialist state of women's reproductive labour as the symbol of socialist labour and patriotism (Pettus, 2003; Gal and Kligman, 2000a). In the following section, I will present how the NGO professional women in Vietnam have demonstrated ethical citizenship in the economy through the production of care with entrepreneurial and intellectual capacity. I will show that the Vietnamese NGO professional women have demonstrated the morality of socialist women who care for the socialist welfare in the collectivist tradition.

6.4 The ethical subject of collectivism

During my fieldwork, I participated in an outdoor event commemorating International Women's Day in Hanoi. The event was organised by a coalition (*lien minh*) of local NGOs and international organisations for the work on women's empowerment. In the event, Yen, my informant, who was one of the leaders of the coalition, was invited to make a speech. In her speech, the NGO leader highlighted the aspiration of freedom of the Vietnamese women who have had a proud tradition for their contributions to protect the country's freedom and develop the national economy throughout Vietnamese history. The following was part of her speech:

> *We are in March, which is the action month for the rights of women. Vietnamese women account for an indispensable part of the history. They are leaders who fought against the foreign invaders; they are people who have contributed significantly to the key industries, who have contributed to building this beautiful country. They are women who speak the language of freedom from their own lives and inspired the following generations. A nation like that, a women's tradition like that would never accept gender stereotypes which hold back progresses (tien bo) or never accept violence and patriarchal thoughts. It is time for women and men both progress and speaking out to erase all gender prejudices for a good and developed society (Yen, field note, 7/3/2017).*

Yen's speech of women's rights has highlighted the proud tradition of Vietnamese women's contributions to the country. Recalling the heroic tradition, Yen continued to repeat the Vietnamese women's tradition to protect and develop the country. Rather than calling for juridical rights, she called for the continuity of women's tradition to contribute to the country. Her notion of the women's contribution also demonstrated the Vietnamese women's aspiration of freedom. However, by stressing the aspiration of women's freedom, she repeated the socialist notion of women's emancipation for women's contribution to a "good and developed society".

The founder of the Vietnamese NGO spoke on behalf of the female NGO professionals in Hanoi to commemorate Vietnamese women's role on the International Women's Day. She stressed the importance of women making "progress" with men to contribute to the country. In her speech, women were highlighted, along with men, for the shared responsibility to "progress" (*tien bo*) for the interest of the country. By calling on both women and men, the informant seemed to repeat the imperative of the socialist men and women to success for the vision of collective well-being.

After *doi moi*, the state has implemented the socialisation policy as an effort to privatise some of the social services, for example, health care and education (Nguyen, 2018; Beaulieu, 1994; Rydstrøm, 2003). The state implemented various measures of privatisation and marketisation, including applying market prices on social services and allowing providers in the private sector to deliver some of the social services in addition to the state (Nguyen, 2018; London, 2004, 2008; Nguyen and Chu, 2016). However, as Nguyen (2018) points out, socialisation should not be associated with privatisation for the policy evokes the tradition of collectivisation of the means of production, which calls upon all the people's responsibility for the ownership of care (Nguyen, 2018, pp. 631-632). The socialisation policy highlights the need to improve the quality of the public services with the market efficiency with the vision of collective well-being (Nguyen, 2018; London, 2004; Nguyen and Chu, 2016). Nguyen (2018) proposes that the mobilisation of all the people in the socialisation policy has evoked the morality of the socialist person in the collectivist and socialist tradition for the self-reliance and individualisation of care to realise the vision of collective being. People's optimisation in the economy in relation to the collectivisation of care is

considered the moral subject of the socialisation policy. Nguyen wrote: "The moral subject is self-governed in accumulating human capitals for the sake of the market, yet loyal to family and community while being governable by the party-state" (Nguyen, 2018, p. 629).

I also found the performance of the Vietnamese female NGO professionals in the role of carers often demonstrated the moral obligations of socialist women in relation to the vision of collectivisation of care which was the soul of the socialisation policy. As presented earlier in this Chapter, the Vietnamese female NGO professionals often demonstrated their indispensable contributions to society through their self-sacrificing labour for the care of the family and the community. The voluntary participation and optimisation of Vietnamese women in NGOs as carers illustrates their responsibilities and self-worth in relation to women's contribution to the country which is embedded in the Confucian tradition and renewed by the socialist vision of the socialist women for "*cong*" (women's labour) to the economy (Marr, 1984; Nguyen, 2019).

The economic performance of the Vietnamese NGO professional women in the illustrates their self-optimisation and self-orientation for the maximisation of care. It is noticeable that the women's performance in the role of carers, which is demonstrated through the entrepreneurial capacity of free choice, autonomous decision making and calculation, also illustrates the morality of self-government in the Foucauldian notion. Foucault highlights the self-government which resonates individual freedom to maximise the market's *laisser-faire* mechanism to fend for the well-being and power of the self. It seems clear that women's choice to work as carers in the NGO sector also illustrates women's freedom to maximise the condition of the free market for the values which are desired by the Vietnamese women. Despite market freedom, women's reproduction still accounts for the desirable role of the Vietnamese female NGO professional women. Furthermore, the account of the sacrifice of individualistic and materialistic satisfaction often evokes the moral of "*cong*" (women's labour) in Vietnam's Confucian and socialist tradition for the harmony, peace and unity in the country (Pettus, 2003; Marr, 1984).

Women's performance as carers in the NGO sector in Vietnam, which continues to reproduce the moral and ideological symbol of the socialist women for the continued care of the family and the country, has illustrated the ethical citizenship

of Vietnam's market-oriented socialism. The notion of ethical citizenship highlights the ethics of market value maximisation which also resonates an individual's social responsibility in the logic of new prudentialism (Nguyen, 2018). Muehlebach's (2012) when writing about the performance of the unwaged voluntary workers in the role of care in the context of economic austerity and market intensification suggests the ethical citizenship of the economic restructuration in Italy. Muehlebach specifically highlights acts of care through which unwaged voluntary caregivers demonstrate ethical citizenship for the immaterial labour and communal spirit which are intensively felt and valued in the context of self-interested materialistic accumulation. The ethical citizens, in Muehlebach's (2012) notion, have assumed the role of care for the society which was left by the state through which they activate a role in public life and a sense of social belonging. Muehlebach (2012) also highlights the morality of the self-government of the voluntary social workers in the role of care through which they continue to demonstrate the value of their relational labour in building social relations in the context of declining social solidarity.

It seems to me that the performance of the Vietnamese female NGO professionals in the role of care for the vulnerable and the poor also illustrates Muehlebach's (2012) notion of ethical citizenship. The voluntary participation of the women in the professional role of care in NGOs has demonstrated the moral appeal of care in the context of the state withdrawal from the broad-based provision of social services (Nguyen, 2018). Moreover, their performance in the role of care also demonstrated a sense of the citizen's responsibility for the ownership of care with the vision of collective well-being which is highlighted by the socialisation policy. It is noticeable that, in this policy, individual responsibility is inseparable from the state's general responsibility of care. The socialist state mobilises individual responsibility to care with the ideological and moral appeal of collectivism and socialism. In this respect, acts of care of the caregivers in NGOs in Vietnam continue to reproduce the morality of the redistributive functions of the socialist welfare (Nguyen and Chu, 2016; Nguyen, 2018; London, 2004, 2008).

The field data also reveals that women's participation in the role of care often illustrates the morality of collectivisation, which does not replace but creates a shared responsibility with the state. Specifically, the women's care for the well-

being of the children and the vulnerable in society has been continually reproduced by the state's vision of the Vietnamese socialist woman, who is capable in both public (for the country) and domestic work. It seems clear that when women's labour was continually drawn into the ideological and moral symbols of socialist labour, their self-reliance and self-optimisation in the economy continues to produce the morality of the socialist women who care for the collective welfare.

I also found that the Vietnamese female NGO professionals demonstrated not only their reproductive but also economic efficiency in saving the state's budget. In the interviews, the informants often demonstrate their shared responsibility with the state for the care of the well-being of the community. They particularly highlighted the role of NGOs to reduce the state's budget burdens and to ensure harmony for economic development. For example, when talking to Mai, she criticised the overspending of the state budget for the maintenance of the system of state-subsidised mass organisations. She complained about the spending on the salaries of the staff of mass organisations which could be maximised for the social benefits. She said:

> *[In sum], all the public services have to hand back to social organisations. Okay, they (mass organisations) are also (social organisations). We are not envious with them. But there will be the time that the government would ask how they have spent this money for, what were their products? (Mai, interview, 28/11/2016).*

Besides the cost efficiency, the women also highlighted their role in supporting the state in their caring for the vulnerable community at the grassroots level. In my conversation with Quyen, who was working for a project in a local NGO supporting people living with HIV/AIDS, she said that her job in the NGO was to support the state by helping people in segments of the population which were not covered by the state's public health facilities. Quyen highlighted the flexibility of local NGOs in supporting the vulnerable and the excluded at the grassroots level. She said:

> *We only support them [the state]. For example, we are working in the HIV area. We are working with the medical partners in the state which were responsible for this area. There are spaces they cannot reach, for example, the target group in the community. They cannot support these people at the community level because they only provide medical services in hospitals. However, we are working at the community level for them. They would realise that: ah, that is the space they left or could not reach. So we support them at that level.*

We cooperate with each other. As a working partner, if they understood our role, we can do our job easier (Quyen, interview, 23/11/2016).

Quyen also emphasised that the role of NGOs was to contribute to the general responsibility of the state in the provision of care. She said:

We only fill in the areas in which the state has not done well. We support them so that they do their job better. We have to work with them side by side. Otherwise, we cannot do our job separately (Quyen, interview, 23/11/2016).

Thanh, a vice-director of a local NGO which provides legal support to disabled people, expressed the indispensable role of the NGOs in reconciling the tension in society between care and economic progress. She specifically highlighted the role of NGOs in providing solutions for the state and the market to fix the tension caused by excessive development. She especially highlighted the role of NGOs to balance the tensions in society for social stability. She said:

There are social tensions that the state and the economy cannot solve, for example, social conflicts between the social strata, environmental problems, equality issues, etc. There are opportunities for us to work for those issues. If there is any tension caused by excessive development, we are the organisations to provide solutions to balance it (Thanh, interview, 17/2/2017).

According to Thanh, NGOs have the mission to reconcile the social conflicts that are unable to be resolved either by the state or the economy. Rather than fighting for the rights of vulnerable groups, she expressed her responsibility to ensure the balance of interests in society. She said:

When working, I always aimed at the balance between relations, between the beneficiaries' interests with the social interests, or between the stakeholders, for example, between the state and businesses. I usually spent a lot of time to calculate to find a solution to balance the interests of stakeholders and to help the beneficiaries to achieve their expectation. That is the balance. If I only to focus on extreme solutions to fight for rights at one moment (or) if I only focus on achieving what I want only, I will forget the other values or the other communities. In my opinion, it is not a sustainable solution (Thanh, interview, 17/2/2017).

When emphasising the role of NGOs in reconciling conflicts, Thanh highlighted the importance of harmony and unity in society. In the interview, she answered my questions when entertaining her second child on her lap in her office. She told me that she had to nurse her children occasionally during office hours when there was no help at home. Thanh recalled how she had sacrificed to establish the

organisation to care for the interest of disabled people. After giving birth to her first child, she and other members of the board of directors had volunteered to work in the NGO without salary for three years. Despite working without the salary, she expressed the satisfaction to work for the well-being of the disabled community. Like many other women working in NGOs, she also expressed the aspiration to maximise the care for the well-being of the disabled community. She said:

> *To help the disabled alone, I have had already many things to do. Sometimes, when going out, I discovered that if I can only need to do small interventions, there will be changes in their lives. If I know there is any framework in which I can do it and (because) I know how to do it, I will have to do it (smile). After doing surveys like this, I wish to do everything (Thanh, interview, 17/2/2017).*

It seems clear that through the role of care, the Vietnamese female NGO professionals continued to demonstrate the shared responsibility with the state for collective well-being. In practising the daily work of care, the Vietnamese female NGO professionals continued to demonstrate their indispensable role in the context of the reduction of the state-subsidised social services. It is noticeable that the self-government of the Vietnamese female NGO professional carers also illustrates the ethical citizenship for the self-reliance and self-optimisation for the maximisation of care. Similar to Muehlebach's (2012) notion of relational value, the women's performance in the role of carers also demonstrated an intermediary role caring for the vulnerable and the poor who were left out by the marketisation process and in the context of the state's withdrawal from the broad-based subsidy mechanism. Nevertheless, rather than demonstrating the relational value from exploitation, they demonstrated the relational values with the state's general responsibility of care with the economic efficiency of NGOs to free the state of some of its burdens and ensure harmony in society. It seems clear that the Vietnamese female NGO professionals continued to demonstrate the moral obligation to care for the nation, which seems to illustrate the state's propaganda of the new socialist person (Nguyen, 2018). The production of women's care which is traditionally felt with social compassion as the symbol of the nurturing and protection of the nation in Vietnamese cultural and socialist traditions has continually produced the morality of the marketisation and privatisation of Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation.

6.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the performance of the Vietnamese women in the professional role of care in the context of *doi moi* economic renovation. I have shown how women's labour in relation to their caring responsibilities has demonstrated the ethical basis of citizenship in Vietnam's post-socialist market reforms. The performance of the Vietnamese female NGO professionals in the market economy illustrates the morality of women's labour for the maximisation of economic value, which is specifically related to women's distinctive reproductive role. In the context of market liberalisation, the Vietnamese NGO professional women have demonstrated the value of their labour in relation to the value of care, which has become scarce because of the economic restructuration and the reduction of state's subsidised public services. The voluntary participation of women in professional roles as carers in the NGO sector in Vietnam reflects what Muehlebach describes as the ethical citizenship of the economy for the accumulation and production of relational value from acts of care. It is noticeable that care has also represented a distinctive value in Vietnam's Confucian and socialist tradition, accounting not only for self-worth in the market but also the power of the people with *dan tri* (intellectual level) for the shared responsibility with the state to care for collective well-being (Nguyen, 1974; Nguyen-Marshall, 2008; Nguyen, 2018). Care also accounts for the power of Vietnamese women in relation to women's reproductive role which used to be the symbol of protection and nurturing of the country in Vietnam's matrilineal history (Le, 1973; Marr, 1984). The women's performance in the role of carers, therefore, often accounts for the prestige of the ruler rather than social empathy with the exploited status as suggested by Muehlebach. Women's choice to work in NGOs, thus, is inseparable from the broader context of Vietnam's moral economy, in which care has always been the responsibility of the socialist state. It is noticeable that the socialisation policy has not removed the state from the overall responsibility but delegates the ownership of care to individuals. Women's voluntary participation in professional positions opened up by the proliferation of NGOs in the context of the "NGO-ization" of development has clearly shown the prestige of female NGO professionals for not only their access to privileged material and professional resources but also the self-worth of the women though the role of carers.

I also presented the performance of the NGO professional women in the economy for domestic responsibility after the state's removal of the subsidy mechanism. It is noticeable that the domestic realm accounts for the distinctive power of Vietnamese women. Unlike the notion of the private sphere in which women are often considered inferior because of their lack of protection in the private sphere, the domestic realm accounts for the source of power inherent to socialist women (Nguyen, 2019; Hemment, 2014, Gal and Kligman, 2000a, 2000b). The socialist ideology of women's emancipation recognises women as socialist workers whose labour for the family is a part of the socialist labour force (Gal and Kligman, 2000a). I also showed that the Vietnamese NGO professional women often prioritised the labour for domestic responsibility, particularly caring for the well-being of the children in terms of having enough food, good health and good education. The performance of the women in the economy has demonstrated their domestic responsibility rather than individualistic wealth maximisation.

Leshkowich (2012) suggests Vietnamese women's performance in finances, family, fashion and fitness demonstrates the morality of the middle-class women which is conducted by the socialist state which guides women's self-government for the responsibility to maintain the happiness of the family. I also found that women's priority was to work in the economy for the fulfilled domestic responsibility. This finding illustrates Nguyen's (2019) notion of the inside/outside space of women which suggests that women's performance in the outside economy is the means for women to claim the power of the inside domestic realm. This notion also illustrates the socialist ideology of women's participation in public life which often recognises women's contribution to domestic responsibility. Despite the removal of the socialist state's subsidy system which has displaced massive amounts of women from full employment, women's voluntary choice to work in the professional positions in NGOs continues to demonstrate the morality of the socialist women for doing well both in public and domestic life. Through the role of carers, the Vietnamese female NGO professionals have continued to demonstrate the shared responsibility with the state to care for the collective well-being. The findings of the Vietnamese NGO professional women's performance in the role of carers, whether in the private sector, for-profit or not-for-profit, state sector or domestic realm, suggest the distinctive role of Vietnamese in relation to women's reproductive labour for the interest of the country. Women's

commitment to the ownership of care in the context of the state's welfare reduction illustrates the traditional role of the Vietnamese socialist women in caring for the family and the community. Through acts of care, the professional women in NGOs also produce and accumulate relational values and a role in public life. However, the relational values are not derived from their double or triple burdens or exploited status but recognised as *cong* (women's reproductive labour) which maintains the harmony and unity in both public and domestic realms. It is also noticeable that, through care, women working in the NGO sector, have reproduced a role in the public life which in turn continues to bind them to reproductive responsibilities.

Through the examination of the Vietnamese NGO professional women's performance in the care sector, I have shown how the women have demonstrated the morality of socialist women with market and entrepreneurial resources. The women's labour in the professional role of care in the private and social realm of NGOs demonstrates the ethical citizenship for galvanising market resources for care work in the context of the post-socialist economic restructuration. Women's care as the symbol of protection and nurturing of the nation continues to produce relational values in the context of the state's reduction from the broad-based subsidy system. Rather than mobilising the moral and ideological value of their independence in the market, the Vietnamese NGO professional women have continually derived the moral and ideological symbol of the socialist women, through which they demonstrated a distinctive role in the public life. In the following chapter, I will present the performance of the informants for the "rights" to associate in the people's realm. I argue that the NGO professionals continue to mobilise "rights" in relation to the socialist ideology of the socialist person who cares for collective well-being to defend their position in public life. I will demonstrate that women's defence for their role in public life has rather defended their responsibility to care rather than challenging the state for liberal rights and independent space.

Chapter 7 - Optimising in the people's realm

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will present how the Vietnamese NGO professionals have formed an autonomous space to perform the "rights" to care. I will demonstrate that, rather than being protected by the legal rights, Vietnamese NGO professional women were equipped with responsibilities of the socialist persons to defend the "rights" to care for collective well-being. I will show how the NGO professional environment in Vietnam resembles an autonomous civil society realm for the women to demonstrate the habits and aspirations to perform the role of carers. By presenting the performance of Vietnamese female NGO professionals in this autonomous realm, this chapter will answer the final research sub-question: *How do Vietnamese female professionals working in the NGO sector perform an autonomous civil society in mono-organisational socialism?*

In Vietnam, the NGO sector was considered to have flourished with the rapid growth of individually and privately-owned organisations, which have increasingly participated in the delivery of social services after the state was removed from the subsidy mechanism (Sidel, 1997; Salemink, 2006; Gray, 1999). Since 1994, Carole Beaulieu has written about the rapid growth of Vietnamese NGOs (VNGOs[9]). According to Beaulieu, the newly established organisations were considered independent from the state because of their financial independence, despite there being no legal provision for civil society. The idea of NGOs in Vietnam is still questionable, as there is not a provision in law for either Vietnamese NGOs or civil society (Thayer, 1995, 2009; Beaulieu, 1994; Sidel, 1997). The terms VNGOs (or local NGOs) is still absent from legal documents and official events (Thayer, 2009; Kerkvliet et al., 2008). The proliferation of VNGOs was rather considered the voluntary response of individual and private organisations to fill in the space that was left by the state for the provision of social services (Wischermann, 2010; Nørlund, 2007b; Sidel, 1997). As Beaulieu

[9] In this research local NGOs and VNGOs are used interchangeable to refer to individually and privately established organisations by Vietnamese people.

commented, the Vietnamese people were enthusiastic about this new form of NGO, which gave them the freedom to do their own thing. Writing about the NGO phenonmenon in Vietnam, she wrote:

> *For some Vietnamese people, "doing their own thing" has recently taken a broader scope than improving their individual lives. Education and poverty alleviation are major concerns among the population, and some people have banded together to do what they can (Beaulieu, 1994, p. 4).*

Several studies also suggest that these individual and private-owned NGOs were established after the state decided to “socialise” several areas in public services (Sidel, 1997; Nørlund, 2007b). This socialisation policy has opened opportunities for private organisations to take over the provision of social services left by the state. Several scholars of Vietnam also suggest that the state has relaxed the legal framework which allowed private science and technology organisations and voluntary organisations to establish to mobilise resources in society for social services (Sidel, 1997, 2010; Thayer, 2009; Beaulieu, 1994; Wischermann et al., 2016).

Mass organisations remain the way in which the state apportions responsibility for social functions in the Marxist-Leninist political system. Also, the proliferation of the private and voluntary organisations established in the private sector seems to illustrate a civil society existing in parallel with the system of social organisations controlled by the state. According to Beaulieu (1994), VNGO actors seemed to have more freedom to do their own thing. The Vietnamese NGOs, nevertheless, were not given their autonomy by the state, but rather by the market, to generate their own resources and the means to do their own thing (Beaulieu, 1994; Nguyen, 2018; Sidel, 1997; Kerkvliet, 2003). Similarly, as several researchers have suggested, civil society actors in Vietnam who were still restricted in their free rights seemed to have proliferated rapidly without any legal standing (Kerkvliet et al., 2008; Vasavakul, 2003; Wischermann and Nguyen, 2003).

In this chapter, I will present how the Vietnamese female NGO professionals have prioritised doing their own thing in the people’s realm. I will demonstrate that the people’s realm is a domain for individual freedom to perform the responsibility for the care of collective well-being in relation to the socialist vision of the collectivisation of care (Nguyen, 2018). Meanwhile, individual pursuance of

individual free rights is still repressed by the state (Thayer, 2009; Kerkvliet, 2015; Vu, 2017). Without having a legal provision for independent civil society, the people's realm, therefore, has rather illustrated a realm provisioned for the social function of the state to realise the collectivisation of care in relation to the socialisation policy (Hannah, 2007, Nguyen, 2018). Resembling Zhang and Ong's (2008) notion of "the new social", people's autonomous activities in the market in Vietnam have also formed a new social realm distancing from the state resembling an autonomous civil society, which is nevertheless governed by the socialist state with vision and guidance of "right" conduct, rather than freeing individualist interests.

This chapter consists of four main sections. I will first present how Vietnamese female NGO professionals have demonstrated a compatible role with mass organisations in the role of care in the people's realm. I will next present how the Vietnamese female NGO professionals have shown solidarity with the state for taking over the care responsibility as their own thing. After that, I will demonstrate how the Vietnamese female NGO professionals defended the associational rights in the drafting of the Law of Associations to care for the well-being of society. Finally, I will present the performance of the Vietnamese female NGO professionals as experts of non-confrontational approaches. I will show that women's performance in the people's realm, particularly in the role of carers, continued to demonstrate their traditional moral obligations in maintaining the harmony and unity of society. In NGOs, women's reproduction of socialist welfare, with the economic efficiency and market facilities, seems to renew the hegemony of socialism in the configuration of market-oriented socialism.

