

Pacific News Pictures: Migrants in Ho Chi Minh City/Vietnam



Laurent Weyl [laurentweyl@wanadoo.fr] is a professional photographer who started this B&W work about Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) in 2001. Finally, the NGO "Ville en Transition" engaged him to continue his study and to concentrate it precisely upon the KT4 migrants (KT4=without official permit of residence by the local administration).

The author's ambition is to make several subjects about the place of the poor in mega cities, a work at the same time social and urban. In Vietnam, he focuses his subject on the rural immigrants who come to the city searching for work.

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DUONG SO 7: Mr. LAM VAN DAM's family

This peasant-family originally came from Long An. They arrived in 2001 according to their children's wishes who wanted them to approach. Seven out of 11 children have come to work in HCMC. They sold their house in the countryside to build a house at HCMC after having bought the property (proprietors with

papers in their hands). They did not sell all their land in the countryside because they fear expropriations in the urban area. Besides, keeping a piece of land secures the children who might suffer a failure in the city.

On this photo, a part of the children has come to visit their parents for Sunday-lunch. In the foreground, next to the father, you can see one of the daughters who succeeded in living on good conditions in the city. She is the vice-director of a garment state-factory and, being married to a Saigon man, she finds herself KT1 (KT1=Legal permanent residency in HCMC accompanying fully obligations and rights, protected by the law). When she and her husband moved to Bin Than, close to