7.2 Civil society as people-oriented organisations

During my fieldwork in Hanoi between 2016 and 2017, I often heard from my informants about the withdrawal of foreign NGOs from Vietnam. According to the informants, the country was no longer the priority of foreign donors after the removal of the World Bank's Lower Middle Income Country status. The informants shared with me their anxieties for their future careers in the sector. Considering the low funding prospects and the downsizing of NGOs, some informants said that they might have to change their jobs to work in for-profit

organisations. Despite uncertain career prospects in NGOs, most of them said that they still wanted to continue to work in NGOs.

I talked to NGO professionals who had worked in the business sector and recently returned to work in the lower-salaried positions in NGOs. They said that they did not feel suitable for the business sector, which was aimed at maximising individualistic profits rather than the benefits of society. Despite the low salary, the career in NGOs was desirable for the women who wished to work in the role of carers rather than maximising wealth. For example, Nhung, who had recently quit her job in business to work as a salaried professional in a foreign NGO in Hanoi, said:

> *Honestly, when I returned to the NGO job, I had a peaceful feeling. First, I feel peaceful for helping someone. You don't have to worry about money because you know how much you earn every month. You don't have to think about the extra income. Besides, when you do something good in a project, you will have a feeling that at least I am helping someone or contribute something to society (Nhung, interview, 3/3/2017).*

Like Nhung, many women who returned from the business sector often expressed their aspirations to work in NGOs to contribute to the well-being of the community. Tuyet, also quit her job in a business organisation to work in the shelter house for victims of domestic violence run by a mass organisation. She told me that she could never work in the business sector if she had to change her job again. She said:

> *If I have to change my job [again], I have made up my mind that I would not do business. Because my mind is always occupied with the problem of this or that woman, I could not remove it from my mind to focus on the negotiation or to do business (Tuyet, interview, 29/3/2017).*

As presented earlier in Chapter 5, when businesses are often associated with individualistic profits, working in NGOs is more desired by the women because of the contribution to society. It is noticeable that when the Vietnamese female NGO professionals often demonstrated the preference to work in the role of carers for the well-being of people in society, there seems to be no difference between NGOs and mass organisations, as both are responsible for caring functions. Especially, the women in individually and privately owned NGOs often demonstrated a compatible function with mass organisations in caring responsibilities.

In my interviews with the informants in local NGOs or INGOs, they often highlighted NGOs for their better capacity of care than mass organisations. According to the informants, because mass organisations are a part of the state apparatus, they do not present the interests of people in society. Meanwhile, NGOs are established by individuals or groups in the people's realm, hence more responsive to people's needs. The debates about differences between NGOs and mass organisations often revolved around who cares better. It seems to me that NGOs care for the well-being of the community because they are civil society organisations. In relation to caring responsibilities, mass organisations are not civil society organisations when they are accountable to the state rather than caring for people's interests. In my discussions with the informants, I often heard critiques against mass organisations for several reasons: (1) Mass organisations are funded by the state; (2) They implement top-down directions; (3) They do not represent the voice of the people, or (4) They do not advocate for policy on behalf of the people. In general, mass organisations were often considered more "state-like" for being responsive to the state's policy rather than to people's needs. For example, Thien, who is a founder of a local NGO, said:

> *I did not see any difference between the state and state-owned (mass) organisations. They are one in nature. They [mass organisations] are the place for the state to legitimise their policy or their direction. NGOs are different. They have demonstrated a clearer role in the policy debates. When having the opportunity to participate in the policymaking, they raised the issues of discrimination. For example, they suggested changing in the policy for the drug users who are not seen as criminals but patients. NGOs advocate policies in that way (Thien, interview, 30/11/2016).*

I also discussed this topic with the informants in mass organisations. In general, they agreed that mass organisations are a part of the state apparatus. Nevertheless, when acknowledging their position in the state apparatus, they highlighted their indispensable role to defend the masses' interests in policymaking. For example, Vy, who worked in the Vietnam Women's Union, disagreed with the idea that they were not contributing to society. She said: "Many people think that we are working here to organise campaigns or cultural activities. They do not understand our functions and missions and what we have done" (Vy, interview, 18/11/2016). In the interview, Vy explained to me how the Vietnam Women's Union had helped women in the microcredit projects, advocating the correct ratio of women representatives in the National Assembly and the

government's system, or influencing the government's policies on women. Rather than differentiating between the Women's Union and NGOs, Vy highlighted the privilege of the Women's Union in the state apparatus to maximise the resources for the protection of women's benefits. According to Vy, given the political position of the Women's Union in the state system, NGOs and the Women's Union need to work together to maximise resources in society for the work in gender. She said:

> *NGOs have tremendous contributions. Not all but many of them which worked in the area of gender have mobilised resources and cooperated with the Vietnam Women's Union to work in this area. The Vietnam Women's Union wants to organise a network to create strength. That is the Women's Union strategy. Because each organisation has its own strength or mobilising resources from different sources. When the Vietnam Women's Union is the organisation which has a role in the constitution or with the special legal position, the Union wants to use that special position to connect with other organisations to organise the strength in gender. It is our strategy in the coming time (Vy, interview, 18/11/2016).*

It seemed clear that the debates between NGOs and mass organisations about what constitutes "civil society" tended to focus on the caring functions of organisations. In relation to these functions, mass organisations and NGOs do not seem to contradict each other. In the interviews, informants from both organisational categories often defended their role in society to care for people's needs. It is noticeable that the informants working in mass organisations, though they were legally assigned their functions by the state, tended to emphasise their contributions to society rather than highlighting their privileged position within the state apparatus. Meanwhile, having no legal standing or legitimate role in this regard, those from international and local NGOs often critiqued mass organisations for having a less practical role than NGOs in terms of meeting people's needs in society.

In my discussion with Ngan, who is working in an American non-profit organisation, she had a critical view about mass organisations which were responsive to the state's policy but not to the people's needs. She said: "Do you ever see the [Vietnamese] Women's Union has mobilised people to demonstrate to protest because of dead fish[10]?" (Ngan, interview, 28/12/2018). According to

[10] Dead fish is the name of a movement in 2016 organised by voluntary groups across the country to protest against the sea contamination which was allegedly caused by a Taiwanese-invested (Formosa) company's waste disposal to the sea.

Ngan, mass organisations are not civil society organisations because they do not represent people's needs. She said: "They are not even called civil society. Civil society should be independent of the state. They have to reflect people's wishes and act on behalf of the people" (Ngan, interview, 28/12/2018).

However, according to other informants, some mass organisations are more responsive to people's needs than others. For example, Cuc, who is working in an international NGO, said that she used to collaborate with many mass organisations who were more responsive to people's needs. For Cuc, even in the system of the state-owned mass organisations, there are organisations which are closer to the people than the state. She said:

> *There is no "one fits all". We cannot say in general like: All Farmer's Unions in Vietnam are all alike. We have to say that: the Farmers' Union in this district is like this. We cannot say that one fits all because they are different. I certainly can work with them. I can work with organisations which are more progressive (tien bo). They are closer to the people (Cuc, interview,16/11/2016).*

In another interview, with Mai, who used to work for VUSTA (Vietnam Union of Science and Technology Associations) which is an organisation below the umbrella of the Fatherland's Front, she considered VUSTA more like a civil society organisation than part of the state. According to Mai, VUSTA is a civil society organisation because it represents the interests of its members - social and science technology organisations which are also local or Vietnamese NGOs, who are working for the benefits of the community. When highlighting the role of VUSTA for helping hundreds of local NGOs to be registered, Mai suggested that VUSTA was more non-governmental than state-like. She said: "VUSTA is one of the 'cradles' that gave birth to our NGOs. People have to acknowledge the role of VUSTA for hosting that [large] number of organisations" (Mai, interview, 28/11/2016).

Despite varied arguments about what is a civil society organisation, the informants tended to associate civil society with an organisation's social functions in society. Rather than articulating the ambiguity of the civil society's autonomy in the system of mono-organisational socialism, the informants often highlighted the role of civil society organisations in caring for people's interests in the process of economic development.

After the reforms, Vietnamese women working in the NGO sector to reproduce the position of women in socialism seem to bear a resemblance to women in other post-socialist economies. For example, Hemment (2014) writes about Russian NGO activists in crisis centres which were supported by Western feminist organisations to mobilise transnational feminist movements to address domestic violence. She argues that these activists have rather demonstrated the role of carers for those displaced in the process of economic restructuration than performing feminist activism. Similarly, I found that the NGO professional women in Hanoi often highlighted their privileged positions in the transnational NGOs network to mobilise resources to care for the marginalised and the vulnerable in society. It is noticeable that when care seems to account for a key function of civil society organisations in Vietnam, the idea of civil society seems to illustrate a social function of the socialist state, regardless of whether organisations are mass organisations or NGOs (Kornai, 1992; Hannah, 2007). Specifically, the way the informants, whether from NGOs and mass organisations or INGOs, focused on the performance of carers seems to reflect Hannah's (2005, 2007) proposition of the people's realm in the Marxist-Leninist model.

Hannah's research (2007) on civil society in Vietnam suggests what they call a 'Three-Bubble Model' (See Figure 9), in which the people's realm is an inseparable part of the Marxist-Leninist political system. In this Three-Bubble model, the state describes the functions of each bubble through the slogan: "The Party leads, the People rule, and the government manages[11]" (Hannah, 2007, p. 54). Moreover, the people's realm, in the Marxist-Leninist political system, is managed by the state to ensure the collective interest of the mass proletariat (Kornai, 1992; Tran, 2016). This notion is highlighted in the slogan "the state of the people, by the people, and for the people[12]". When the slogan highlights the role of the socialist state to defend the people's interest, the notion of the state of the people seems to confirm the state's legitimate representation of the collective interests in society. The notion of the people's realm in the socialist model of society often illustrates the state's control of the collective interest of the masses rather than representing the plurality of interests in civil society (Kornai, 1992; Rigby, 1991).

[11] In Vietnamese: *Dang lanh dao, Nha nuoc quan ly, Nhan dan lam chu.*
[12] In Vietnamese: *Nha nuoc cua dan, do dan va vi dan.*

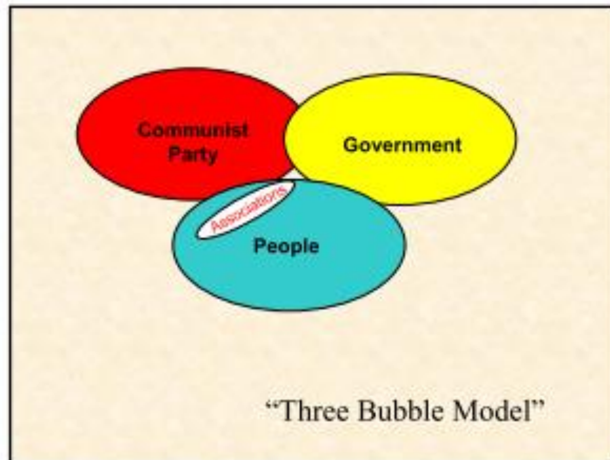


Figure 9 - Hannah's Three-Bubble Model

(Source: Hannah, 2007, p. 54)

It seems clear to me that when the informants defended their interests in the people's realm, they often showed a complementary role with the state's overall responsibility for the collective interest in society. Specifically, they often demonstrated the position in civil society to care for people's interests, which is embedded in the state's provision of the social function of individuals/organisations in the people's realm rather than the autonomy often assumed by foreign donors about the function of civil society.

In the international aid agenda, NGOs were often advocated by donors for a necessary autonomy from the state to play the role of watchdog or introduce alternative development (Edwards and Hulme, 1996; Tvedt, 1998; Van Rooy, 1998; Mitlin et al., 2007; Howell and Pearce, 2001). For example, Mitlin et al. (2007) have proposed that NGOs as "non-governmental" are independent from the state to create small and alternative development from the mainstream development process. However, for the NGO professionals in Hanoi, who were concerned to perform the role of carers, the status of "non-government" seems to cause an undesirable separation from the social function of care in Vietnam's social system. It seems clear that Vietnamese NGOs, which are still struggling to defend their legitimate status, continue to rely on the state's provision of the social function to perform caring responsibilities in society.

In my interviews with informants, they often expressed the ambivalence of the NGO identity, which is not always associated with their endeavours in society. Especially, when the term NGO is still banned from the official usage, it often evokes negative inferences of un-governmental or counter-governmental. Informants also expressed concerns about the ambiguity of the NGO title, which was often associated with anarchists or out-laws. This is partly because the NGO term in Vietnamese as *phi chinh phu* (non-governmental) was often misinterpreted as *vo chinh phu* (un-governmental). For example, Yen expressed the common misinterpretation of her organisation for an un-governmental organisation as follows:

> *For example, if I told other people that I was working in a non-governmental organisation, they would not understand what a non-governmental organisation is. Because everyone usually associated non-governmental with un-governmental (laugh). People in NGOs would turn out to be like the outlaws. Therefore, it [NGO] generates a very negative meaning (Yen, interview, 17/11/2016)*

Several scholars of Vietnam also write about the scepticism of the state about the use of the terms civil society or NGO, which are often associated with anti-government undertakings or movements (Hannah, 2005, 2007; Taylor et al., 2012; Thayer, 2009; Salemink, 2006). My data also suggest that these terms in Vietnamese, such as *to chuc phi chinh phu* (NGOs) or *xa hoi dan su* (civil society), though discussed freely in daily conversations, are still absent in public use, for example, in official documents or on conference banners. Besides the ban of the state, the ambiguity of the "non-governmental" terms often caused undesirable misunderstandings about the work of the Vietnamese female NGO professionals in relation to the government's general responsibility of care, which is legal in accordance with the socialisation policy.

Moreover, the informants seemed to consent with the state to refrain from using these terms on public occasions. They acknowledged that the misinterpretation of the terms *phi chinh phu* or *xa hoi dan su* had caused problems that prevented them from doing the work of NGOs in society. It seems clear that these problems come not only from misinterpretation of their role in the community but also from government which often associates these terms with anarchic or reactionary groups (Thayer, 2009; Kerkvliet, 2015, Kerkvliet et al., 2008). It is understandable that the NGOs, which are organisations with a registered status, often avoid being associated with these kinds of group. For example, a recent study of the state's

repression of citizen-led social movements in Vietnam suggests the tactic of NGO professionals to avoid direct confrontation against the state to protect their legitimately registered titles to work for their interests (Vu, 2017).

My field data suggest that, rather than opposing the state, the NGO professionals in Hanoi often highlighted the contributions of NGOs to society as complementary to the social function of the government. Noticeably, they tended to agree with the government's categorisation as *to chuc xa hoi* (social organisation) rather than publicly used the names *xa hoi dan su* (civil society) or *to chuc phi chinh phu* (non-governmental organisations) in public conferences or on formal documents.

In December 2016, I attended a public conference on the topic of networking with and between civil society organisations for the combat of HIV/AIDS, organised by VUSTA and funded by the Global Fund. On the bilingual banner of the conference, the phrase *to chuc xa hoi* (social organisations) was used in parallel with the English subtitle *civil society organisations*. Mai, my informant, made a speech at the opening ceremony in the presence of the Deputy Prime Minister. She highlighted the role of science and technology organisations in the HIV/AIDS national programme in Vietnam. In her speech, with a special address to the Deputy Prime Minister, she assured the audience, including the presence of the Deputy Prime Minister, that science and technology organisations are also called Vietnamese NGOs which are not un-governmental but those working for the benefits of the community with non-profit purposes. She said:

> *Because of their non-profit feature, science and technology organisations are called non-governmental. Therefore, we should not be worried about organisations which are called Vietnamese non-governmental organisations because, in principle, they are science and technology organisations (Mai, field note, 01/12/2016).*

When I met Mai later for another interview appointment, she told me how she had advocated the legitimacy of *to chuc phi chinh phu Vietnam* (VNGOs) by highlighting the role of these organisations as the carers for the vulnerable in society. In particular, by aligning their roles with vulnerable groups, like the HIV/AIDS community, VNGOs' credibility seemed to be improved in the government's eyes. She told me: "When they saw these people, were they not frightened? We are real people who are doing real jobs". She recalled an informal occasion when the Deputy Prime Minister had acknowledged NGOs or civil society organisations by calling them by their names *to chuc phi chinh phu* and

xa hoi dan su as follows: “That’s it, non-governmental organisations, international organisations used to listen to civil society organisations like you. We sisters and brothers need to co-operate with each other” (Mai, interview, 28/11/2016).

Similarly, in a group discussion, one informant said that NGOs were recognised in the state system because there was a body in the government to deal with Vietnamese NGO businesses. In another group discussion, the participants said that they were not called *phi chinh phu* (non-governmental) but *to chuc xa hoi* (social organisations). One informant even made a joke: “So I often called me by a wrong name (laughed)”. From the anecdotes about the ambiguity in the use of term *phi chinh phu*, it seems to me that the informants were more concerned about the state’s acknowledgement of their role in society rather their non-governmental status. Especially, some informants expressed their consent with the state’s categorisation of *to chuc xa hoi* rather than being referred to as NGOs or civil society organisations. For example, in my interview with Ngan, she said:

> *When they (the state) said they do not know about that definition, it does not mean they do not know what we are doing. Because they are only the typologies of organisations. Actually, ‘phi chinh phu’ is also ‘to chuc xa hoi’. They are nothing different, right? (Ngan, interview, 28/12/2018).*

Like Ngan, Thao also said that the name NGO did not tell much about their work. For Thao, organisations like hers were working for the collective benefits of the community, which is not-for-profit. She said: “We are a non-profit organisation. That is the most important thing” (Thao, interview, 02/11/2016).

Despite the ambiguity of NGOs, the Vietnamese female NGO professionals seemed to be content with the social function of social organisations in society. Similarly, rather than deepening NGO/mass organisations discrepancies, NGO professional women often highlighted that they are more useful for maximising their independent resources rather than depending on the state for social work. Except for their financial independence from the state, it seems to me that Vietnamese NGOs are not different from mass organisations in terms of the social function in the people’s realm. Interestingly, this notion seems to reflect Nørlund’s (2007b) report about civil society in Vietnam, in which she suggests that mass organisations have played a more social rather than political function in the state system. It seems clear that the role of civil society organisations has been reduced to caring functions. However, when these caring functions are aligned

with the social function of the state, there is not much division between the state and civil society.

In the interview with Mai, she drew a structure of civil society in Vietnam to help me understand the system of civil society in Vietnam. According to Mai, civil society in Vietnam consists of social organisations including (1) socio-political unions (*Doan the chinh tri xa hoi*) which mainly are mass organisations, (2) socio-political organisations (*to chuc chinh tri xa hoi*), (3) socio-political and professional organisations (*to chuc xa hoi chinh tri nghe nghiep*), (4) organisations for special characteristics (*hoi dac thu*), social-professional organisations/associations (*to chuc/hiep hoi xa hoi nghe nghiep*) (5) science and technology organisations (*to chuc khoa hoc cong nghe*) which are alternatively Vietnamese or local NGOs (*phi chinh phu dia phuong/Vietnam*), (6) voluntary coalitions and (7) CBOs which are unregistered organisations. Noticeably, I found a similar categorisation of non-commercial juridical persons in the 2015 Civil Code. In the law, social organisations are equally recognised with other state-owned mass organisations for the non-commercial juridical person status “whose primary purpose is not seeking profits and its possible profits may not distribute to its members” (Civil Code, 2015, Article, 76-1). According to this law, social organisations have the legal status of non-commercial and non-profit organisations/persons, like mass organisations and the army, for the services for the community.

In addition, when the role of civil society organisations is assimilated with the social function of social organisations in the Marxist-Leninist system of society, civil society seems to play a subordinate role of the socialist state in the people’s realm to perform the social functions of the state. As presented earlier, without a consensus of what civil society is, the NGO professionals in Hanoi tended to demonstrate that they are closer to the people’s realm by responding to people’s needs. Noticeably, the notion of the people’s realm does not connote independence from the state. Rather, when demonstrating that they are working closely with people, the informants often highlighted the importance of the state’s recognition for their contribution to society for the benefits of the poor and the vulnerable. In this respect, the role of NGOs in the people’s realm has rather demonstrated the role of carers which is inseparable from the state’s overall representation of care for the collective well-being in the socialist system (Nguyen, 1974; Verdery, 1991).

Similarly, when civil society is submerged to the social function of care, a more proliferated and plural civil society has not separated from the control of the state. Noticeably, this civil society appears to be a zone for the freedom of individuals and organisations to maximise resources in society and the market to perform the state's vision of the collectivisation of care ownership (Nguyen, 2018). It seems clear that the embodiment of the role of civil society for caring functions has rather illustrated the state's vision of the collectivisation of care responsibilities for the well-being of the society, which is flagged by the socialisation policy.

As the data reveal, the competition between mass organisations and the local NGOs for social function seems to manifest mainly through the caring functions. Especially, co-existing in the people's realm, individually and privately owned NGOs seemed to show a compatible role with mass organisations in caring for the people's interests. In this role, both types of organisation are not independent from the state, which is supposed to present the collective interests of all people. In other words, the performance as carers of Vietnamese NGO professionals responds to the vision of collective well-being, which is inseparable from the responsibilities of the socialist persons rather than reflecting the freedom of individual interests. The notion of civil society in relation to the vision of collective well-being illustrates the social function of individuals and organisations under the provision of the socialist state which, though withdrawing from the subsidising mechanism, is still responsible for care with the socialisation policy. In the following section, I will present how women in NGOs have demonstrated the spirit of solidarity with the state to cope with the uncertainty of the market to protect their interests in the people's realm.

7.3 Building solidarity for the care work

During my fieldwork research in Hanoi, I attended several NGO public events. The events were often organised by networks of foreign and local NGOs in forms of NGO coalitions. It is noticeable that NGO networks used to be established to meet the requirements of donors. Under the requirements of donors, foreign and local NGOs formed coalitions to co-implement foreign-funded projects (Wells-

Dang, 2013). However, recently, many groups were voluntarily formed by local NGOs who got together to experiment with themes of their own.

In a coalition meeting, representatives from members of the coalition and the beneficiaries from the community got together to discuss the methods they employed or the progress of some activities they had implemented to improve the life of the beneficiaries. After the meeting, speakers and participants often presented some staged performances like singing, dancing, reading a poem, acting in a play or playing a game to demonstrate the changes experienced by the beneficiaries. Despite representing various interests in a project, participants in the coalition, whether from INGOs, local NGOs, mass organisations or from the community, seemed to show the spirit of solidarity to combat the challenges for the benefits of the community.

It is noticeable that the formation of coalitions is also a response of local NGOs to cope with scarce funding and the reduction of INGOs in Vietnam. In my interviews with the informants, they emphasised the necessity of forming coalitions to make a stronger civil society in terms of the mobilisation of resources among NGOs in the context of donors' retreat and the foreign funding crisis. For example, Thien, who is a founder of a local NGO and also a member of several coalitions, emphasised the needs for coalition instead of competition to mobilise resources among organisations to cope with the resource constraints in the context of a funding reduction. According to Thien, NGO coalitions are formed to strengthen NGOs through sharing visions, resources, and passions. She said:

> *We shared the vision and shared activates in a shared project. We get together to bid for the project. In this context, everyone understands that it is difficult to apply for a project individually. We need coalitions. I think there will be more coalitions in the coming time (Thien, interview, 30/11/2016).*

Other informants also shared concerns about the prospects of NGOs in the context of a funding shortage and donors' withdrawal. For example, Duong discussed the necessity of forming coalitions to cope with the funding scarcity as follows:

> *Instead of working separately which you might get nothing or none of us gets nothing, we are now working together to gain a little. It is better to get something small [rather than nothing]. We will then share the work or work together. It is a natural trend in this situation (Duong, interview, 27/3/2017).*

The recent funding crisis seems to have strengthened solidarity among local NGO leaders who became more conscious about securing resources to survive in the NGO sector. Noticeably, the formation of recent coalitions seems to reveal a different cause compared to the previous forms of networking, which were usually formed by foreign donors. Many coalitions I know were formed by a group of leaders of local NGOs, who got together to mobilise funding or expertise to enhance the capacity to raise fund for their organisations. This form of coalition seems to address the priorities of local NGOs rather than foreign donors, unlike the earlier form of NGO network in the past.

The NGO Resource Centre was one of the organisations involved in the early form of NGO networks from the beginning of the period after *doi moi*. The NGO resource centre was co-run by a group of foreign donors and INGOs and the government of Vietnam to coordinate the activities of foreign donors in the context of international assistance in Vietnam since 1993 (Salemink, 2006). The centre used to facilitate many working groups under various themes. My informant, Trinh, has been a coordinator of these working groups for more than ten years. Trinh said that members of working groups at the beginning who were mainly INGOs and foreign donors got together regularly to exchange information about the government's policies and implementation of projects in major thematic areas. Many working groups were subsequently deactivated because of the recent wave of donors' withdrawal, including INGOs, from Vietnam. Considering the shrinking donors/INGO community in Hanoi, the centre recently only ran a small number of working groups, with less regular meetings, which are mainly led by representatives of local NGOs or Vietnamese staff in INGOs. It is noticeable that several donor-established working groups have been transferred to the ownership of Vietnamese counterparts both in INGOs and local NGOs[13].

People's Power[14] is one of the working groups set up by foreign donors since the 1990s which has remained active. The working group is currently chaired by a local NGO. My informant, Thao, who was the coordinator of the working group, said that the Vietnamese NGOs have now taken over most of the activities of the group. According to Thao, there were two major thematic programmes which were led by two active members who were also in charge of mobilising the

[13] See Hannah (2007) about the localisation of INGOs in Vietnam
[14] The name of the working group was changed to protect the identity of the informant.

funding for the regular activities of the group in these thematic areas. Rather than having an operational budget for the group, activities in the working group are developed with the available resources from the projects implemented by member organisations or flexibly mobilised by the member organisations for their priorities. Thao said:

> *We do not commit anything. We make (annual) plans from individual organisations' activities. If there is a funding of USD 10,000 or 15,000 from World Bank for certain activities, they will share with the group. Similarly, our organisations will take activities that belong to our expertise. Other Oxfam or Care will do the same. We are not dependent on any core donors in the group. We plan activities. Organisations will raise fund if we do not have a financial resource for any activity. We will write concept notes to different embassies and receive feedback from interested donors (Thao, interview, 02/12/2016).*

People Power is an example of the localisation of a donor-led group in which local NGOs have taken over to do things to match their priorities. When coalitions seem to illustrate a strategy of the NGOs to cope with the funding challenges, they also demonstrate the spirit of solidarity of the NGO community to protect their space for their businesses. Duong, who was a deputy director of a local NGO, emphasised the need for coalitions to make a stronger community. She said:

> *Coalitions or alliances have become the indispensable global trend. It is a way for NGOs to connect with each other in one area to make them stronger. This trend occurs when resources become scarce, and everyone becomes weaker. At that time, they have to hold each other's hands to make a stronger voice (Duong, interview, 27/3/2017).*

Other informants also emphasised the need for coalitions to build a stronger NGO community to maximise the resources for social work within the community. Dung was a leader of a local NGO which was also a leading member of CIVINET[15], a network of civil society organisations (CSOs) in Vietnam which is a member of a global civil society network. According to Dung, CIVINET focused on advocating an enabling environment to build a stronger Vietnamese CSO community. Though acknowledging legal restrictions that were causing difficulties for the development of NGOs in Vietnam, Dung considered the restrictions were not the main obstacle for Vietnamese civil society organisations. Dung argued that they

[15] The name of the coalition is changed to protect the identity of the informant.

were still able to work despite the restrictions of the government. Interestingly, rather than challenging the government for creating a less favourable environment, she criticised the dependence of local NGOs on foreign donors for funding. According to her, local NGOs have weakened themselves by only focusing on implementing projects of donors rather than building their own capacity. Dung also criticised INGOs for exploiting local NGOs rather than working with them as partners. She said:

> *They (INGOs) made great pressure on us. They paid our salaries so cheap. They appropriated our results as their own results because we were just their sub-grantees (Dung, interview, 06/03/2017).*

Alternatively, Dung highlighted the need to retreat from the dependence on INGOs. Dung proudly told me that her organisation were presently qualified enough to bid for grants internationally without having depended on INGOs for funding. Nevertheless, Dung said that being dependent on international aid was not always good. She insisted that local NGOs need to build their capacity from local resources in order to empower the local NGO community. She said:

> *We have not yet exploited the local resources which are endless. It is probably this time we have to catch up with the trend. Most NGOs in other countries need to rely on local resources, right? (Dung, interview, 06/03/2017).*

Like Dung, several informants also challenged the requirements of foreign donors as obstacles in terms of administrative procedures, pressures of the (short-term) project timeline and financial dependence as the obstacles for NGOs to do their own things. For example, Tam, who worked in a local NGO, said that she was not happy with the result of a project which was implemented to meet the donor's deadline. She said: "I felt guilty. I did not feel that I have done something that my colleagues and I wanted to do." (Tam, interview, 13/12/2106).

The informants also expressed the priority of doing things of their own rather than fulfilling the donor's requirements. For example, Tam said that after the project, her team continued the project in their own way without the funding. She said:

> *In the next phase, we did not have pressures of time or disbursements (from the donors). We continued to do the project with slower progress. We were happy with the final product. We did not have any budget. We get together because we wanted to do it together. The product was more meaningful with us (Tam, interview, 13/12/2106).*

Similarly, other informants told me about the maturity of local NGOs for the capacity to refuse funding from certain donors. For example, Quynh, a former leader of a local NGO, told me that, the release from donors' dependence was considered a sign of the growing maturity of the VNGO community. She said:

> *[Vietnamese] Organisations have more bargaining power. They feel that they do not need donors because they need funding to do the jobs that they want, but if donors do not agree, they will stop working with those donors. They do their jobs without donors. They will not try to meet the donors' demands at any price if they are not supporting their visions or the way they do their jobs. Because there are many and many more organisations, they do not need to do that (Quynh, interview, 16/3/2017).*

The rejection of Vietnamese NGOs' dependence on foreign donors reveals how the Vietnamese NGO professionals have shared the spirit of solidarity around the priorities to perform the caring responsibilities. Though foreign funding continues to be key financial resources for NGOs' survival, their reconciliation with donors' requirements seems to maximise the foreign funding to do "their own thing" in society. Especially, the formation of NGO coalitions to cope with the funding crisis seems to suggest the solidarity of Vietnamese NGOs to protect their collective interests in society. It seems clear that when coalitions were formed to protect the collective interests of local NGOs, they tended to defend their interests in caring for the community rather than merely conforming to donors' priorities.

The Vietnamese female NGO professionals also seemed to demonstrate shared interests with the government to care for collective well-being. Not only sharing the vision of collective well-being, some organisations have started to mobilise the government's financial support in the context of scarcity of foreign funding. For example, Duong expressed that her organisation were developing a strategy to mobilise the state's budget for their activities in the thematic area of HIV/AIDS. Rather than considering funding as weakening NGOs, Duong sees the priority of funding as being to secure their support for the community. She said:

> *One of our strategies is to mobilise budget from local governments, from provinces and the central government for the communities prioritised by the local governments that we are supporting. We do not care how much or whether the fund goes directly to our organisation. We only care that the state's budget was used to support the communities we are working with them. It is also a good source that we can mobilise (Duong, interview, 27/3/2017).*

According to Duong, her organisation was working with donors with shared vision and values rather than being dependent on the donors' priorities. In this respect, donors, whether foreign donors or the state, are not different when sharing with Vietnamese NGOs visions and values towards the benefits of the community. She said:

> *When working with foreign donors, we only chose to work with ones who have the same vision or the same purposes when doing this work together. There are many foreign donors out there, why I only work with a few. We can work with each them because we shared vision and values. Similarly, with the state, we only chose programmes which are suitable for us or sharing the vision and values with us (Duong, interview, 27/3/2017).*

Interestingly, when shared vision and shared values are often highlighted in coalitions between Vietnamese NGOs and foreign donors, they also represent the notion of friendship and solidarity. Salemink (2006) suggests that the Vietnamese government often treats the presence of INGOs or foreign donors in Vietnam as an expression of "solidarity" of the world with Vietnamese people rather than to support donors' agenda of an independent civil society. As he highlights, to work in Vietnam, INGOs are required to register with the People's Aid Coordinating Committee which is a member of the Vietnam Union of Friendship Organizations (VUFO). According to the state's interpretation of "friendship" (*huu nghi*), the presence of INGOs in Vietnam illustrates the "friendship" between governments and between the peoples. The INGOs or donors' presence in Vietnam, therefore, was often comprehended as an expression of the solidarity between the world and Vietnam's government and the Vietnamese people.

In this analogy, the account of the "shared vision" and "shared values" expressed by the informants seemed to reflect the logic of the notion of *huu nghi* (friendship) and *doan ket* (solidarity) between international and Vietnamese NGOs. It is clear that, when NGO coalitions seemed to illustrate the solidarity of NGO individuals/organisations to care for the well-being of people, the expression of the 'shared values' or 'shared vision' seemed to show the priorities of Vietnamese NGOs in the coalition working with foreign donors to realise the local actors' priorities. As the data suggest, when the gap between donors' and local priorities became widened, the Vietnamese female NGO professionals tended to get

closer with the government for the shared interests of the collective well-being rather than conforming to donors' priorities.

As demonstrated earlier, the formation of coalitions has illustrated the responses of the local actors to protect the space to realise the social function of organisations in society. The ambivalence of Vietnamese NGO professionals towards foreign donor seems to suggest a clash between the priorities of local actors and foreign donors over the civil society agenda. Salemink (2006) also mentioned about conflicts in the interpretation of the notion of civil society between foreign donors, local NGOs and Vietnam's government. As Salemink (2006) pointed out when foreign assistance was often comprehended as "friendship" and "solidarity", the implementation of a foreign donor's agenda in relation to civil society tended to legitimate the government's control of civil society.

As presented earlier, the coalitions of NGOs to cope with the scarcity of foreign funding also seem to show the solidarity of the NGOs to protect their interest in the caring role in society. It seems clear that when the notion of civil society is often associated with the social function of social organisations in the people's realm, mainly in relation to caring responsibilities, civil society organisations tend to demonstrate the "shared value" and "shared vision" with the state about the Vietnamese collective interests. In this respect, civil society organisations often shared the state's ideological and institutional provisions for caring functions.

The performance of the NGO professional women in NGOs in relation to the social function of social organisations in the socialist system also illustrates Ferguson and Gupta's (2002) notion of the top-down topography of the state in which civil society sits in the middle between the state and the grassroots to perform a role in the vertical encompassment. Rather than coercion, the state operates a mode of governmentality with imaginative and symbolic devices to mobilise the consent of the masses with vertical governance (Ferguson and Gupta, 2002, Ferguson, 2006). It seems clear that the Vietnamese NGO professional women have also mobilised the ideological and symbolic functions of social organisations in the socialist system to reinforce a legitimate role. Civil society actors in Vietnam, as Hannah (2007) suggests, when performing the professional role of carers, often demonstrate consent with the state rather than forms of opposition and resistance. Also, as I have presented earlier, the

Vietnamese NGO professional women tended to show the spirit of solidarity with the state for the shared responsibility to care. It is also noticeable that NGO professionalisation toward the role of carers is inseparable from the moral and ideological appeals of Vietnamese-ness in the area of international development, with Vietnamese NGO professionals who possess high levels of professional and educational accomplishments (Hannah, 2007).

In the following section, I will present how the Vietnamese NGO professionals have attempted to advocate their rights of association in the drafting of the Law of Associations. I show that, despite the absence of a legal provision, they often recalled the "rights" of the socialist persons who care for collective well-being. By mobilising the moral and ideological appeals of caring responsibilities in the socialist tradition, the NGO-led advocacy campaign has led to the delay of the law which was supposed to hamper the position of NGOs in the social realm.

7.4 Defending the space for care

It is noticeable that in the Marxist-Leninist political system, the state still maintains control of the social realm for civil society organisations (Hannah, 2007; Thayer, 1995). Nevertheless, the state does not always demonstrate an absolute exercise of the dictatorship of the social realm but seems to govern it with the moral and ideological appeals of collectivism which is embedded in the cultural and socialist tradition of Vietnamese society (Thayer, 1995; Nguyen, 2018; Kerkvliet, 2001). As I have presented earlier, the socialist ideology, on the one hand, mobilises the subject of freedom and autonomy with the vision of collectivisation of care. On the other hand, as I will argue, this ideology is also mobilised by the NGO actors to demonstrate the rights to participate in public space. Despite the absence of legal rights, the mobilisation of the ideological and symbolic role in the collectivisation of care seems to provide the NGO professionals with the legitimate rights to participate in the public life to care for the collective well-being. I will present in the following section how the NGO intellectuals have defended their rights under the symbol of all people in the drafting process of the Law of Associations. Rather than defending the rights of a particular group, the Vietnamese female NGO professionals often represented the collective interest of "all people". It is noticeable that the notion of "all people" which illustrates the

people's realm in the Marxist- Leninist system seems to be produced by the Vietnamese female NGO professionals to defend the legitimate rights to associate (Hannah, 2007; Thayer, 2009).

The drafting of the law was carried out between 2015 and 2016. There were several discussions initiated by various NGO groups which were organised to provide public comments (*lay y kien dong gop*) for the draft law. According to the informants, in this public commenting process, there seemed to be a consensus between the drafting committee and the NGO groups about the coverage of the draft law which included almost all organisations in society for the provision of the right to associate. However, on 10/10/2016, only half a month before the voting at the National Assembly, the drafting committee came up with another version of the draft law which removed NGOs and several other voluntary groups from the law. According to the new version, the law only recognised the rights of membership-based associations, thereby excluding NGOs and other non-membership-based associations.

In my discussion with the informants, they expressed the disagreement with the latest drafted version (the version on 10/10/2016) for denying the associational rights of NGOs. The draft law was also criticised for obstructing Vietnamese associations from receiving funding from or getting associated with organisations overseas. According to the informants, there was a consensus within the NGO groups to mobilise political support from the community to advocate for the delay of the law which was planned to vote at the National Assembly on 24/10/2016, about two weeks after the final draft was released. Finally, the law was for another time delayed. Though the law was not passed, the informants seemed to be satisfied with the result. It is noticeable that though they were not covered by the law, NGOs were active in the advocacy to postpone the law. My informants said that they did that to protect the associational rights of all people, which was protected by the constitution. Thao, who was an active member in the People's Power working group, which was one of the leading groups advocating for the delay of the law, told me:

> *No VNGOs would want to be regulated by the final version or the draft law which was discussed at the National Assembly meeting. It [the drafted law] contains more obstacles and more regulations. No one wants to be regulated by it. They [VNGOs] are still working under the provision of the Law of Science and Technology. In this Law [of*

Science and Technology], self-financed science and technology organisations, centres and institutes are still allowed to establish (Thao, interview, 02/11/2016).

According to Thao, there is no need to have a Law of Associations. As she argued, people are free to associate with the rights recognised by the constitution and the Law of Science and Technology. She said: “You do not need a law to have your rights which were confirmed by the constitution. The law in Vietnam is only to restrict your rights” (Thao, interview, 02/11/2016). However, Mai who has advocated the law since the 1990s, emphasised the need for a Law of Associations to protect the legitimate rights of NGOs. Mai expressed the fear of NGOs being eliminated without the protection of the law. She highlighted the need for a law to recognise the legitimate role of NGOs for care in society. She said:

We are also a kind of association. There are membership-based associations and non-membership-based ones. The membership-based associations work only for the interests of their members. However, we work for the benefits of the community and society. We aimed at a mission at the broader scale. You have to see [the importance] of our organisations. Not everyone understands it (Mai, interview, 28/11/2016).

Despite the contradictory visions about the necessity of the Law of Associations, the consensus of different groups of NGOs in the drafting process to defend the rights to care for the community seems to illustrate the solidarity of the NGOs for the defence of their rights to associate. It seems clear that when defending NGOs as non-membership-based associations, the women often highlighted their role in caring for all people’s interests rather than the member’s or individualistic interests. The advocacy of the associational rights for all people to perform the caring functions seems to illustrate the socialist vision in the socialisation policy for the extended contributions to society rather than the free rights for individualistic maximisation. Noticeably, the NGO-led advocacy campaign seemed to have successfully mobilised political support in the state to postpone the law which was supposed to exclude NGOs from the law.

Several researchers on Vietnam have written about the drafting of the Law of Associations since the early 1990s which was anticipated as a law to legalise the rights to associate in the constitution (Sidel, 1997, 2000; Thayer, 2009; Salemink, 2006). From the 1990s to 2016, the law was shelved at least three times after being discussed in the government’s law-making agenda with hundreds of

discussions and dozens of revisions. According to Sidel (2010), the main reason for the delay of the law was the reluctance of the state to formalise the rights for fear of colour revolutions which were rampant in Eastern Europe, which were supposed to develop from the independent civil society. Nevertheless, the absence of the law has not impeded the rapid growth of associations and voluntary groups on the ground (Sidel, 1997, 2000; Thayer, 2009; Salemink, 2006). Thayer (2009, p. 8), for example, has said that the "explosion of associational activity" in Vietnam since the 1990s has "outpaced Vietnamese legal statutes".

When the delay of the law does not seem to justify the proliferation of associational activities, the promulgation of the law also seemed to be suspended by the resistance of organisations. In this process, NGOs have played a critical role in defending their rights in the drafting of the law, which often excludes them from the provision of associational rights. This time was not the first time the law was suspended by NGOs' resistance. For example, Sidel (2010) has written about the proposition of a law which was drafted by intellectuals in VUSTA to defend their rights, which was unprecedented in the law-making practice. Thayer (2009) also suggested that NGO elites had successfully lobbied for the delay of the law in the drafting period between 2005 and 2006. My data also suggest that NGO groups have played a major role in lobbying for the delay of the law which had been planned to pass at the National Assembly in October 2016. Furthermore, despite making no progress in the legalisation of the associational rights, the delay of the law when leaving NGOs with ambiguous legal status seems to account for Vietnamese NGOs' victory in the defence of their associational rights.

During my fieldwork in Hanoi, I received an email from one of my informants that called for the cancellation of the drafted law on behalf of the People's Power coalition. The email was sent to approximately 70 email addresses. The email highlighted the impact of the drafted law on the prospects of Vietnamese associations with clear messages such as: "will make thousands of Vietnamese people joining associating activities illegal" or "associations without affiliating and joining foreign associations and receiving foreign funding will put Vietnam in isolation and backwardness… and freezing associative activities in the country" or "many opportunities for the existence of application-approval instruments and

arbitrary decision-making" and "the associational rights of foreigners in Vietnam is not recognised" (field note, 14/10/2016).

In my interview with Thao, I asked her whether People's Power represented any particular group in society. Thao told me that the coalition was advocating for the associational rights of all the people in society rather than any particular group. She insisted on defending the right of all Vietnamese people to associate to maximise the contribution of people to society. She said:

> *We do not represent any particular group in this law because we are advocating the law for the Vietnamese in general. Therefore, we aimed at criteria that enable the Vietnamese to establish their own groups and work the freest in order to both meet their demand to associate and to contribute the most to the society (Thao, interview, 2/11/2016).*

When talking about the rights of all people, Thao repeated several times that she was defending the associational rights which were legally protected by the constitution. According to Thao, the draft law has restricted the rights of all people, especially the vulnerable, who wish to contribute to the community. Especially, she highlighted the unfairness of the law in its restrictions to the equal rights of all people who associate for the contribution in society. She said:

> *Actually, in Vietnam, that process (registration) is no easy. Many groups who wish to do social work. There are groups of social workers in Sai Gon, for example. They wished to organise the association of social workers. They could not register their group because they (the state) said that there are groups established by this person or that person. If they wish to associate, they need to join the available groups (Thao, interviews, 02/11/2016).*

The NGO professional women, when reflecting on the drafted law, also expressed concerns about the future of NGOs when being excluded from the right to associate for the benefits of vulnerable people. According to them, NGOs were unable to defend the interests of the vulnerable in society when being restricted from associational rights. For example, Thanh expressed her interest in transforming her NGO to become a membership-based organisation for the disabled. When defending the interests of the disabled, she expressed her concerns about the uncertainty of the future of her organisation for the benefits of the disabled rather than the board of directors. She said:

> *We want our organisation to sustain longer. Even when the director and I no longer work here, the next generation will take over and develop the organisation. They still maintain and sustain the value of*

the organisation. We need a consistent legal framework for us to do that (Thanh, interview, 17/02/2017).

In general, the informants expressed their uncertainty about the prospects of organisations and associations of the people who wish to work for the benefits of the people, especially the vulnerable, in society. They criticised the unfairness of the draft law, which was not made in the interest of all the people. Rather than advocating for their own organisations, they often highlighted the interest of all people. Noticeably, though there is no legal provision for NGOs to associate to defend people's interests, the association of Vietnamese NGO professionals to protect people's interests seems to have gained some sympathy from constituents in the political system. In my discussion with Dung, who led the advocacy in CIVINET group, she said that they were advised by members of the National Assembly to lobby to postpone the law as a way to maintain the status quo. She said:

> *[Because] There was a direction (from the top). We were advised to advocate to postpone the law. There was no other way (smiled). Because the law would be definitely brought out and determined accordingly from the top (Dung, interview, 16/3/2017).*

The delay, nevertheless, was considered as demonstrating the success of the immediate advocacy campaign of the Vietnamese NGO professionals. In my interviews with the informants, they often expressed their concerns about the new law which will block them from professionalisation in the role of care of the community. The delay of the law, though it held them from the right to associate, was considered a success as it demonstrates the "right" to work for the care responsibility. Their defence of this "right" seemed to show the appeal of the associations of Vietnamese NGO professionals, which gained the political support inside the state system. In other words, the NGO professionals continued to highlight their responsibilities to care for all people, which seemed to account for the legitimacy of these NGOs recognised by the political system. Despite being established outside the state, the relational labour of Vietnamese NGO professionals to the state's general responsibility of care seemed to justify the ambiguous position of NGOs within the system of mono-organisation socialism.

Nguyen (2018) has argued that the socialisation policy evokes the responsibilities of all the people for the ownership of care in the collectivisation tradition (Nguyen, 2018). The notion of "all the people" is not independent of the socialist state that is supposed to represent the people's collective interests (Rigby, 1991; Nguyen,

2018). It seems clear to me that, the informants, when defending the right of all people, often recalled this right in relation to the collectivisation of the ownership of care in the socialist tradition. In other words, individualisation of care under the category of socialist labour is not separate from the collectivisation of care. Noticeably, I found that there was a consensus among NGO groups, of both men and women, in the advocacy for the right to associate, which often highlighted individual responsibility to care for the collective well-being (rather than defending the interest of individual organisations). Though the advocacy was considered challenging against the top leaders' decision about the law, the NGO-led petition for the right to associate, in this analogy, did not to fall out with the state's vision of the socialist person for the ownership of care in the socialisation policy.

Several studies have suggested that Vietnam's socialist government still opposes the idea of an independent civil society. For example, Carlyle Thayer (2019) has written about the series of brutal state repressions and closure of civil society organisations or voluntary associations established for political or liberal interests. In this repressive environment, NGOs seemed to access the political privileges to gain an autonomous space to carry out the NGO business. In addition, as revealed by the advocacy campaigners, they were able to participate in and challenge the law-making process with political support from inside the state system. I also found that NGOs elites were able to mobilise solidarity in society to resist the state's decisions. It seems clear that the state's arbitrary repressions do not always have the consent of society. However, NGO elites seemed to demonstrate a role in the Gramscian notion of the "sphere of consent" to reconcile tensions in society (Buttigieg, 1995, p. 30). Like Vu (2017) who has discussed the sensitive and fragile NGO registered entitlement, I also found that the informants tended to reconcile the repressive environment to protect the realm restricted to their commitment to the care function.

During my fieldwork in Hanoi, I was invited to attend a street march in Hanoi which was organised by an NGO coalition to commemorate International Women's Day. However, the march was cancelled within a few hours of the event. Instead of marching, the organiser held a small event inside the walled garden of the History Museum in Hanoi. The celebration of women was started with the performance of a female aerobic dance group and followed with some games joined by male participants. My informant, who was a member of the organising committee, told

me on the day that the permit for the march was withdrawn at short notice. Though informed of the cancellation of the march, several participants waited until the end of the event to convince the organisers to continue the march. When observing the reactions of the participants, it seemed to me that the state's arbitrary restrictions tended to trigger resistance rather than obedience. In the end, the march did not happen since the organiser refused to disobey the government's order.

When this event was recalled in my interview with Dung, she agreed about the regular and arbitrary obstructions of the state in many NGO-led activities. However, she did not suggest the state's repression as the main obstacle to stop NGOs to realise their goals. She said:

> *There are many ways to realise their goals. Is your goal marching around the Lake or (outreaching) communicating the message to many more people as possible? Right? You will find different ways to achieve either of these goals (Dung, interview, 06/03/2017).*

Dung recalled how the state's restrictions against an event commemorating CSOs' contributions to society in 2015 had resulted in a collective reaction against the state. As Dung recalled, the failure to get a permit from the government for the event has eventually turned into a nation-wide campaign raising the spirit of solidarity among all Vietnamese civil society organisations to defend their rights to contribute to society. The repression of the state has resulted in the enhanced awareness and promotion of the rights to care, of individuals and organisations across the country. According to Dung, despite failing to happen, the CSO networking event has raised public concerns about the state's repression against NGO's contribution to society. She said:

> *The story has reached a massive audience and raised the concerns among CSOs that they should make a louder voice and have more rights to do this or that. In the beginning, you might only want to commemorate a small contribution. However, the communication following the incident has communicated more profound information (Dung, interview,06/03/2017).*

Despite the absence of the law, the resistance against the state's repression seemed to show a consensus in the Vietnamese NGO community to defend the right to participate in society to contribute to society. As mentioned earlier, the defence of the right to associate of Vietnamese NGO professionals often illustrates the responsibility of all people to care for the collective well-being appealed to by the socialisation policy. Rather than defending their individual

interests, Vietnamese NGO professionals highlighted the representation of NGOs for the collective benefits of "all people" which seemed to gain political support both from the political system and the grassroots.

It is also noticeable that when defending a caring function in society, the NGO professionals demonstrated consent with the state's general responsibility of the collective well-being. Rather than mobilising the resistance from resentment, the Vietnamese NGO professionals often showed their position in the middle to mobilise political support from the state and to galvanise social solidarity. In addition, the performance of the women in the role of carers seemed to demonstrate the responsibility of socialist women in public life to protect collective well-being. Interestingly, the professionalisation of care work in NGOs tended to help them to perform an indispensable role in the reconciliation of social conflicts in society that have been intensified by the process of marketisation and privatisation. In the following section, I will describe how Vietnamese NGO professional women have professionalised care work with apolitical and non-confrontational approaches to ensure peace and non-confrontational relations between society and the state.

7.5 Optimising for professionalism

Between 2015 and 2016, there were several street demonstrations in Hanoi, with gatherings of large amounts of people in prominent areas in Hanoi, i.e. the walking streets around Hoan Kiem Lake, Thien Quang Lake, Lenin Park, Lenin statue, or around the government cluster in Ba Dinh district. The demonstrators often gathered in public areas to express resistance to or reactions against local and central government policies in recent years (Geertman and Boudreau, 2018; Le, 2013; Vu, 2017). Studies of the social movements in Vietnam in recent years suggest an active role for civil society organisations which have contributed to the advanced organisation of the movements in terms of visibility, quantity and scale (Wells-Dang, 2011; Vu, 2017; Thayer, 2009; Kerkvliet, 2018).

In March 2015, Hanoi observed a mass mobilisation of Hanoi residents against the city government for the decision to cut down trees in many streets in Hanoi. The incident was often mentioned as the Tree (Hugging) movement which involved mass gatherings around Hoan Kiem Lake, Thien Quang Lake and in

streets where trees were to be cut down. In April 2016, there was another large-scale mass mobilisation of people in many cities from the North to the South to protest against a Taiwanese company, Formosa Ha Tinh Steel, for discharging waste into seawater in the coastal areas in Central Vietnam. The crowds demanded transparent and accountable investigations into the cause of massive numbers of dead fish in the region. On Facebook, which has become the most popular means of daily communication for Vietnamese people, there were videos of the waste disposals by the company, which were allegedly causing the dead fish, despite the government's unconfirmed explanations of the causes in the public media. A massive amount of people were asked to respond to this by changing their profile pictures on Facebook with slogans *Toi la nguoi Vietnam Toi chon ca* (I am Vietnamese I choose fish) or *Ca can nuoc sach, dan can minh bach* (Fish need clean water, people to demand accountability) to show solidarity with the suffering experienced in the central coastal area in Vietnam. The more confrontational and open resistance of the people in public areas seems to illustrate the revival of social movements, which have become rare since the anti-colonial and anti-imperial movements led by the communists during the revolutionary period (Kerkvliet, 2011).

Studies of recent social movements in Vietnam suggest coalitions between formal and informal in society. Andrew Wells-Dang (2011), who studies the networks of social movements in Vietnam and China, suggests that the networks of the recent social movements in Vietnam have progressively engaged with different groups in society. His study of the development of social networks in the organisation of social movements in Vietnam suggests a connection between INGOs, local NGOs and voluntary and unregistered groups in society. When looking at the organisation of the movements, he also suggested that movements in Vietnam were "people-driven" campaigns in which people were voluntarily and temporarily, associated to defend the collective interests of the local community.

Similarly, Vu's study (2017) of the Tree (Hugging) Movement in Hanoi in 2015 suggests a new form of citizen-led activism, in which NGOs temporarily allied with unregistered groups to exercise activism to mobilise social change. According to Vu (2017), the Tree movement in Hanoi was neither led by any specific leader, nor any group, to promote a new ideology which was aimed at challenging the socialist state. The citizen-led movement was driven by the collective interest of

various groups in society who temporarily got together to mobilise emotional and physical participation of people in all social clusters to make an appeal to the local government for the transparency and accountability of the tree replacement policy. The coalition of NGOs as registered groups in the citizen-led movement was not permanent but rather the “symbiotic relationship” in which NGOs relied on the temporary coalition with unregistered groups in the movement to legitimise activism which was often restricted by their registered status (Vu, 2017, p. 1183).

Specifically, Vu (2017) suggested the “surreptitious symbiosis” that Glasius and Ishkanian (2015) used to describe the preferences for activism of NGO actors outside their professional positions in NGOs. However, it seemed to me that the Vietnamese female NGO professionals when participating in the popular movements tended to demonstrate the solidarity among Vietnamese people to defend the collective interests, rather than strengthening their political coalitions with oppositional groups. In other words, I found that participation of NGO professionals in these movements seemed to consolidate the position in the middle, of NGOs between the state and the grassroots to mobilise political support from the both the top-down and bottom-up. Rather than opposing the state, the informants often demonstrated the position of carers from which they mobilised support from both the state and society. Especially in the caring role, the Vietnamese female NGO professionals seemed to perform a greater role in closing the gap rather than exacerbating the conflicts between the state and society.

In the interviews, the informants often expressed the spirit of solidarity with people’s recent reactions in the mass gatherings to demand the transparency and accountability of the government’s policies. Despite the risk of arrest, they started to participate in the movements by signing on-line petitions or joining the crowds in public places. The informants often associated their role in the movements with the expertise or responsibility of NGOs to protect people’s interests. For example, Tien has recently joined the crowds in the Tree movement, despite admitting that she had previously distrusted the effects of social movements. When acknowledging that her participation in recent social movements was motivated by her job in the NGOs, Tien also expressed compassion with the demonstrators who led an example of social change. She said:

Because of my job, I had to create a petition to collect the signature of supporters. Initially, I found this job was silly and nonsensical. After that, I saw the impact of that job. When I know better about the nature of the job, I accepted it more easily. Now if there are movements like the Formosa[16] case when I see thousands of people going down the street, I would find it easy to accept because it is the movement of the society (Tien, interview, 11/11/2016).

When meeting with Ngoc, a leader of a local NGO, she said that the Tree movement was the first attempt among key members in a local NGO coalition to organise a street campaign against the non-transparent decision of the Hanoi government to cut trees down. According to Ngoc, she participated in social movements to defend people's right to demonstrate. She said:

Our participation in street demonstrations and LGBT movements around the Hale lake was to practice our rights to demonstration (Ngoc, interview, 7/3/2017).

Ngoc, when admitting to adopting the activist approach, insisted that the organisation of the movements was a technique which was articulated carefully by NGO leaders rather than a spontaneous decision. When insisting on the technical approach in social movements, she seemed to defend the political independence of the NGO elites in the movements from other politically driven groups. She said:

When you involve in a movement, you are still a technical person, right? After all, it is my experience and my technical [knowledge] in the organisation. That is the key [core competence] that I can involve in the policy-making, or I can work with the community. When we work in social movements, we are all the technical persons. We are not [spontaneous]. We articulated what the engagement technique is. That was not a spontaneous coalition (Ngoc, interview, 7/3/2017).

The NGO professional women, when joining the citizen-led movements, seemed to demonstrate a technical and lawful approach to promoting non-confrontational solutions rather than agitation. Though the activist approach was adopted by several NGOs recently, there were criticisms against activism for causing the distrust of the government for NGOs. Some state-retired NGO founders even expressed their discontent with the activist approach. For example, Hoang, a founder of a local NGO, considered activists as extreme, which caused the state distrust of NGOs:

[16] Formosa is the name of the Taiwanese company which was allegedly caused the massive dead fish in the central area.

(Because) There are some organisations in Vietnam that were so extreme. They made lousy noise to protest or participating in this or that business, the people (nguoi ta) tend to have a less amicable view about NGOs (Hoang, interview, 5/12/2016).

Dung, a young leader of a local NGO, also criticised activists for exacerbating the negative aspects in the society to justify the necessity for social movements as follows: "They always criticise. They mobilise social movements to protest and to exacerbate the negative things." (Dung, interview, 6/3/2017). Dung preferred to describe herself as an educator rather than an activist. As an educator, Dung highlighted the usefulness of her skills and knowledge for bridging the gap between society and the state. She said:

I adopt the approach of educators. I fill the gap of knowledge between civil society organisations and the state and tend to harmonise their relationships. We also build the image of CSOs as a contributor to the development process (Dung, interview,6/3/2017).

It seems clear that when the Vietnamese NGO professional women developed towards a technical or educator approach, they tended to demonstrate a useful role to reconcile the conflicts between society and the state. Thien, a researcher and a leader of a local NGO, said that though her research was independent, it was not aiming to resist the government. Thien's description of the independence of NGOs from the state seems to demonstrate a better role to identify and fulfil obligations in spite of the constraints of the current system. Despite the distrust of the state for NGOs, Thien anticipated more recognition from society, including donors and the state, for NGOs' contributions rather than oppositions against the state. She said:

Because of that [suspicion of the government for NGOs], I want to do something to make people realise that non-governmental organisations only have a different voice, an independent view but they are not opposing the state"(Thien, interview, 30/1/2016).

Like Thien, several women I met highlighted the necessity of their jobs in the NGOs to maintain the balance between social and economic development. For example, Thanh expressed her priority in seeking the balance in society rather than promoting the right-based approach. When expressing the preference for the balance, she seemed to play a role in preventing the confrontation with the state, which was not considered advantageous for her beneficiaries. She said:

When working, I always try to harmonise the benefits between the needs of the beneficiaries, the social benefits and the benefits of stakeholders, like the state or the businesses. Therefore, I always try

> *to find a solution that balances the benefits of stakeholders and to meet the expectations of the target groups. I think that the balance is good (smiled). I do not favour the negative solutions from the right(-based) approach. I do not want to get what I want by all means while sacrificing other values of the community. In my opinion, it is not a sustainable solution (Thanh, interview, 17/02/2017).*

In a focus group discussion, an informant disagreed with the proposition about NGOs as a competing force against the state's interests. By contrast, she highlighted the complementary role of NGOs to the state's broad-based provision of care. She said:

> *NGOs will never compete (with the state). They only work on the problems which were neglected by the government because it does not have sufficient resources, time or attention" (Nguyet, focus group 2, 25/12/2016).*

Quyen who is working on a project with the self-help groups of people living with HIV/AIDS also confirmed that her role in the NGO was to support the community at the grassroots level because they could not receive the medical assistance in the hospitals. She said:

> *Because their [government's] roles were in the hospitals. We support them at the community level. They know that it is the gap they have left. Therefore, we work together" (Quyen, interview, 23/11/2016).*

Moreover, to work with the state, Quyen expressed that she also had to learn to be skilful (*kheo*) to gain the state's recognition. As presented earlier, the NGO professional women in Hanoi often highlighted their priorities to work for the benefits of the community, which was inseparable from the state's general responsibility of care. In addition, the women who aspired to care tended to demonstrate their usefulness through the professional capacity of reconciliation and a peaceful approach, rather than confrontation. The way the women chose to be skilful to avoid conflicts with the government seems to reflect the constraints of the NGOs imposed by their registered status (Vu, 2017; Glasius and Ishkanian, 2015). Moreover, beyond the registered status, it seems clear to me that NGO professional women in Vietnam tended to be dependent on the state for legitimate recognition of their role as carers. It seems to me that the dependence of the NGOs on the registered status and the legitimate role for caring functions better explain the avoidance of Vietnamese NGO professionals for activism or opposition. In other words, when NGO professional women often showed that they were experts in caring, they also tended to demonstrate that they were professional in reconciling conflicts rather than resisting the state. For example,

when talking to Duong, she highlighted her work in the NGO was to help other people. According to Duong, to help other people, NGOs should go along with, rather than resisting against, the government. She said:

> *If we want to contribute to this society and you want to contribute to the changes, even of the state, you have to go along with them. When you are willing to go along with them, you can go with them. At that time, you can create mutual impacts. Because when you go with them and understand them, you will find the opportunity to find the window or the gate to walk in. If you choose to counter with them, they will beware of you. How can you see any possibility to open any window or door? (Duong, interview, 27/3/2017).*

The account of "going along with" the government illustrates how the women shared the interests of care with the government. It seems clear that rather than defending the independence of NGOs, the women tended to create trust by developing the skills (*kheo leo*) to work with the government peacefully to have the opportunities to defend the interests of the people. The way the NGO professionals defended their interests in terms of legitimacy and their role in civil society with their expertise in the reconciliation of conflicts seems to illustrate Hannah's (2007) description of the professionalism in Vietnamese NGOs. Hannah (2007) also found a preference of Vietnamese NGO professionals for apolitical techniques rather than confrontational actions. Building on Ferguson's (1994) notion of the apolitical machine of international development, he argues that the professionalisation of Vietnamese NGOs tends to build a non-confrontational civil society rather than the capacity of opposition and resistance.

Similarly, as presented earlier, my data also suggest that the Vietnamese female NGO professionals often showed that they are experts in conflict reconciliation rather than agitation. Furthermore, I also found that the NGO professional women who were professionals in care often demonstrated their indispensable role in maintaining peace and refraining from conflicts. Recalling the interview with Ngoc, who has recently engaged more in social movements in a coalition with unregistered groups, she expressed her responsibility in producing the next generation using peaceful approaches. Instead of developing activism for agitation, she talked about her mission in building peace. She said:

> *After I learned more about peace, I understand the value of peacebuilding. I understand how important inner peace is. Peace is created by ourselves but not brought by anyone" (Ngoc, interview, 26/2/2017).*

Ngoc's NGO currently organises training courses for young people. I met her in a coffee shop when she was conducting a training course for young participants. Looking at the young learners who were having a break from the class, she expressed her belief in the next generation of professionals who were trained with the peaceful approach would contribute to peaceful development. She also expressed her responsibility to protect young people from agitation. She said: "I do not want to create a generation of non-violent resistance in Gandhi's way. If I did not teach them, they would go to the unsafe direction; it would be their mistakes" (Ngoc, interview, 26/2/2017).

Like Ngoc's organisation, several registered NGOs recently have had regular connections with voluntary groups in society. They provided the newly formed groups with free training, office spaces and sometimes financial support. During my fieldwork, I joined a regular meeting of an LGBT group. The meeting was organised in the office of a local NGO. In the meeting, members in the group practised skills of sharing and tolerating differences. They also learned how to raise funds to organise their own activities. Hoai, 25 years old, who was part of the NGO staff but also a founding member of the group, expressed that she was planning to join another group member in running an independent group outside of the NGO. Rather than taking the activist approach, she expressed her vision of creating a peaceful and safe environment for the LGBT community in Hanoi. She said:

> *We set up our group with the hope that Hanoi would become a safe and friendly space with Queer. They can express themselves and enjoy fair access to private and public services. They raise their own voice. They can tell their stories if they like. We do not target policy advocacy but can join and cooperate if necessary. We aimed at raising social awareness and creating our small space for networking among queer people in a safe and friendly way (Hoai, focus group 1, 4/12/2016).*

The interest of the young informant in a non-political civil society is clear. Her vision of a non-political and peaceful civil society reflected the tradition of the Vietnamese socialist women to care for the people and her country. The informant's vision of a tolerant civil society did not seem to reflect an interest in ideological change or opposition against the state. Rather, it showed the intent of building an autonomous civil society to care for the community. It seems to me that women's reproduction of the care work in this autonomous community

illustrates an autonomous civil society inspired by the ideological and moral appeal of women's reproductive role embedded in Vietnam's Confucian and socialist tradition. In this autonomous realm, the professionalisation of NGOs continues to galvanise social solidarity with the consent with the process of economic restructuration of Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation.

It is noticeable that Vietnamese female NGO professionals who were empowered with the caring functions also demonstrated their responsibility to develop a civil society. For example, Quynh, who was no longer working for NGOs, believed that she continued to contribute to civil society through a moral lifestyle and technical knowledge that she gained from the NGO. According to Quynh, NGO staff continued to contribute to society even after they have finished their missions in NGOs. She said: "An organisation is like a root which can develop into a new tree. It can produce fruits or seeds to build more new trees. What was there in the organisation would not disappear but developed into something from the old root. They develop into different sizes and shapes" (Quynh, interview, 16/3/2017). It seems clear to me that the new civil society, inspired by the socialist spirit of care, continues to evolve with new forms, spaces and time.

7.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have illustrated how Vietnamese female NGO professionals demonstrated a civil society in the system of mono-organisational socialism. Specifically, I have shown how Vietnamese NGO professionals had defended the responsibility to care in the people's realm in the Marxist-Leninist system of society. Without a provision of the legal rights to associate, the Vietnamese NGO professionals have demonstrated the "right" to care in the people's realm to perform. The way they possessed the right to care rather illustrated the ownership of care responsibility flagged by the socialisation policy which evoked responsibilities of all people as socialist people to care for collective well-being (Nguyen, 2018). It seems clear that the Vietnamese NGO professionals, whether working in state-owned mass organisations, local NGOs or INGOs, all demonstrated an indispensable role for the maximisation of resources for the care work in the context of Vietnam's marketisation. The findings on the competition among the professionals, from local NGOs, international NGOs and mass

organisations in Vietnam, for the practical role in the people's realm, has illustrated how they have competed for the social function in the people's realm which is integral to the role of the state in the Marxist-Leninist system (Hannah, 2007).

The account of civil society as a subset of the people's realm has rather illustrated the shared vision for collective well-being. The coalitions of organisations which perform the social function for the well-being of people in society reflect the Marxist-Leninist model of society. The findings on the Vietnamese female NGO professionals' performance in the people's realm suggest that they did not differentiate themselves from state-owned mass organisations in terms of the caring function in society. Rather, their performance for better care of the people in society demonstrates their closer relations with people in the society, which show the responsibility of the socialist persons for the ownership of care mobilised by the socialisation policy (Nguyen, 2018, 2019). The coalitions of Vietnamese NGO professionals in the context of foreign funding reduction have pushed them closer to the state for the shared responsibilities of care rather than opposing or resisting the state. The relationships between the state and the NGOs through the caring function in the governance of care suggest the space between the state and society which is not completely vacant nor entirely controlled by the dictatorship of a mono-organisational system. The performance of the women working in the NGO welfare regime to allocate care in the context of the state reduction of welfare demonstrates ethical citizenship and continues to rebuild social relations and to galvanise solidarity. The formation of the cluster of NGOs with shared responsibilities with the state to care for people in society also suggests that the Vietnamese NGO professionals have produced and accumulated the power to allocate within the logic of the economy of shortage, which accounts for the power of intelligentsia in socialism (Konrád and Szelényi, 1979; Verdery, 1991).

Though having no associational rights, the Vietnamese female NGO professionals have demonstrated the associational "right" to care in the public space which is endorsed within the vision of socialist women. The notion of the "right", as I have demonstrated, has rather reproduced individual responsibility for the ownership of care in the collectivist tradition. In this respect, the Vietnamese NGO professionals seemed to grow in their solidarity with the state,

with the vision of collective well-being. This finding illustrates Ferguson and Gupta's (2002) and Ferguson's (2006) notion of the consent with the state for the imaginative and symbolic attributes of the state. In this respect, the vision of the socialist person seems to justify the solidarity between individuals and the state in relation to individual and organisational responsibilities for collective well-being. The finding that Vietnamese NGO coalitions mobilised resources for the care work independent from the priorities of donors demonstrates the shared interest between the Vietnamese NGO professionals and the state in doing "their own thing". When doing "their own thing", the Vietnamese NGO professional women have shown the spirit of solidarity with the state by responding to the moral and ideological appeal of the ownership of care in the Vietnamese socialist tradition. The economic and professional performance of the Vietnamese NGO workers, through professionalisation has also evoked the image of a new Vietnam with the high economic growth and solidified socialist spirit which has become a symbol of the success of Vietnam's market-oriented socialism (Hayton, 2010).

The professionalisation of the development work in NGOs towards care functions has also brought the professional women a distinctive middle power of civil society for the political support from both the state and society (Ferguson and Gupta, 2002; Banks et al., 2015). Rather than developing the capacity of resistance and opposition, Vietnamese NGO professionals have accessed political privileges in a politically repressive environment which is hostile and intolerable to liberal and independent civil society. As I have demonstrated, the Vietnamese NGO professional women, whether from the private, state or international NGOs, have competed for the social function in the people's realm in relation to caring responsibilities. Their performance seems to illustrate an autonomous realm which resembles a civil society. Rather than a legally protected civil society, this new social realm gains political support from the state and society for the commitments of Vietnamese socialist persons to dedicate their labour and progress to care for the prosperities of the family and community. The findings on women's reconciliation with the state's repressions despite political support and open opportunities for resistance suggest their preference for the political privileges in the middle position in relation to caring functions. The NGO women's performance in professional roles, i.e. educators or trainers, seems to repeat Vietnamese women's traditional reproductive role which protects the

harmony and peace of the society and the country, for which they mobilise the support from both the state and the grassroots. The professional performance of the women working in the NGO sector with the moral and ideological symbols of caregivers in Vietnam's Confucian and socialist tradition, in this respect, illustrates Gramsci's notion of "the sphere of consent" which explains the dynamics of civil society in Vietnam's post-socialist economic transformation.

Chapter 8 – Conclusion– personhood and civil society: making the *homo-oeconomicus* with the socialist soul

8.1 Introduction

In this research, I have used Foucault's notion of governmentality to explore the dynamics of the autonomous civil society in Vietnam's post-socialist economic reforms. This research has looked into the personhood of Vietnamese female NGO professionals with an examination of the economic maximisation and forms of freedom that the women mobilised from the transnational NGO professional network in the context of market liberalisation. By using governmentality theory, this research has revealed the personhood of Vietnamese post-socialist women whose economic maximisation and autonomous optimisation in the NGO sector illustrates a mode of governmentality operated by Vietnam's socialist state. The research also contributes findings on the consent of the Vietnamese NGO middle-class women with their traditional productive role, which accounts for a position for the women in the public life. The research reveals a notion of public life in Vietnam's Confucian and socialist traditions which is significantly different to the notion of the public sphere in the capitalist West, or at least as proposed by Habermas as a legally protected public sphere to ensure the practice of individual liberal rights (Keane, 1998; Kaldor, 2003; Howell and Pearce, 2001). The findings of the research on the *NGO welfare regime,* which is dominated by women's voluntary labour, have rather illustrated the ideological and moral appeal of women's reproductive role in the Vietnamese socialist tradition. The formation of the *NGO welfare regime* bears a resemblance to Zhang and Ong's (2008) proposition of "the new social", but not a civil society to reinforce liberalism and pluralism. Rather, voluntary and self-governing practices in the autonomous civil society realm illustrate the consent produced by a mode of governmentality operated by socialist Vietnam to conduct autonomous economic maximisation from afar with imaginative and symbolic devices of the socialist hegemony. The finding on consent in civil society illustrates the Gramscian notion of civil society as the "sphere of consent" in which the dominance of NGO middle-class women

working in the framework ethical citizenship continues to reproduce the socialist rule in Vietnam's post-socialist market liberalisation.

In this concluding chapter, I recapitulate the findings from the research to answer the overall research question: *What does the examination of the personhood of the post-socialist female professionals working in the NGO sector reveal about the dynamics of civil society in Vietnam's doi moi economic renovation?* I will highlight the original contributions of the research when presenting key findings revealed by the research process.

I also summarise methodological contributions of insider research. From the experience of conducting an insider inquiry into the natural settings of the community, I will present how insider research could be improved by maximising reflexivity and triangulation. I next reflect on the limitations and implications for future research using the Foucauldian notion of subjectivity in the process of generating narrative data for the research. This section is aimed at making suggestions for future research using a similar framework or research methods to add to knowledge of the social world.

I will spend the last section reflecting on the journey of doing PhD research. I summarise the learning experience from the PhD research programme, which has helped me to improve not only my academic knowledge of the studied areas but also the process of conducting independent research in an academic environment. The research on the personhood of the Vietnamese women in the context of Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation also has enriched my personal experience of getting to know about the process of "making" my "self" in the context of marketisation and privatisation.

8.2 Key research findings

8.2.1 Governing from afar: making the *homo oeconomicus* with the socialist soul

I have, so far, presented the findings of the *homo oeconomicus* characters of the post-socialist women working in the NGO sector in Vietnam's market reforms. The performance of the women for the maximisation of individual freedom and

economic value in the context of the post-socialist market liberalisation in Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation illustrates the Foucauldian notion of self-government for the maximisation of entrepreneurship and market resources. Foucault's notion of governmentality suggests the technology of the self, which highlights the self-government of individuals in autonomous decision-making, risk-taking and calculations for individualistic and materialisation satisfactions. With this technology, individuals operate like entrepreneurs or enterprises with economic rationality and calculation for economic maximisation. In this notion, individuals are considered *homo-oeconomicus* or *the economic man* whose economic maximisation is moral to fulfil the imperative of self-care in Christian liberal culture (Foucault in Rabinow, 2000; Ong, 2006; Rose, 1996, Miller and Rose, 2008). Proponents of neoliberalism have furthered the Foucauldian notion of *homo oeconomicus* to disseminate the imperative of self-government for economic maximisation with market liberalisation as the optimal condition for individuals to optimise entrepreneurship and freedom for individualistic and materialistic maximisation (Rose, 1996, Miller and Rose, 2008; Ong, 2006; Hayek 1979).

In this research, I also found that women in the post-socialist economy in Vietnam have exercised the freedom to choose to optimise economic benefits and materialistic privileges. The findings in Chapter 5 on the NGO middle-class suggest their attempts to outperform in the context of market liberation to earn a higher income and to consume products and services for their well-being. The acquisition of the high educational, economic and professional levels of the women working in the NGO sector illustrates how Vietnamese NGO professional women have optimised market liberalisation rather than depending on the state for employment and consumer commodities. The women with access to professional privileges in terms of higher education overseas, transnational and international mobility and higher income from professional positions in the cosmopolitan NGO environment bears a resemblance to the NGO middle-class which has been depicted widely in the literature on the cosmopolitanism of NGOs. There has been widespread criticism of the professionalisation of NGOs, which is assumed to have produced class privileges for a particular cohort of NGO professionals who exacerbate the divide and inequality alongside the transnational aid network (Schnable, 2015; Narayanaswamy, 2016; Mercer and

Green, 2013). My research findings on the NGO middle-class also suggest the superior positions of the NGO professional women with the material and professional conditions accumulated from NGO professional positions. The acquisition of privileged material assets demonstrates civility and modernity, which accounts for the prestige of NGO middle-class in Vietnam in the context of post-socialist market expansion.

In line with the contemporary literature on the middle-class in the neoliberal consumer culture, the research reveals an NGO middle-class formed for high educational, economic and professional performance in the economy. The performance of the NGO middle-class women in Vietnam illustrates Weber's notion of the middle-class to acquire privileged goods and services symbolic to the middle-class rather than the Marxian notion of class in relation to capital ownership. Rather than representing their wealth status, the economic performance of the women demonstrates their reproductive responsibilities which also account for women's upper position in Vietnamese society. In Chapter 5, I have presented women's embodied position of the upper and middle-class with the prestige of the Vietnamese intellectuals. Resembling the role of the intellectual in the Confucian tradition, the Vietnamese NGO professional women demonstrated a subordinate role to the state's general responsibility to care for the well-being of local communities. In addition, I have shown that women's performance in the caring role also illustrates how the state continues to guide women's performance in the economy with the "correct" conduct. The finding on the middle-class anxieties suggests the ambiguity of the wealth status which is incompatible with the socialist political system which still rules in Vietnam. The women's performance for the middle-class prestige is often associated with forms of hard work and sacrifice rather than the maximisation of materialistic and individualistic satisfaction. Despite the market liberalisation, women's economic maximisation for the reproductive role has rather demonstrated the prestige of Vietnamese women in the Confucian and socialist tradition. The finding on the anxieties of the middle-class with the wealth status in the post-socialist Vietnam also illustrates Mills' (1951) notion of the uncertainty of the middle-class for lacking the social structure of prestige, and whose members are often reliant on the ruling class from whom to borrow class prestige. The research reveals that, rather than the prestige of property owners, Vietnamese female NGO

professionals often demonstrated the prestige of the socialist women who are good at both public work and housework. It is noticeable that the performance of the NGO middle-class women in the economy to fulfil women's reproductive role also reflects the state's guidance on the "proper woman" with the vision of the civilised and cultured family. The findings in this respect suggest that women's liberation in the economy has demonstrated the state's vision of the "correct" conduct of women's performance in the economy, which continues to bind women's power to the domestic realm.

The performance of the women in the professional role of care in NGOs illustrates ethical citizenship in economic sovereignty, particularly in the context of Vietnam's post-socialist economic restructuration and the reduction of the state-owned social sector. Ong (2006) has written about governmentality in China with the market sovereignty in which individuals are governed by the market principle of profit-driven and economic maximisation beyond the sovereignty of the nation-state. The state, though it no longer intervenes in individual economic decisions, guides the collectively economic performance of individuals in society with the vision of "socialism with Chinese characteristics" (Zhang and Ong, 2008, p. 14). Zhang and Ong's (2008) proposition of "socialism from afar" suggests that China's socialist state governs individual self-governing practices in an increasingly spatial society with the vision of *suzhi* (people of quality) which continues to justify individual economic activities within the state's vision of national interests. Similarly, Nguyen (2018, 2019), who writes about privatisation in Vietnam's *doi moi* economic reforms, proposes that Vietnam's socialist state conducts the self-reliance of individuals with the notion of *dan tri* (intellectual level) in the same logic of new prudentialism. The notion of *dan tri* when it highlights individuals for the capacity of self-reliance and individualisation of care is inseparable from the state's vision of collective well-being, and therefore, regulates individual economic behaviour by highlighting the self-responsibility of the socialist person for success in the market. It is clear that in the notion of "socialism from afar", the nation-state has not disappeared but is created and recreated with the imaginative and symbolic ideals of socialism that compel individual economic performance. Individual economic performance, in this respect, represents ethical citizenship of economic sovereignty, yet continues to serve and subordinate to the power of the nation-state sovereignty. In Chapter 5,

I have shown that the economic performance of Vietnamese NGO professional women repeatedly demonstrated the moral obligations of Vietnamese socialist women for the state's vision of collective well-being. The women's performance and transformation into the figure of intellectuals illustrate the notion of *dan tri* for self-government and optimisation to maximise economic and individual resources with the vision of collective well-being in the socialisation policy. It seems clear that *dan tri* has become a mode of government from afar which allows the state to mobilise "all the society" for economic efficiency with the moral and ideological appeal of the socialist person with the vision of the collective well-being (Nguyen, 2018). Women's economic maximisation when continues to contribute to this vision is "re-moralised" as the symbol of the upper- and middle-class.

In Chapter 6, I specifically looked at the ethical citizenship of Vietnamese female NGO professionals in the domain of care. In this respect, I have engaged with Muehlebach's (2012) notion of ethical citizenship when describing the performance of voluntary low-waged or unpaid labour in the role of care in the context of economic restructuration. Like Muehlebach, who proposed the moral appeal of care in the context of the state's reduction of welfare, I also found that NGOs have exposed a desirable career track which attracted a cohort of voluntary female NGO workers in Vietnam to produce and accumulate relational value through acts of care. As proposed by Muehlebach, the performance of the low-waged and unpaid volunteer social workers which are mostly the retired and unemployed workers in the role of care in the context of economic austerity in Italy has drawn social compassion with both exploited status and sacrifice of the care workers. Through this embodied role as carers, voluntary social workers have gained a sense of belonging and played a role in galvanising social solidarity in the context of increasingly and excessively self-interested economic exploitation. The finding on the performance of the highly educated women in Vietnam in the role of care suggests a different system of the relational value of care.

In the system of the Confucian and socialist humanitarianism in Vietnam, care is often associated with the power of the rulers (Nguyen-Marshall, 2008). In the socialist system, caregivers positioned in the middle-management strata possess the distinctive power to play the redistributive role of the state (Verdery, 1991). This notion explains the distinctive power of caregivers in Vietnam's Confucian

and socialist tradition. Rather than representing the condition of the exploited, the Vietnamese highly educated women demonstrated the power of the ruler in professional positions in NGOs. The findings in Chapter 6 of the women's economic performance in the economy to care for the family suggests that Vietnamese women's power is still confined to the domestic realm. The performance of the Vietnamese NGO professional women in the role of carers for the well-being of the family and community should be seen within the context of Vietnam's socialism in which women's reproduction also illustrates the socialist labour for the socialist welfare. Women's role as carers in the NGO sector bears a resemblance to Muehlebach's notion of ethical citizenship, which is vested in the voluntary and autonomous NGO sector which has been professionalised toward caring functions. Yet, as I have demonstrated, the production of care in NGOs does not substitute the state. As the symbol of the socialist labour, the economic performance of Vietnamese female NGO workers for reproductive role continues to exemplify the idea of women's emancipation through the contributions to the collective welfare.

The finding on Vietnamese women's performance in the NGO sector in Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation illustrates a notion of socialism from afar. The state has operated a mode of governmentality to conduct women's voluntary will to improve for the care work with the ideological and moral appeal of the care work in Vietnam's socialist tradition. Rather than coercion, the state conducts individual activities for wealth generation with the vision of collective well-being to control autonomous activities within the priorities of the state. As the research reveals, through the examination of the notion of *dan tri*, the state has governed women with the ideology of the "socialist woman", which interprets women's role in the public life with the free forms of entrepreneurial-self to care better for the family and the community. The research findings suggest that this form of governmentality has guided women's performance in the market, which is fraught with contradictory and normative values of materialistic commodities and uncertain class status in the market.

The research reveals women's dependence on the state's vision of *dan tri* as the notion of the proper personhood for the contributions to the happy family and peaceful society. Women's freedom in the market continues to demonstrate the will to improve towards economic areas which specifically appeals to women's

traditional reproductive role. The findings of women's voluntary participation in the professional career in NGOs in the context of the state welfare reduction suggest that they have demonstrated ethical citizenship in the economy for the reproduction of welfare, which is endorsed by the socialist state. It seems clear that NGOs have become an ideal platform for Vietnamese NGO professional women to accumulate ideological and moral symbols denoting the prestige of socialist women based on their economic performance in the market economy.

8.2.2 Civil society: (re-)making the power of Vietnamese socialist women

In this research, I have presented the self-government of the Vietnamese NGO professional women in the context of Vietnam's post-socialist market liberalisation. In the open and multi-sectoral economy, Vietnamese NGO professional women have maximised the market opportunities to seek desirable employment and to acquire material assets through consumption. The performance of these women in the economy illustrates women's participation in public life for the realisation of economic maximisation in Foucault's notion of self-government. Foucault especially highlights self-interested materialistic maximisation, which accounts for the economic rationality and calculation of self-government, which also frees individuals from the ideological domination of the ruler (Foucault in Rabinow, 2000, pp. 74-75). The research findings of women's free and voluntary choice to work in voluntary and professional positions in NGOs in Vietnam to perform the role of care suggest the power of the ruler which is rooted in the history of Vietnam's matrilineal, Confucian and socialist tradition. Vietnamese women's free and autonomous economic performance, in other words, does not merely illustrate their interests in individualistic maximisation but also the moral and ideological symbol of the superior in relation to women's traditional reproductive role.

In Chapter 5, I have presented the findings of the Vietnamese NGO professional women's economic, educational and professional performance, which illustrates women's participation in public life in the socialist tradition. With the abolishment of the central planning mechanism, women's full employment is no longer ensured by the state. The findings of the Vietnamese NGO middle-class women

suggest they have relied on the market to acquire higher education, professional positions and a higher salary. However, women's materialistic maximisation in the economy does not account for Vietnamese women's role in public life. The findings on women's sacrifice of materialistic and individualistic satisfaction to maximise economic resources for the care of the family and the community explain prestige of the Vietnamese NGO middle-class women in the society. It is important to acknowledge that the notion of public life is not compatible with the idea of the public sphere to reinforce individual free rights. Habermas specifically highlights the fact that the public sphere must be a legally protected realm to reinforce the practice of free participation to encourage pluralism and democracy (Keane, 1998; Kaldor, 2003; Eade and Pearce, 2000). On the other hand, the notion of public life in socialism is recognised with the state's recognition of women's as socialist workers in a socialist socio-economic system (Gal and Kligman, 2000a).

The socialist ideology of women's emancipation endorses women's full labour status, whose reproduction also accounts for women's role in the economy (Gal and Kligman, 2000). This notion of public life resonates with the idea of women's freedom and voluntary participation in professional positions as carers in NGOs to gain a role in the context of socialisation. The socialisation policy which mobilises all the people's responsibilities for the ownership of care in the socialist tradition does not remove the state's general responsibility of the collective welfare. Women's participation in the professionalisation of care work in NGOs in response to the moral appeal of collective well-being in the socialisation policy continues to demonstrate shared responsibilities with the state. It is noticeable that care also accounts for the prestige of the ruler in Vietnam's Confucian and socialist humanitarianism (Nguyen-Marshall, 2008). Women's reproduction of care, in relation to the socialist humanitarianism, through forms of sacrifice for the well-being of the poor and vulnerable, has given the Vietnamese NGO professional women a role in the public life in the context of state welfare reduction.

In Chapter 6, I have presented how the Vietnamese NGO professional women have accumulated the ideological and symbolic values of care which account women's role in public life. The women's economic performance for domestic responsibility often accounts for women's virtues in Vietnam's Confucian

tradition. The Confucian doctrine confines women to the domestic realm with the moral obligations of virtues and submissions to men in the family (Marr, 1984). The socialist state though declares that it emancipates women from the domestic realm with recognition of women as socialist workers, yet highlights women's sacrifice for the care of the family and the community (Pettus, 2003; Werner, 1981). In the same resonance with the Confucian doctrine, women's reproductive labour for the collective well-being is seen as "*cong*" or "public virtues" which account for women's prestige in society (Marr, 1984; Jellema, 2005; Nguyen, 2019). In this system of credentials, women's production of care continues to account for the value of women's productive activities in the economy (Nguyen, 2019; Werner, 1981; Marr, 1984). The findings in this respect suggest that the state's recognition of women's role in the public life has not liberated women but rather resonated women's freedom with the free market to resume a role in the society, which continues to confine women's main responsibility to the domestic realm.

The research reveals that the Vietnamese NGO professional women in the role of carers often recalled their "entitlement" to public life in this logic. In Chapter 7, I have presented findings of the women's participation in NGO coalitions to demonstrate the "right" to care. Without the legally protected rights to associate, the NGO professionals who defended the "right" to associate often evoked the responsibility of the socialist women to care for the collective well-being. Women's defence for the "right" to associate often recalled the "right" in the same resonance with the responsibility of "all the people" in the collectivist tradition evoked by the socialisation policy (Nguyen, 2018). Especially, the possession of caregiving positions in NGOs accounts for the distinctively privileged positions of those in the middle where they accumulate political support from both the state and the grassroots. This finding illustrates Ferguson and Gupta's (2002) proposition about the topography of the spatial government in which civil society posits a middle position below the state and above the grassroots. In the middle position, civil society mobilises a source of government power to encompass the masses in society vertically.

I also have presented the women's performance in the people's realm, whether from the local NGOs, international NGOs or mass organisations, to compete for the social function of the state. In the context of the state's reduction of welfare,

the women, in the private sector as well as state-owned mass organisations, seemed to produce and accumulate the power to allocate care with the moral and ideological appeal of the socialist person for the ownership of care. The NGO professionals gained autonomy from the state in the realm provisioned for the functions of care while continuing to reconcile the state's regular surveillance and repression for other political interests.

The finding on the forms of NGO professionalisation towards the role of care suggests that the Vietnamese NGO professional women often accumulate the middle power in the vertical governance. It is also noticeable that the socialist redistributive mechanism possesses a repertoire of ideological and moral power for caregivers in society (Konrád and Szelényi, 1979; Verdery, 1991). Earlier I acknowledged Muehlebach's (2012) notion on the relational values derived from the acts of care. It is noticeable that the socialisation policy in Vietnam does not render the logic of privatisation. As Nguyen (2018) points out, the state still possesses the highest power to assure collective well-being when delegating the care responsibilities to individual and organisational with the logic of collectivisation. The women's performance in NGOs with shared responsibilities with the state in the provision of care seems to illustrate a buffer zone in which they reallocate welfare in the context of state welfare reduction (Nguyen and Chen, 2017). The performance of the Vietnamese female NGO professionals in the provision of care is moral, considering the scarcity of care in the context of marketisation and privatisation. Considering care is also a powerful currency in socialism, acts of care performed by the NGOs women seem to illustrate the relational values not only for the social compassion with care which has increasingly become scarce in the context of marketisation but also because of the moral appeal of the economy of shortage. In this respect, women's professionalisation in the role of care in NGOs continues to demonstrate the relational value to the socialist redistributive functions.

The findings in Chapter 7 suggest that the Vietnamese female NGO professionals often demonstrated their important position between the state and society because of their professionalisation in technical and apolitical approach rather than agitation. The findings in this respect repeat Hannah's (2007) finding on Vietnamese NGOs as an apolitical machine. Ferguson's (1994) notion of the government of the development of the machine within the government

bureaucratic process to enforce development policies. The location of NGOs in this vertical government system is often criticised for eliminating the political weapons of civil society actors who are professionalised towards bureaucratic functions of the spatial government.

I also presented the embodiment of the Vietnamese female NGO professionals in the role of care in which they often reproduced the symbiotic power of caregivers with the shared responsibility of the state. On the one hand, the findings on women's performance in the role of care rather than devising opposition or resistance suggest the tactics of the NGO professionals to protect their fragile registered condition in a repressive authoritarian environment (Vu, 2017). On the other hand, in the spatial government, the NGO professionals continued to accumulate political privileges with the position in the middle to perform a subordinate role to the state and power to encompass society from below. The findings of professionalisation of NGOs towards the caring role illustrate how NGOs have moved away from political missions for forms of confrontation or opposition against the state but closer to and subordinate to the state (Ferguson and Gupta, 2002; Ferguson, 1994, 2006; Banks et al., 2015; Hannah, 2007). As the research reveals, NGOs have moved towards the functions of care with the vested interest of Vietnamese women, particularly for the moral and ideological appeal of the women's reproductive role in the socialist tradition.

The research findings on the self-governing activities of Vietnamese women in the NGO sector suggest an autonomous social realm formed by the "will to improve" of women in the professional role of carers in NGOs. These self-governing practices are continually restricted and controlled by ideological but also not less repressive means to shape the "will to improve" with the "correct" conduct. The mode of governmentality operated by Vietnam's socialist state has created a type of "the new social" found in Zhang and Ong's (2008) study of the privatisation in China, which has become distant but inseparable from the state's control. Rather than coercion, the state operates the mode of governmentality which allows the state to govern the autonomous economic activities of individuals in society from a distance with imaginative and moral devices of the state through which socialism is renewed.

As the research reveals, with the hegemonic position, the state has the power to encompass society vertically because of not only the bureaucratic process but also with the role of civil society in the middle. The findings on the exercise of Vietnamese NGO professional women in the caring role within the ideological and moral sphere of socialist welfare and the apolitical methods of NGO professionalisation suggest a civil society in the Gramscian notion of "the sphere of consent" (Buttigieg, 1995). In the middle position, the Vietnamese female NGO professionals have produced and accumulated not only social compassions for but also the political privileges of caregivers to nurture and educate the consent of the poor masses. The NGO sector with the welfare functions has become a "sphere of consent", which continues to produce the hegemonic power of the socialist state in the configuration of market-oriented socialism.

The formation of the "new social" for the functions of care illustrates the continuum between the state and society. Resembling Muehlebach's notion of the welfare regime, the NGO welfare regime emerged in the context of the state's reduction of welfare plays a role of connecting social relations and galvanising social solidarity through the relational labour of carers. The formation of this welfare regime resonates with the logic of socialism from afar with which the state on the top operates spatial governmentality with layers of civil society in the middle to educate the consent of individuals with the appeals of economic maximisation and with the socialist spirit. The formation of social relations in this social realm suggests how intellectual and entrepreneurial activities in this autonomous social realm continues to reinforce the hegemony of the socialist state. Marketisation in Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation has involved the formation of a quasi-civil society with autonomous entrepreneurial activities. The civil society formed by a mode of governmentality is distancing but not liberated from the state. Rather, autonomy and economic efficiency of individuals in this realm reinforce socialist hegemony with the "good sense" of self-government and self-reliance for the vision of collective well-being.

8.3 Methodological contributions

8.3.1 Contributions from insider research

I have implemented insider research to optimise my membership status in the native research environment and NGO community in Hanoi. By doing insider research, I have reflected on and discussed the methodological and ethical concerns associated with the insider status in the research process. As mentioned in Chapter 4, I optimised the insider status to gain the natural access of the member of the group to gain trust and rapport from the researched group in order to generate rich and authentic insider perspectives. Specifically, I utilised my identity as a Hanoian woman, and a former NGO practitioner, to gain natural access to members in the NGO community in Hanoi, to generate rich and in-depth data from the informants. I optimised my close relationships and friendships with the informants who are my friends and former co-workers or working partners in the NGOs in Hanoi, for the participant observation and their narratives of life stories. With the insider status, I gained the trust and acceptance of the informants to elicit intimate and in-depth stories which are only shared with the people they know.

The close relationships and friendships I previously had with the informants were useful for me to become immersed in the quotidian activities of the informants, to carry out participant observation in the natural settings to extract, verify and validate information for the research purposes. Nevertheless, doing insider research is also associated with methodological and ethical risks which might jeopardise the research results. In this research, I have explained the methodological and ethical risks associated with the insider status and the mitigation options that I have adopted to continuously reflect on critical issues associated with an insider status and to avoid any problems associated with this, including the risk of insider biases.

I have used my insider experience to describe the specific situations I have encountered because of my insider status. Specifically, I have discussed the assumptions of the informants about the researcher as “one of us”, which might influence the researcher with their insider knowledge. I have also reflected the

dilemmas I encountered as the insider researcher when researching the informants who were also my friends. I have discussed how I have maximised the intimacy to gain trust and rapport of the community to carry out participant observation, or to approach the informants through chain referrals and snowball sampling.

From my insider experience, I have attempted to discuss the strengths and challenges associated with the insider researcher position and the mitigations. As Taylor (2011) rightly highlighted, not many authors have sufficiently discussed the ethical issues associated with the friendship between the researcher and the informants who are his or her pre-established friends. By doing insider research, I have contributed to insider research with specific examples and solutions to mitigate the biases involved with intimate insider research.

I have discussed the specific solutions to mitigate the methodological and ethical issues associated with my insider status. As I have discussed in Chapter 4, I have maximised my insider status to get natural access to maximise the depth and richness of the qualitative data whilst also maintaining a temporary distance from the insider status to reflect and elaborate on, and justify, the methodological and critical issues associated with an insider status. I have discussed how I have optimised the flexible insider/outsider positionality throughout the research process of fieldwork, data analysis and writing-up. When withdrawing from the insider status, I was able to identify and justify the confusions associated with insider and outsider knowledge, or critically challenge the insider knowledge to seek another account of the topic under investigation. I also described how my experience of taking an outsider stance when discussing with the informants did not cause distrust among the informants. By making my researcher status transparent to the informants, I was able to mitigate the false assumption of the informants of the shared insider perspectives.

I also engaged in the ethical issues associated with doing intimate insider research with friend-informants. Specifically, I have discussed the dual dilemmas of the insider researcher to fulfil ethical obligations with the research process while protecting the friends' personal and intimate details, which is complex due to the blurred boundaries between friends and the researcher-informant relationship. I have discussed how I have engaged with reflexivity, by withdrawing

from the insider position to consider the relationship with the informants for the information received, based on which I deliberately decided in each case whether to use or omit different forms of personal and intimate information from the data set.

In this research, I have adopted a flexible insider-outsider positioning strategy to withdraw from the insider status when necessary to be aware of and mitigate the insider's biases and inherent ethical perils. The reflexivity was carried out throughout the research process, from the data collection, data analysis and the writing up of the thesis which involved the usage of the data protection techniques as necessary measures to protect the privacy of both informants and the researcher. The adoption of the flexible positioning strategy and reflexivity in the process of data analysis and writing-up was proved as essential to ensure the necessary objectivity of the researcher, while eliminating unnecessary friendship influence over the research process.

8.3.2 The generation of visual and textual narratives

In this research, I carried out multiple data collection methods to generate rich and in-depth data and to enhance the opportunity for triangulation from various data sources and types. The implementation of multiple qualitative data collection methods allowed me to generate rich and various forms of narratives involving textual and visual data from the fieldwork.

Besides using interviews and focus group discussions to generate the data from the informants, I experimented with concept-mapping as a means to generate visual data. This data generation method involved the informants in the process of memorising, organising and presenting the values in the narrative form. The use of concept maps was to generate a visual representation of key themes and the relationships between them on the maps. When conducting this method, I found that the generation of concepts and the organisation of the relationships between the values highlighted by the informants in the concept maps could be used to clarify the relationships between values, which are useful as a complementary method, with other textual data generation methods. Particularly, I found that the repetition of values and their relationships in the maps helpful to consolidate the findings in the data analysis. However, the brief presentation of the concept maps could not form an independent data source for drawing out the

themes. Rather, they could be implemented as a complementary method with other textual data collection methods to maximise the cognitive process of the informants. Specifically, I found that the combination of the concept mapping in the interviews was useful to consolidate the narratives of the informants. Mapping creates a good opportunity for the informants to organise and summarise the discrete details into the concise values and present them meaningfully into the maps.

It is also important to note that not every informant found the task equally easy and implementable. This finding seems to replicate Wheeldon and Faubert's (2009) concerns about the difficulty associated with individual informants in drawing a graph to meet the standard of a concept map. In addition to the graphs, I also asked informants to provide verbal explanations to clarify the relationship of the values on their maps. Although not all informants have successfully presented the relationships of the values in the maps, I found the recorded explanations of the informants in this task useful to consolidate the contents of the interviews.

In sum, the combination of interactive interviews and independent mapping activities have improved the process of data collection. Also, the collection of both textual and visual narratives in this research helped me to create necessary discrepancies for triangulation and reflexivity. Discrepancies in the data were helpful for the identification of meaningful variation and repetition in social narratives. The variation and repetition of narratives drawn from the comparison of both textual and visual narratives across the data set helped me to construct and validate findings in the narrative analysis.

8.3.3 Narrative analysis and the construction of themes

I implemented a narrative analysis to analyse the life stories and histories of different generations of the women working in NGOs in Vietnam. The narrative analysis was aimed at constructing the social narratives from the comparison and identification of the repetition and variation in the personal narratives of the Vietnamese female NGO professionals. I coded data in the interviews and compared those across the data set to see the repetitions and variations. This

process of compare and contrast was also aimed at finding narrative discrepancies to construct themes meaningfully.

To find and sequence themes and sub-themes, I implemented an inductive thematic analysis. I followed the steps of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 83) to code qualitative data to maximise the richness of the data. I combined both manual coding and NVivo software to identify and check the consistency of the codes to find the nuances of the themes. The themes were not only driven by the richness and informativeness of the qualitative data but also aligned with the appropriate literature to form meaningful answers for the research questions. Considering the complexity and messiness of the qualitative data, there was no linear process to analyse the qualitative data. The data analysis process involved numerous attempts to assemble findings in different ways in an effort to fit the data into a logic of interpretations. Combining the literature in the interpretation also helped to unpack the qualitative data meaningfully. After several attempts to connect the codes and refine the codes, I arrived at three main themes to answer the research questions, findings from which constructively build on the literature of governmentality and civil society with the specificity of Vietnam's post-socialist economic transition.

8.4 Implications for further research

I will discuss the limitations of the research to make suggestions for further study on this matter or using a similar methodological approach. I will first review the use of governmentality theory for conducting research into non-Western post-socialist contexts. I will then discuss the limitations of insider research and how I have overcome the limitations to build on the insider approach in social sciences research.

The Foucauldian notion of governmentality allows the research to look at the self-government of individuals to explore the economic personality of the post-socialist personhood in the context of the post-socialist economic transition. It is noticeable that there is also an ontological division in the employment of governmentality theory in research, which complicates the relations between freedom and the market. The government theory which is drawn from Michel

Foucault's discussions of subjectivity embedded in Christian ritual practice, which is considered a self-produced subject for the power realised from the consciousness and rationalities of individual freedom. In this tradition, individual freedom is regarded as a natural right when subjectivity is considered a self-generated product for self-interested economic maximisation rather than the subject of the ideological domination of the ruler (see Foucault discussions about subjectivity) (Foucault in Rabinow, 2000, Gordon, 1980). Markets, therefore, are considered as the means to maximise individual freedom for the self-interested economic maximum on the broad-base or in Harvey's words as "universality and goodness" (Harvey, 2005, p. 38). Governmentality, in the Foucauldian notion, is promoting subjectivity induced by market forces rather than the ideological domination of the ruler (Rose, 1996, Miller and Rose, 2008). In other words, taking individual freedom and universal rights for granted, neoliberal proponents tend to exaggerate aspects of individualisation and liberation informed by market forces, but is less concerned about ideological domination in the construction of freedom (Harvey, 2005; Leshkowich, 2012).

On the other hand, the theory of governmentality, as a mode of government from afar, is also employed to explore the governing techniques of the post-socialist states in the context of neoliberal economic restructuration. Studies of government from afar have split from the normative propositions of governmentality in the liberal capitalist tradition but look at the (neoliberal) technology to govern of authoritarian states in promoting the self-governing behaviour of individuals to conduct market reforms. Rather than liberating individual freedom, the state has mobilised the moral and ideological appeal of the free will in the market to realise specific economic development priorities (Harvey, 2005). Neoliberalism as "a set of (malleable) governing technologies" allows the state to govern self-governing activities with the conduct of conduct to maximise the capacity of free choice, autonomous decision making and the risk-taking of individuals in the market to enhance economic competitiveness in the global market while continuing to restrain and coerce political freedom (Zhang and Ong, 2008, p. 17, Ong, 2006). Despite market liberation, socialist states in post-socialist authoritarian societies such as China and Vietnam retain their singular power despite the collapse of Soviet economies in Eastern Europe. Governmentality, in the context of neoliberal exception, as Ong (2006) proposes,

provides a window for this research to explore the ideological tools of the state to conduct individual optimisation in the economy under state control. As I have demonstrated in this research, the socialist state remains the hegemonic position in the configuration of market-oriented socialism to encompass the society vertically with the moral and ideological appeals of socialism. I have presented how the state has mobilised the freedom for economic maximisation of Vietnamese female NGO workers in the context of the state welfare reduction with the socialist ideology of emancipation, which does not liberate women from the domestic realm with the freedom of the market. The finding in this research contests the proposition of neoliberal proponents of the freedom created by the free market's facilities and economic maximisation.

However, the approach of neoliberalism as a set of "malleable" governing techniques tends to treat society as a homogenous group with a shared interest in economic efficiency. It is also noticeable that economic maximisation in the sovereignty of the economy is often associated with the power to render forms of exploitation. As Ong (2006, p. 21) points out, individuals who are governed by the sovereignty of economic maximisation are subjected to forms of exploitation and inequality which are not governable by the sovereignty of the nation-state. This notion prompts forms of exploitation which might be exposed in the new hierarchy of the economy. By focusing on privileged NGO middle-class women, this research might miss the chance to look further at the power relations between different groups in the economy of care (for example, from different gender, economic, social and/or political backgrounds) which might inform forms of contestations and resistance caused by these differences. As a result, the research might miss the chance to expand the analysis of the hybridity in the configuration of market-oriented socialism. This limitation prompts a scope for a future study to unravel new forms of governmentality of the socialist state to retain the hegemonic position in the expanding market economy with evidence of growing inequality and exploitation in the post-socialist economic landscape.

This research also bears some of the constraints of insider research. As earlier mentioned about the limitations associated with the privileges of the NGO middle-class, as being one of them, I might have missed the opportunity to identify or critically challenge the privileged position of my being in the field as a female middle-class and well-educated researcher. As some have warned, research on

NGOs is often conducted by Western-educated, middle-class and liberal feminist researchers who have significantly shaped the knowledge of NGOs (Bernal and Grewal, 2014). In this research, I have maximised the privileges of my insider status to make an inquiry of the salaried female professionals in registered NGOs and organisations with legal standing. However, by focusing on this group, I missed a chance to look further at a large group of voluntary social workers in unregistered groups and voluntary community-based organisations. Considering the politically repressive environment in Vietnam, actors in these groups without access to official development aid and political privileges represent the subject of exclusion and deprivation associated with the forms of spatial government in the configuration of market-oriented socialism. This constraint of insider research offers an opportunity for future research to operate a strategy of insider/outsider positionality to include this group in the research of governmentality to reveal a more comprehensive picture of the civil society environment in Vietnam.

Finally, I want to discuss a limitation associated with the subjectivity of the informants in the personal narratives which were elicited. Particularly, as several authors have pointed out, narratives in society are considered to hold a repertoire of meanings related to the social and cultural structure of the group, which various traditions in social sciences have exploited to describe social phenomena by means of interpretation (Atkinson and Delamont, 2006; Mishler, 1986; Shenhav, 2015; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Nevertheless, narratives are also stories which are personalised products of individual storytellers, who tell the stories with (political) purposes. In particular, as Atkinson and Delamont (2006, p. 166) have pointed out, narratives should not be treated as the “truth” but “accounts” and “performances” with “rhetorical” and persuasive” functions. For this characteristic, narratives should be treated as “speech acts” rather than “at face value” (Atkinson and Delamont, 2006, Riessman, 1993). In other words, the culture and social structure underlying the performances of the authors of narratives to construct a particular chronological order reveals as much about the group as the content of the texts (Riessman, 1993; Atkinson and Delamont, 2006). Several authors, particularly Mishler (1986), Riessman (1993), and Antaki and Widdicombe (1998), have suggested to include language performances in the analysis of narratives to construct particular identities from particular storytelling strategies. In this research, the data analysis might have not sufficiently addressed the

performance of the storytellers. However, as I have explained extensively about my insider status throughout the process, I deliberately switched between both insider and outsider positions to better reflect on and evaluate the information provided by the informants. By using flexible insider/outsider positionality and reflexivity, I have addressed the performance of the informants in the process of data collection and analysis.

In addition to the above, the data analysis was aimed at constructing social narratives. Specifically, the purpose of the data analysis was aimed at constructing the collective narratives from the logic of the multiplicity of personal narratives in society (Shenhav, 2015). I analysed narratives for the collective construction of meanings, values and ideologies in the social and cultural context of Vietnam's *doi moi* economic renovation. Therefore, I concentrated on the comparison of personal narratives to identify the variation and repetition of the narratives for generalisation purposes. For this purpose, I have designed the qualitative research with the use of multiple data collection methods including interviews; focus group discussions; participant observation, and, concept mapping, to maximise the opportunity to generate discrepancies in the narratives.

By addressing the limitations in the theoretical framework, research design and the narrative analysis, I hope to offer insights for the improvement of the theoretical framework or methodological approach for future research in the same area. Also, by building theoretical and methodological rigour, this insider research offers an approach to decolonise scientific knowledge by building on the strengths of insider research, especially in the process of reconstruction and construction of local knowledge.

8.5 Learning experience

In this research, I have engaged in a complete process of conducting qualitative research on a topic which is close to my personal life, and work experience in the development sector, both in general and in NGOs in particular, in the context of the *doi moi* economic renovation in Vietnam that started in the late 1980s. Particularly, I have maximised my insider status to generate authentic but not less rigorous knowledge about civil society. The research on this area allowed me to explore and work out the problematic questions, the research gaps in the

literature, the research design, a fieldwork study, analysis of the data and write up the thesis.

In this research process, particularly, I have learned how to conduct research from the theoretically designed course work and sharing workshops, symposiums and conferences for and among PhD students, early career researchers and academic researchers and, most importantly, through trial and error, to seek the solutions for my own problems encountered in the research process. I learned that there is no best way to do research. Rather, the process involves the skills, knowledge and experience of the researcher which are accumulated and enriched through hands-on practice.

The experience from the fieldwork study was truly a precious lesson in my research process. Particularly, the implementation of different data collection methods in the field allowed me to activate my senses and capacities as a researcher to collect and record the desirable data for the research purposes. In the data analysis process, I had the opportunities to experiment with various ways of coding, both manually and on NVivo, to search and validate the findings and to increase my reflexivity in making inferences from the data.

The writing of the thesis has been truly a difficult journey. The implementation of the inductive data analysis means that I have started to write findings of the data from scratch. After that, I had to search for the literature to best describe the contextual phenomenon revealed from the data and reframe it within the area of the research. The writing of the thesis, particularly the findings chapters, therefore, was rather a part of the data analysis which involved trial and error. This process nevertheless was the best part of the learning process, where I learned more about the governmentality theories, the Gramscian notion about civil society in the organic structure with the state, and how this structure has been sustained throughout the transition process in Vietnam. These theories have been further clarified and built up with the findings that I have generated from the qualitative data.

Finally, the research I conducted through the narratives of life stories of Vietnamese women in a transitional period enabled me to gain and present knowledge in rigorous research about generations of Vietnamese women, representing my mother, my sisters and my own generation. The anticipated

results have been the personal motivation and the inspiration for me to carry on the research with continuous improvements to ensure rigorous research. Since this is the biggest research project in my early research career, there are inherent limitations and weaknesses associated with my limited knowledge of the researched area and limited research experience. Despite the limitations in the research, the hands-on experience that I gained from the research process has provided me with the knowledge, skills and confidence to embark on further research in this theoretical area and other qualitative research on other subjects involved with fieldwork and human informants.

Bibliography

Alagappa, M. 2004.*Civil society and political change in Asia: expanding and contracting democratic space.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Alvesson, M. 2003. Methodology for Close up Studies: Struggling with Closeness and Closure. *Higher Education.* **46**(2), pp.167-193.

Anagnost, A. 2004. The Corporeal Politics of Quality (Suzhi). *Public Culture.* **16**(2), pp.189-208.

Angrosino, A. and Rosenberg, J. 2011. Observations on Observation. In: Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. eds. *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research.* 4th ed. California: Sage Publication Inc.

Antaki, C. and Widdicombe, S. 1998. *Identities in talk.* London: Sage.

Atkinson, P. and Delamont, S. 2006. Rescuing narrative from qualitative research. *Narrative Inquiry.* **16**(1), pp.164-172.

Banks, N. and Hulme, D. 2012. *The role of NGOs and civil society in development and poverty reduction*. Global Development Institute Working Paper Series. GDI. The University of Manchester.

Banks, Hulme, N., D. and Edwards, M. 2015. NGOs, States, and Donors Revisited: Still Too Close for Comfort? *World Development,* **66**, pp.707-718.

Bayly, S. 2007. *Asian voices in a post-colonial age : Vietnam, India and beyond.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bayly, S. 2009. Vietnamese narratives of tradition, exchange and friendship in the worlds of the global socialist ecumene. *In:* WEST, H. G. and Raman, P. eds. *Enduring Socialism. Explorations of Revolution, Transformation and Restoration.* Oxford: Berghahn Books, pp.125-147.

Beaulieu, C. 1994. *Is it an NGO? Is it a civil society? Is it pluralism wriggling along?* CB -26, Hanover: Institute of Current World Affairs.

Beck, J. A. 2000. (Re)negotiating selfhood and citizenship in the post-communist Czech Republic: five women activists speak about transition and feminism. In: Marchand, M. H. and Runyan. S. A. eds. *Gender and Global Restructuring: Sightings, Sites and Resistances.* London: Routledge.

Beck, U. 2001. *Individualization: institutionalized individualism and its social and political consequences.* London: SAGE.

Bélanger, D., Drummond, L. B. W., Nguyen-Marshall, V. 2012. Introduction: Who are the urban middle class in Vietnam. In: Nguyen-Marshall, V., Drummond, L. B. W., Bélanger, D. eds. *The Reinvention of Distinction: Modernity and the Middle Class in Urban Vietnam.* Ontario: Springer, pp.1-17.

Beresford, M. 1999. *The Vietnamese transition from plan to market: transformation of the planning mechanism*. No. 8/1999, Macquarie University: Department of Economics.

Beresford, M. 2003. Economic Transition, Uneven Development, and the Impact of Reform on Regional Inequality. In: Luong, H.V. ed. *Postwar Vietnam: dynamics of a transforming society.* Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., pp.55-80.

Beresford, M. 2008. Doi Moi in review: The challenges of building market socialism in Vietnam. *Journal of Contemporary Asia,* **38**(2), pp.221-243.

Beresford, M. and Dang, P. 2000. *Economic transition in Vietnam: trade and aid in the demise of a centrally planned economy.* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Berg, B. L. 2007. *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*. 6th ed. London: Pearson.

Berg, B. L. Berg, B. L. 2014. *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*. 8th ed. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Bernal, V. and Grewal, I. 2014. The NGO form. *In:* Bernal, V. and Grewal, I. ed. *Theorizing NGOs States, Feminisms and Neoliberalism.* Durham: Duke University Press, pp.1-17.

Bonner, A. J. and Tolhurst, G. 2002. Insider-outsider perspectives of participant observation. *Nurse researcher.* **9**(4), pp.7-19.

Bornstein, E. 2012. *Disquieting gifts: humanitarianism in New Delhi.*

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. 2006. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology.* **3**(2), pp.77-101.

Browne, K. 2005. Snowball sampling: using social networks to research non-heterosexual women. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology.* **8**(1), pp.47-60.

Bui, H. T. 2015. In Search of a Post-Socialist Mode of Governmentality The Double Movement of Accommodating and Resisting Neo-Liberalism in Vietnam. *Asian Journal of Social Science,* **43**(1-2), pp.80-102.

Burawoy, M. Verdery, K. 1998. *Uncertain transition: ethnographies of change in the postsocialist world.* Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Buttigieg, J. A. 1995. Gramsci on civil society. (political theorist Antonio Gramsci). *Boundary 2,* **22**(3), pp.1-32.

Carroll, W. K. 2006. Hegemony, Counter-hegemony, Anti-hegemony. **2**(2), pp.9-43.

Chavez, C. 2008. Conceptualizing from the Inside: Advantages, Complications, and Demands on Insider Positionality. *Qualitative Report.* **13**(3), pp.474-494.

Chinh phu. 2011. Cương lĩnh xây dựng đất nước trong thời kỳ quá độ lên chủ nghĩa xã hội (Bổ sung, phát triển năm 2011). [Online]. [Accessed 02/02/2019]. Available from: http://www.chinhphu.vn/portal/page/portal/chinhphu/NuocCHXHCNVietNam/ThongTinTongHop/noidungvankiendaihoidang?categoryId=10000716&articleId=10038370.

Civil Code. 2015. The Law No. 91/2015/QH13. The National Assembly Session 13. Socialist Republic of Vietnam. World Intellectual Property Organization. [Accessed: 24/8/2019]. Available at: https://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/vn/vn079en.pdf.

Cleland, J. A. and Durning, S. J. 2015. *Researching medical education.* eds. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell.

Comaroff, J. 1985. *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance.* London: University of Chicago Press.

Comaroff, J. and Comaroff, J. L. 2000. Millennial Capitalism: First Thoughts on a Second Coming. *Public Culture.* **12**(2), pp.291-343.

Comaroff, J. L. and Comaroff, J. 1999. *Civil society and the political imagination in Africa: critical perspectives.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

De Sardan, J. P. O. 2015. *Epistemology, fieldwork, and anthropology.* 1st ed. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. 1994. *Handbook of qualitative research.* Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. 2008. Introduction The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research. In: N Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. eds.

Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials. 3rd ed. California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. 2011. *The Sage handbook of qualitative research.* 4th ed. London: Sage.

Dewiel, B. 2008. A Conceptual History of Civil Society: From Greek Beginnings to the End of Marx. *Past Imperfect.* **6**, pp.3-42.

Diamond, L. J. 1994. Rethinking Civil Society: Toward Democratic Consolidation. *Journal of Democracy.* **5**(3), pp.4-17.

Dinh, V. A. 2003. Report. *Developing the socialist-oriented market economy in Vietnam: a reference book*. Hanoi - Government Document: Central Institute for Economic Management/Statistical Publisher.

Drummond, L. 2000. Street Scenes: Practices of Public and Private Space in Urban Vietnam. *Urban Studies.* **37**(12), pp.2377-2391.

Drummond, L. 2004. The Modern "Vietnamese Woman": Socialization and Women's Magazine. In: Drummond, L. and Rydstrøm, H. eds. *Gender Practices in Contemporary Vietnam.* Singapore: Singapore University Press.

Drummond, L. 2006. Gender in Post-Doi Moi Vietnam: Women, desire, and change. *Gender, Place & Culture.* **13**(3), pp.247-250.

Drummond, L. B. W. 2012. Middle Class Landscapes in a Transforming City: Hanoi in the 21st Century. In: Nguyen-Marshall, V., Drummond, L. B. W., Bélanger, D. eds. *The Reinvention of Distinction: Modernity and the Middle Class in Urban Vietnam.* Ontario: Springer, pp.79-93.

Dunn, E. C. 2004. *Privatizing Poland: baby food, big business, and the remaking of labor.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Dwyer, S. C. and Buckle, J. L. 2009. The Space Between: On Being an Insider-Outsider in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods.* **8**(1), pp.54-63.

Eade, D. and J. Pearce. 2000. *Development, NGOs, and civil society: selected essays from Development in practice.* Oxford: Oxfam.

Eagleton, T. 1991. *Ideology: an introduction.* London: Verso.

Earl, C. 2014. *Vietnam's New Middle Classes: Gender, Career, City.* Gendering Asia. Copenhagen: NIAS Press.

Edwards, M. and Hulme, D. 1995. *Non-governmental organisations: performance and accountability: beyond the magic bullet*. London: Earthscan.

Edwards, M. and Hulme, D. 1996. *Beyond the magic bullet: NGO performance and accountability in the post-cold war world*. West Hartford: Kumarian Press.

Eisen, A. 1984. *Women and revolution in Viet Nam.* London: Zed Books.

Fassin, D. 2011. Policing Borders, Producing Boundaries. The Governmentality of Immigration in Dark Times. *Annual Review of Anthropology,* **40**(1), pp.213-226.

Ferguson, A. 1767. *An essay on the history of civil society.* London: printed for A. Millar & T. Caddel [sic]. London, and A. Kincaid & J. Bell, Edinburgh.

Ferguson, J. 1994. *The anti-politics machine: "development," depoliticization, and bureaucratic power in Lesotho*. thesis, University of Minnesota Press.

Ferguson, J. 2006. *Global shadows : Africa in the neoliberal world order.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Ferguson, J. and Gupta. A. 2002. Spatializing States: Toward an Ethnography of Neoliberal Governmentality. *American Ethnologist,* **29**(4), pp.981-1002.

Fforde, A. 2009. Economics, History, and the Origins of Vietnam's Post-War Economic Success. *Asian Survey,* 49**,** 484-504.

Fforde, A. 2013. The Politics of Civil Society Organisation in Cambodia and Vietnam. *European Journal of East Asian Studies.* **12**(1), pp.35-53.

Fforde, A. 2016. Vietnam: Economic Strategy and Economic Reality. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs,* **35**(2), pp.3-30.

Fforde, A. and De Vylder, S. 1996. *From plan to market: the economic transition in Vietnam.* Oxford: Westview Press.

Foucault, M. 2008. *The Birth of Biopolitics Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979.* London: Palgrave MacMillan.

Fukuyama, F. 1992. *The end of history and the last man.* London: Penguin.

Fusch, P. I. & Ness, L. R. 2015. Are We There Yet? Data Saturation in Qualitative Research. *The Qualitative Report,* 20**,** pp.1408-1416.

Gainsborough, M. 2002. Political Change in Vietnam: In Search of the Middle-Class Challenge to the State. *Asian Survey.* **42**(5), pp.694-707.

Gainsborough, M. 2010. *Vietnam: rethinking the state.* New York: Zed.

Gainsborough, M. 2017. The Myth of a Centralised Socialist State in Vietnam: What Kind of a Myth? *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs.* **36**(3), pp.119–143.

Gal, S. and Kligman, G. 2000a. *The politics of gender after socialism: a comparative-historical essay.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Gal, S. and Kligman. 2000b. *Reproducing gender: politics, publics, and everyday life after socialism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Gammeltoft, T. 2014. *Haunting Images: A Cultural Account of Selective Reproduction in Vietnam.*

Geertman, S. and Boudreau, J-A. 2018. "Life as Art": Emerging Youth Networks in Hanoi and the Tree Hug Movement: Emerging Youth Networks. *City & Society*. **30**(2), pp. 210–236

Glasius, M and Ishkanian, A. 2015. Surreptitious Symbiosis: Engagement Between Activists and NGOs. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations.* **26**(6), pp.2620-2644.

Gordon, C. 1980. *Power/knowledge: selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977*. New York: The Harvester Press.

Gray, M. L. 1999. Creating Civil Society? The Emergence of NGOs in Vietnam. *Development and Change*. **30**(4), pp.693-713.

Greene, M. J. 2014. On the Inside Looking In: Methodological Insights and Challenges in Conducting Qualitative Insider Research. *The Qualitative Report.* **19**(29), pp.1-13.

Griffin, A. and May, V. 2012. Narrative analysis and interpretive phenomenological analysis. *In:* Seale, C. ed. *Researching Society and Culture. Third Edition.* London: Sage Publications Ltd., pp.441-458.

Guest, G., Bunce, A. and Johnson, L. 2006. How Many Interviews Are Enough?: An Experiment with Data Saturation and Variability. *Field Methods.* **18**(1), pp.59-82.

Ha, V. S. 2008. The harmony of family and the silence of women: sexual attitudes and practices among rural married women in northern Viet Nam. *Culture, Health & Sexuality.* **10**(1), pp.163-176.

Hall, S. 1988. *The hard road to renewal: Thatcherism and the crisis of the left.* London: Verso.

Hann, C. M. 1990. Second economy and civil society. *Journal of Communist Studies.* **6**(2), pp.21-44.

Hann, C. M. 1996. Introduction: political society and civil anthropology. In: Hann, C. M. and Dunn, E. eds. *Civil Society: Challenging Western Models.* London: Routledge.

Hann, C. M. 2002. *Postsocialism: ideals, ideologies and practices in Eurasia.* London: Routledge.

Hann, C. M., Caroline, H. and Verdery, K. 2002. Introduction Postsocialism as a topic of anthropological investigation. In: Hann, C. M. ed. *Postsocialism Ideals, Ideologies and Practices in Euroasia.* London: Routledge.

Hann, C. M. and Dunn, E. eds. 1996. *Civil society: Challenging western models.* London: Routledge.

Hannah, J. 2005. Civil-Society Actors and Action in Vietnam: Preliminary Empirical Results and Sketches from an Evolving Debate. In: H.B. Foundation. ed. *Towards Good Society. Civil Society Actors, the State, and the Business Class in Southeast Asia - Facilitators of or Impediments to a Strong, Democratic, and Fair Society?* Berlin: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, pp.101-110.

Hannah, J. 2007. *Local Non-Government Organizations in Vietnam: Development, Civil Society and State-society Relations*. Ph.D. thesis, University of Washington.

Harms, E. 2014. Civility's Footprint: Ethnographic Conversations about Urban Civility and Sustainability in Ho Chi Minh City. *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia,* **29**(2), pp.223-262.

Harrison, G. 2010. *Neoliberal Africa: the impact of global social engineering.* London: Zed Books.

Harvey, D. 2005. *A brief history of neoliberalism.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hayek, F. A. V. 1979. *The political order of a free people.* Law, legislation and liberty: a new statement of the liberal principles of justice and political economy. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hayton, B. 2010. *Vietnam : rising dragon.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Heckathorn, D. D. 2011. Comment: Snowball versus respondent-driven sampling. *Sociological Methodology.* **41**(1), pp.355-366.

Hemment, J. 2004. The riddle of the third sector: civil society, international aid, and NGOs in Russia.(Author Abstract). *Anthropological Quarterly,* **77**(2), pp.215-241.

Hemment, J. 2007. *Empowering Women in Russia: Activism, Aid, and NGOs,* Bloomington, Indiana University Press

Hemment, J. 2014. Global civil society and the local costs of belonging. *In:* Bernal, V. and Grewal, I. eds. *Theorizing NGOs States, Feminisms and Neoliberalism.* Durham: Duke University Press, pp.119-142.

Hoare, Q. and Nowell-Smith, G. 1971. *Selections from the prison notebooks of Antonio Gramsci.* London: Lawrence and Wishart.

Howell, J. and Pearce, J. 2001. *Civil society & development: a critical exploration.* Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Humphrey, C. 2013. Dilemmas in doing insider research in professional education. *Qualitative Social Work.* **12**(5), pp.572-586.

Ishkanian, A. 2007. Democracy promotion and civil society. In: Albrow, M., Anheier, H. K., Price, M. E. and Kaldor, M. eds. *Global Civil Society 2007/8: Communicative Power and Democracy.* London: Sage Publication Ltd., pp.58-85.

Jellema, K. 2005. Making Good on Debt: The Remoralisation of Wealth in Post-Revolutionary Vietnam. *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology.* **6**(3), pp.231-248.

Jovchelovitch, S. and Bauer, M. W. 2000. Narrative Interviewing. In: M. W. BAUER and G. GASKELL, eds. *Qualitative researching with text, image and sound: a practical handbook.* London: SAGE, pp.57-74.

Kaldor, M. 2003. *Global civil society: an answer to war.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Kamberelis, G. and Dimitriadis, G. 2011. Chapter 33 Focus Groups: Contingent Articulations of Pedagogy, Politics, and Inquiry. In: Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. eds. *The Sage handbook of qualitative research.* 4th ed. London: Sage.

Kamberelis, G. and Dimitriadis, G. 2013. *Focus Groups: From structured interviews to collective conversations.* 1st ed. London: Routledge Ltd.

Keane, J. 1998. *Civil society: old images, new visions.* Oxford: Polity Press.

Kerkvliet, B. J. T. 1995. Village-State Relations in Vietnam: The Effect of Everyday Politics on Decollectivization. *The Journal of Asian Studies.* **54**(2), pp.396-418.

Kerkvliet, B. J. T. 2001. An Approach for Analysing State-Society Relations in Vietnam. *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia.* **16**(2), pp.238-278.

Kerkvliet, B. J. T. 2003a. Authorities and the People: An Analysis of State-Society Relations in Vietnam. In: Luong, H. V. ed. *Postwar Vietnam: dynamics of a transforming society.* Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., pp.27-53.

Kerkvliet, B. J. T. 2003b. Introduction: Grappling with Organizations and the State in Contemporary Vietnam. In: Kerkvliet, B. J. T., Heng, R. H. K. and Koh, D. W. H. eds. *Getting Organized in Vietnam Moving in and around the Socialist State.* Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, pp.1-24.

Kerkvliet, B. J. T. 2011. Workers' Protests in Contemporary Vietnam. In: Chan, A, ed. *Labour in Vietnam.* Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, pp.160-210.

Kerkvliet, B. J. T. 2015. Regime Critics: Democratization Advocates in Vietnam, 1990s-2014. *Critical Asian Studies.* **47**(3), pp.359-387.

Kerkvliet, B. J. T. 2018. An Approach for Analysing State-Society Relations in Vietnam. *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia.* **33**(1), pp.156-198.

Kerkvliet, B. J. T. and Nguyen, Q. A., and Bach, T. S. 2008. *Forms of Engagement Between State Agencies & Civil Society Organizations in Vietnam Study Report*. Hanoi.

Kerkvliet, B. J. T. and Selden, M. 1998. Agrarian Transformations in China and Vietnam. *The China Journal.* **40**, pp.37–58.

Kim, A. M. 2008. *Learning to be capitalists: entrepreneurs in Vietnam's transition economy.* New York: Oxford University Press.

King, V. T. 2008. The middle class in Southeast Asia: Diversities, identities, comparisons and the Vietnamese case. *International Journal of Asia-Pacific Studies.* **4**(4), pp.75-112.

King, V. T., Nguyen, P. A. and Nguyen, M. H. 2008. Professional Middle Class Youth in Post-Reform Vietnam: Identity, Continuity and Change. *Modern Asian Studies.* **42**(4), pp.783-813.

Konrád, G., Szelényi, I. 1979. *The intellectuals on the road to class power (translated by Arato, A. and Allen R. E.).* Brighton: Harvester Press.

Kornai, J. 1980. *Economics of shortage.* Amsterdam: North Holland.

Kornai, J. 1992. *Socialist System: The Political Economy of Socialism.* Oxford: Clarendon.

Landau I. 2008. Law and civil society in Cambodia and Vietnam: A gramscian perspective. *Journal of Contemporary Asia.* **38**(2), pp.244-258.

Le, T. N. T. 1973. *Phu nu Viet Nam qua cac thoi dai.* Ha Noi: Nha Xuat ban Khoa hoc Xa hoi.

Le, T. P. 2013. Tracing the discourses on civil society in Vietnam: a narrative from within. In: Waibel, G., Ehlert, J. and Feuer, H. N. eds. *Southeast Asia and the Civil Society Gaze Scoping a Contested Concept in Cambodia and Vietnam.* London: Routledge, pp: 171-186

Lee, C. J. G. 2012. Reconsidering Constructivism in Qualitative Research. *Educational Philosophy and Theory.* **44**(4), pp.403-412.

Leshkowich, A. M. and Endres, K. W. 2018. Introduction: Space, Mobility, Borders, And Trading Frictions. *In:* Endres, K. W. and Leshkowich, A. M. eds. *Traders in motion : identities, and contestations in the Vietnamese marketplace.* Ithaca: Southeast Asia Program Publications, pp.1-15.

Leshkowich, A. M. 2012. Finances, Family, Fashion, Fitness and... Freedom? The Changing Lives of Urban Middle-Class Vietnamese Women. In: Nguyen-Marshall, V., Drummond, L. B. W., Bélanger, D. eds. *The Reinvention of Distinction: Modernity and the Middle Class in Urban Vietnam.* Ontario: Springer, pp.95-113.

Levine, R. F. 2006. *Social class and stratification classic statements and theoretical debates.* 2nd edition. ed. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Pub.

Lewis, D. and Mosse, D. 2006. *Development brokers and translators: the ethnography of aid and agencies.* Bloomfield: Kumarian Press.

Li, M. T. 2007. *The Will to Improve Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Liechty, M. 2003. *Suitably modern: making middle-class culture in a new consumer society.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

London, J. D. 2004. Rethinking Vietnam's mass education and health systems. *In:* McCargo, D. ed. *Rethinking Vietnam.* London: Routledge, pp.127-142.

London, J. D. 2008. Reasserting the state in Viet Nam Health Care and the logics of market-Leninism. *Policy and Society.* **27**(2), pp.115-128.

Luong, H. V. 2003. Postwar Vietnam society: An overview of transformational dynamics. In: Luong, H. V. ed. *Postwar Vietnam: dynamics of a transforming society.* Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, pp.1-26.

Luong, H. 1989. Vietnamese Kinship: Structural Principles and the Socialist Transformation in Northern Vietnam. *The Journal of Asian Studies,* **48**(4), pp.741-756.

Maclean, K. 2012. Enacting Anticorruption: The Reconfiguration of Audit Regimes in Contemporary Vietnam. *positions: east asia cultures critique.* **20**(2), pp.595-625.

Makovicky, N. 2014. Me, Inc.? Untangling Neoliberalism,Personhood, and Postsocialism. In: Makovicky, N. ed. *Neoliberalism, personhood, and postsocialism : enterprising selves in changing economies.* Surrey: Ashgate, pp.1-16

Malkki, L. H. 2015. *The need to help: the domestic arts of international humanitarianism.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Marr, D. G. 1984. *Vietnamese tradition on trial, 1920-1945.* ACLS Humanities E-Book. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Martin, E. 1997. Designing flexibility: Science and work in an age of flexible accumulation. *Science as Culture.* **6**(3), pp.327-362.

Martin, E. 2000. Flexible survivors. *Cultural Values.* **4**(4), pp: 512-517.

McNally, M. and Schwarzmantel. J. J. eds. 2009. *Gramsci and global politics: hegemony and resistance.* London: Routledge.

Mercer, C. and Green, M. 2013. Making civil society work: Contracting, cosmopolitanism and community development in Tanzania. *GEOFORUM,* **45**, pp.108-117.

Merton, R. K. 1972. Insiders and Outsiders: A Chapter in the Sociology of Knowledge. *American Journal of Sociology.* **78**(1), pp.9-47.

Miller, P. and Rose, N. 2008. *Governing the present: administering economic, social and personal life.* Cambridge: Polity.

Mills, C. W. 1951. *White collar: the American middle classes.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mishler, E. G. 1986. *Research interviewing: context and narrative.* London: Harvard University, Press.

Mitlin, D., Hickey, S. and Bebbington, A. 2007. Reclaiming Development? NGOs and the Challenge of Alternatives. *World Development.* **35**(10), pp.1699-1720.

Muehlebach, A. K. 2012. *The moral neoliberal: welfare and citizenship in Italy.* London: The University of Chicago Press.

Narayanaswamy, L. 2014. NGOs and Feminisms in Development: Interrogating the 'Southern Women's NGO'. *Geography Compass,* **8**(8), pp.576-589.

Narayanaswamy, L. 2016. Whose feminism counts? Gender(ed) Knowledge and Professionalisation in Development. *Third World Quarterly*. **37**(12), pp.2156-2175.

Nguyen-Marshall, V. 2008. *In Search of Moral Authority: The Discourse on Poverty, Poor Relief, and Charity in French Colonial Vietnam.* New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Incorporated.

Nguyen-Marshall, V., Drummond, L. B. W., Bélanger. 2012. *The Reinvention of Distinction: Modernity and the Middle Class in Urban Vietnam.* eds. Ontario: Springer.

Nguyen-Vo, T.H. 2004. The Class Sense of Bodies: Women Garment. Workers Consume Body Products In and Around Ho Chi Minh. In: Drummond, L. and Rydstrøm, H. eds. *Gender Practices in Contemporary Vietnam.* Singapore: Singapore University Press, pp.179-209.

Nguyen-Vo, T.-H. 2008. *The Ironies of Freedom: Sex, Culture, and Neoliberal Governance in Vietnam.* Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Nguyen, D. T, Nguyen, K. G., and Vu, S. C. 2015. *Ước lượng chi phí kinh tế cho các tổ chức quần chúng công ở Việt Nam*. Hanoi: Vietnam Institute for Economic and Policy Research (VEPR).

Nguyen, K. V. 1974. *Tradition and revolution in Vietnam.* Berkeley: Indochina Resource Center.

Nguyen, M. T. N. 2018. Vietnam's 'socialization' policy and the moral subject in a privatizing economy. *Economy and Society.* **47**(4), pp.627-647.

Nguyen, M. T. N. 2019. *Waste and Wealth - An Ethnography of Labor, Value, and Morality in a Vietnamese Recycling Economy.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Nguyen, M. T. N. and Chen, M. 2017. The Caring State? On Rural Welfare Governance in Post-reform Vietnam and China. *Ethics and Social Welfare,* **11**(3), pp.230-247.

Nguyen, N. H. and Chu, T. T. V. 2016. Socializing Education and Healthcare in Vietnam Market Economy. *Vietnam Social Sciences.* **171**(1), pp.21-26.

Nørlund, I. 2007a. Civil society in Vietnam. Social organisations and approaches to new concepts. *ASIEN*. **105**, pp.68-90.

Nørlund, I. 2007b. *Filling the gap: the emerging civil society in Viet Nam.* Hanoi: UNDP Vietnam.

Ong, A. 2006. *Neoliberalism as exception: mutations in citizenship and sovereignty.* London: Duke University Press.

Patnaik, A. 2012. The Contemporary Significance of Gramsci's Critique of Civil Society. *WorkingUSA.* **15**(4), pp.577-588.

Pedersen, K. R. 2001. *Civil society in the context of development aid - The case of Vietnam*. Working paper IKL/CBS, Copenhagen.

Penrod, J., Preston, D. B, Cain, R. E. and Starks, M. T. 2003. A Discussion of Chain Referral as a Method of Sampling Hard-to-Reach Populations. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing.* **14**(2), pp.100-107.

Pettus, A. 2003. *Between sacrifice and desire: national identity and the governing of femininity in Vietnam.* London: Routledge.

Phillips, S. D. 2005. Will the market set them free? Women, NGOs, and social enterprise in Ukraine. *Human organization,* **64**(3), pp.251-264.

Phillips, S. D. 2008. *Women's Social Activism in the New Ukraine: Development and the Politics of Differentiation.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Rabinow, P. 2000. *The essential works of Michel Foucault, 1954-1984: Vol.1, Ethics: subjectivity and truth.* London: Penguin.

Read, J. 2009. A Genealogy of Homo-Economicus: Neoliberalism and the Production of Subjectivity. *Foucault Studies,* **6**, pp.25-36.Riessman, C. K. 1993. *Narrative Analysis.* California: Sage Publication, Inc.

Riessman, C. K. 1993. *Narrative Analysis,* California, Sage Publication, Inc.

Rigby, T. H. 1991. Mono-organisational Socialism and the Civil Society. In: Kukathas, C., Lovell, W. D. and Maley, W. eds. *The Transition from Socialism State and Civil Society in the USSR.* Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, pp.107-122.

Rose, N. 1996. *Inventing our selves: psychology, power, and personhood.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Ross, L. E. 2017. An account from the inside: Examining the emotional impact of qualitative research through the lens of "insider" research. *Qualitative psychology (Washington, D.C.).* **4**(3), pp.326-337.

Rydstrøm, H. 2003. Report. *Embodying morality: growing up in rural northern Vietnam.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Rydstrøm, H. 2010. Compromised Ideals: Family Life and the Recognition of Women in Vietnam. In: Rydstrøm, H. ed. *Gendered inequalities in Asia: configuring, contesting and recognizing women and men.* Copenhagen: NIAS.

Rydstrøm, H. H. and Drummond, L. B. W. 2004. Introduction. In: Drummond L. B. W. and Rydstrøm, H. eds. *Gender Practice in Contemporary Vietnam.* Singapore: Singapore University Press, pp.1-25.

Sadler, G. R., Lee, H. C., Lim, R. S. H. and Fullerton, J. 2010. Recruitment of hard-to-reach population subgroups via adaptations of the snowball sampling strategy. *Nursing & Health Sciences.* **12**(3), pp.369-374.

Salemink, O. 2006. Translating, interpreting and practicing civil society in Vietnam A Tale of Calculated Misunderstandings. In: Mosse, D. and Lewis, D. eds. *Theoretical Approaches to Brokerage and Translation in Development.* Bloomfield: Kumarian Press Inc.

Sampson, S. 1996. The social life of projects Importing civil society to Albania. *In:* C. Hann and Dunn, E. eds. *Civil society Challenging Western models.* London: Routledge, pp.121-142.

Savvides, N., Al-Youssef J., Colin, M. and Garrido C. 2014. Journeys into Inner/Outer Space: reflections on the methodological challenges of negotiating insider/outsider status in international educational research. *Research in Comparative and International Education.* **9**(4), pp.412-425.

Schnable, A. 2015. New American Relief and Development Organizations. Voluntarizing Global Aid. *Social Problems,* **62**(2), pp.309-329.

Schuler, S. R., Hoang, T. A., Vu, S. H., Tran, M. H., Bui T. T. and Pham, V. T. 2006. Constructions of gender in Vietnam: In pursuit of the 'Three Criteria'. *Culture, Health & Sexuality.* **8**(5), pp.383-394.

Schuller, M. 2009. Gluing Globalization: NGOs as Intermediaries in Haiti. *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review,* 32**,** 84-104.

Schwandt, T. A. 1994. Constructivist, interpretivist approaches to human inquiry. In: Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y. S. eds. *Handbook of qualitative research.* Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc., pp.118-137.

Shenhav, S. R. 2015. *Analyzing social narratives.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Shils, E. 1991. The Virtue of Civil Society. *Government and Opposition.* **26**(1), pp.3-20.

Sidel, M. 1997. The emergence of a voluntary sector and philanthropy in Vietnam: functions, legal regulation and prospects for the future. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations.* **8**(3), pp.283-302.

Sidel, M. 2010. Maintaining Firm Control: Recent Developments in Nonprofit Law and Regulation in Vietnam. *International Journal for Not-for-Profit Law.* **12**(3), pp.52-67.

Smith, M. B. and Jenkins, K. 2011. Disconnections and exclusions: professionalization, cosmopolitanism and (global?) civil society.(Report). *Global Networks,* **11**(2), pp.160-179.

Spradley, J. P. 1980. *Participant observation.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Taylor, J. 2011. The intimate insider: negotiating the ethics of friendship when doing insider research. *Qualitative Research.* **11**(1), pp.3-22.

Taylor, W., Nguyen, T. H., Pham, Q. T. and Huynh, T. N. T. 2012. *Civil Society in Vietnam: A Comparative Study of Civil Society Organizations in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City*. Hanoi: The Asia Foundation.

Thayer, C. A. 1995. Mono-organizational socialism and the state. In: B. J. T. KERKVLIET and D. J. PORTER, eds. *Vietnam's Rural Transformation.* New York: Routledge.

Thayer, C. A. 2009. Vietnam and the Challenge of Political Civil Society. *Contemporary Southeast Asia.* **31**(1), pp.1-27.

Thomas, D. R. 2006. A General Inductive Approach for Analyzing Qualitative Evaluation Data. *American Journal of Evaluation.* **27**(2), pp.237-246.

Tran, D. T. and Tran, X. D. 2014. *Using Landsat image to study the relationship between land surface temperature and land use/land cover in Hanoi city, Vietnam*. Hanoi: Hanoi National University of Education.

Tran, Q. 2018. *Lương và... lậu* [Online]. [Accessed 28/7/2019]. Available from: https://www.nhandan.com.vn/hangthang/item/37175402-luong-va-lau.html.

Tran, T. 2016. Cơ chế Đảng lãnh đạo, Nhà nước quản lý và Nhân dân làm chủ ở Việt Nam. [Online]. *Tạp chí Khoa học xã hội Việt Nam.* **3**(100). [Accessed 28/7/2019]. Available from: http://tapchikhxh.vass.gov.vn/co-che-dang-lanh-dao-nha-nuoc-quan-ly-va-nhan-dan-lam-chu-o-viet-nam-n50213.html.

Tvedt, T. 1998. *Angels of mercy or development diplomats? NGOs & foreign aid.* Oxford: Africa World Press.

Uy ban Mat tran To quoc Viet Nam Thanh pho Ho Chi Minh. 2012. Mat tran to quoc Viet Nam. [Online]. [Accessed 25/9/2019]. Available from: http://ubmttq.hochiminhcity.gov.vn.

Van Rooy, A. 1998. *Civil society and the aid industry: the politics and promise.* London: Earthscan.

Vandemoortele, M. and Bird, K. 2011. *Viet Nam's progress on economic growth and poverty reduction: Impressive improvements*. Development Progress, London: ODI Publications.

Vasavakul, T. 1996. Reform of state institutions in the post-socialist era. In: Leung, S. ed. *Vietnam Assessment: Creating a sound investment climate.* Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Vasavakul, T. 2003. From Fence-Breaking to Networking: Interests, Popular Organizations and Policy Influences in Post-Socialist Vietnam. In: Kerkvliet, B. J. T., Heng, R. H. K. and Koh, D. W. H. eds. *Getting organized in Vietnam Moving in and around the Socialist State.* Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, pp.25-61.

Venugopal, R. 2015. Neoliberalism as concept. *Economy and Society.* **44**(2), pp.1-23.

Verdery, K. 1991. Theorizing socialism: a prologue to the "transition". *American Ethnologist.* **18**(3), pp.419-439.

Vietnamnews. 24/10/2016. *Experts slam Draft Law on Association* [Online]. [Accessed 2/6/2019]. Available from: https://vietnamnews.vn/politics-laws/344927/experts-slam-draft-law-on-association.html#te70AerDRDJyQUJI.97.

Vu, N. A. 2017. Grassroots Environmental Activism in an Authoritarian Context: The Trees Movement in Vietnam. *VOLUNTAS.* **28**(3), pp.1180-1208.

Vu, T. H. 2019. Female leadership in Vietnam: Traditional gender norms, gender quota policy and the media. In: Chao C.C. and Ha, L. eds. *Asian Women Leadership A Cross-National and Cross-Sector Comparison.* London: Routledge, pp.109-124.

Wells-Dang, A. 2011. *Informal Pathbreakers: Civil society networks in China and Vietnam*. PhD thesis, University of Birmingham.

Wells-Dang, A. 2013. Promoting Land Rights in Vietnam: A Multi-Sector Advocacy Coalition Approach. In: *Annual World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty 2013*, April 8-11, 2013, Washington D.C.

Werner, J. 1981. Women, socialism, and the economy of wartime North Vietnam, 1960-1975. *Studies in comparative communism.* **14**(2-3), pp.165-190.

Werner, J. S. 2009. *Gender, household and state in post-revolutionary Vietnam,* London, Routledge.

Werner, J. S. 2002. Gender, Household, and State: Renovation (Đổi Mới) As Social Process In Việt Nam. *In:* Werner, J. S. and Bélanger, D. eds. *Gender, Household, State: Đổi Mới in Việt Nam.* Ithaca, N.Y: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, pp.29-48.

Wheeldon, J. and Faubert, J. 2009. Framing Experience: Concept Maps, Mind Maps, and Data Collection in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods.* **8**(3), pp.68-83.

Williamson, K. 2006. Research in Constructivist Frameworks Using Ethnographic Techniques. *Library Trends.* **55**(1), pp.83-101.

Wischermann, J. 2010. Civil Society Action and Governance in Vietnam: Selected Findings from an Empirical Survey. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs.* **29**(2), pp.3-40.

Wischermann, J., Bui, T. C. and Dang T. V. P. 2016. Vietnamese Civic Organisations: Supporters of or Obstacles to Further Democratisation? Results from an Empirical Survey. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs.* **35**(2), pp.57-88.

Wischermann, J. and Nguyen, Q. V. 2003. The relationship between Civic and Government Organizations in Vietnam: Selected Findings. In: Kerkvliet,

B. J. T., Heng, R. H. K. and Koh, D. W. H. eds. *Getting Organized in Vietnam.* Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, pp.185-233.

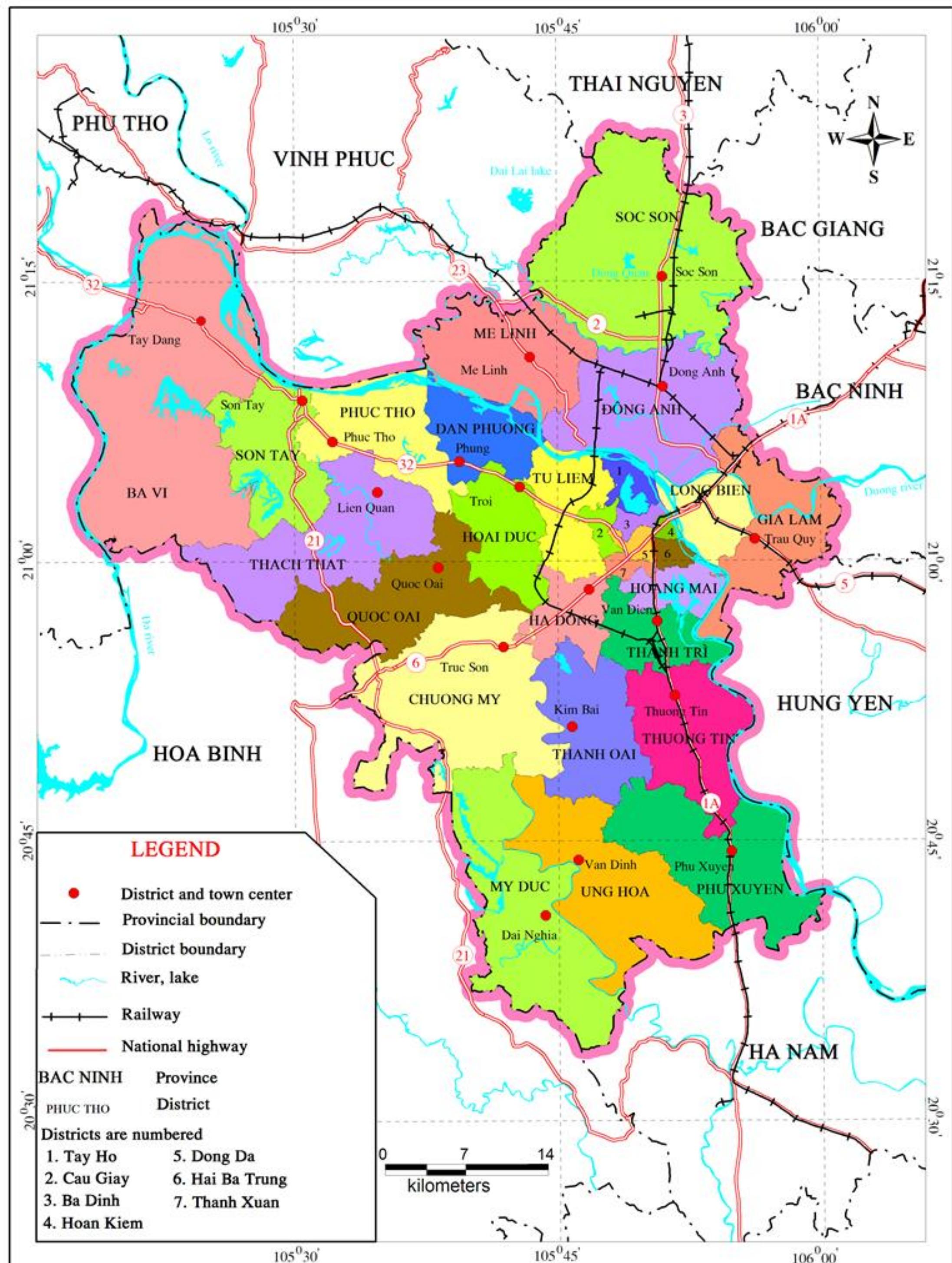
World Bank. 1996. *World Development Report 1996: From Plan to Market*. New York: The World Bank.

Yarrow, T. 2008. Life/History: Personal Narratives of Development Amongst NGO Workers and Activists in Ghana. *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute.* **78**(3), pp.334-358.

Zhang, L. and Ong, A. 2008. *Privatizing China: socialism from afar.* London: Cornell University Press.

Zhang, L. M. 2010. *In search of paradise: middle-class living in a Chinese metropolis.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Appendix A Map of Hanoi



Administrative map of Hanoi in 2003

(Source: Tran and Tran, 2014)

Appendix B List of informants in pseudonyms

ID	Pseudonyms	NGO types	positions	Age-groups	Marital status	Children
#1	Thao	VNGO	Programme manager	30-39	Married	YES
#2	Hop	INGO	Project Coordinator	40-49	Single	NO
#3	Xuan	INGO	Project Coordinator	40-49	Single	NO
#5	Tien	VNGO	Project Officer/Counsellor	30-39	Married	YES
#6	Dang	INGO	Project Officer	30-39	Married	YES
#7	Cuc	INGO	Project Manager	50-59	Widow	YES
#8	Yen	VNGO	Founder	50-59	Married	YES
#9	Vy	State-owned	HR Deputy Director	30-39	Married	YES
#10	Dao	INGO	Project Officer	30-39	Single	NO
#11	Quyen	VNGO	Project Officer	30-39	Married	YES
#12	Dong	State-owned	Departmental Deputy Director	30-39	Married	YES
#13	Mai	Former state-owned	HR and organisational Director	60-69	N/A	N/A
#14	Truc	VNGO	(Mental health) Coordinator	30-39	Married	YES
#15	Hoang	VNGO	Founder	60-69	Married	YES
#16	Thien	VNGO	Founder	50-59	Married	YES
#17	Hue	VNGO	Project Officer	20-29	Single	NO
#18	Huong	VNGO	Project Officer	20-29	Single	NO
#19	Nguyen	VNGO	Founder	60-69	Married	YES
#20	Tam	VNGO	Project Officer	20-29	Single	NO

#21	Ngan	INGO/non-profit	Coordinator	30-39	Single	NO
#22	Lan	VNGO	Project Officer	30-39	Married	YES
#23	Nhai	VNGO	Project Officer	30-39	Single	NO
#24	Thanh	VNGO	Co-founder	30-39	Married	YES
#25	Thuy	VNGO	Project Manager	30-39	Single	NO
#26	Binh	State-owned	Officer	30-39	Married	YES
#27	Ly	VNGO	Deputy Director	30-39	Married	YES
#28	Tra	INGO	Coordinator	30-39	Married	NO
#29	Ngoc	VNGO	Director	40-49	Married	YES
#30	Nhung	INGO	Programme Manager	40-49	Divorced	YES
#31	Dung	VNGO	Founder/Director	30-39	Married	YES
#32	Phuong	VNGO	Project Officer	20-29	Single	NO
#33	Quynh	VNGO	Former Director/Quit	40-49	Divorced	YES
#34	Duong	VNGO	Deputy Director	40-49	Married	YES
#35	Thu	VNGO	Admin Chief	50-59	Married	YES
#36	Tuyet	State-owned	Officer	30-39	Single	YES
#37	Trinh	INGO	Coordinator	40-49	N/A	N/A
G.1	Hoai	VNGO	Officer	20-29	Single	NO
	Huyen	VNGO	Officer	30-39	Single	NO
	Bich	VNGO	Officer	30-39	Married	YES
G.2	Nguyet	VNGO	Deputy Director	40-49	Married	YES
	Linh	INGO	Unit Manager	40-49	Married	YES
	Diem	VNGO	Director	40-49	Married	YES
G.3	Van	VNGO	Deputy Director	30-39	Single	NO
	Duyen	VNGO	Admin Officer	30-39	N/A	N/A

	Khanh	VNGO	Researcher	30-39	Married	N/A
	Nghiem	VNGO	Accountant	30-39	Married	YES

Appendix C Interview and Focus group Guide

Before the interview

- Hand the participant the research information sheet, give 5 minutes for the participants to read (before each interview, I have already sent them through email the information sheet);
- Ask the participant if he/she has any questions to ask from the information sheet;
- Offer the participant an opportunity to refuse to participate;
- Hand the participant the consent form to sign if he/she agrees to participate;
- Thank the participant for taking part in the interview;
- Inform the informant of the time and organisation of the interview, including topics and mapping activity;
- Explain to the participant that their names will be kept anonymous/or changed into pseudonyms to protect their identity. All informants' data and will be saved in a separate sheet from the (transcribed) records of the interview;
- Ask the permission to tape and making notes during the interview;
- Follow the interview/discussion guide. The researcher can swap the topic cards in any random order based on the dynamics of the conversation.

Motivation to work in NGOs

Interview/discussion goal: let the informants talk about the decision and benefits/losses working in NGOs

1. Why do you work for the NGO sector?
2. What did influence your decision working in this area?
3. How long do you plan to stay in this sector? (or Why do you come back to work in NGOs?)

Life and Career Goals

Interview/discussion goal: let the informants elaborate the material/non-material gains/losses when working in NGOs

1. What was (or were) your professional goal(s)?
2. What is important to your life?

- Material
- Non-Material

1. Why do these non-material/material terms matter than the other material terms?
2. How has working in an NGO helped you to realise this (or these) professional and/or life goal(s)?
3. What reasons that keep you in (or move out of) the NGO(s)?
4. What type of trade-off or sacrifice in your life that you have made in order to stay in the NGO sector?

Opportunities and Risks when working in NGOs

Interview goal/discussion goal: let the informant talk about constraints or opportunities working in NGOs

1. What are the gains working in NGOs?
2. What risks associated with working in NGOs?
3. Can you give examples of any critical incident (joys/fears/losses/gains) that you have encountered when working in NGOs? Or in your life?
4. What are constraints/threats prevented you from realising your goals?

Individual task: Drawing a concept map (15 mins)

Please map out key values that you have achieved when working in the NGO sector? (Values can be arranged either in a random or a hierarchical order to contribute to a core value).

Closing the interview/focus group discussions

Thank the participant for sparing time for this interview.

Explain that from now on the participant cannot withdraw from the research because it causes disturbance to the research process/results.

Offer the participants to contact me if they have any questions about the usage of their information for the research purpose or any requests or preferences in the usage of their information for the research purpose.

Appendix D Members of Vietnam Fatherland's Front

Vietnam Communist Party (VCP)	Vietnam Oriental Traditional Medicine Association
General Confederation of Labour	Medical Association
National Farmers Union	Association of Historical Science
Ho Chi Minh Communist Youth Union	Vietnam Gardening Association
Vietnam Women's Union	Association for Ornamental Plants
Vietnam Veterans' Union	Association for Buddhism
People's Armed Forces of Vietnam	Committee for Catholic Solidarity
Vietnam Union of Science and Technology Associations (VUSTA)	Protestant Association
Alliance of Arts and Literature Associations of Vietnam	Association for the Blind
Union of Friendship Organizations	Association to Support Handicapped and Orphans
Vietnam Youth Federation	Association for Family Planning
Cooperative Alliance	Association for the Promotion of Education

Vietnam Lawyers’ Association	Association for the Elderly
Journalists’ Association	Acupuncture Association
Red of Vietnam Cross	Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry

(Source: http://ubmttq.hochiminhcity.gov.vn)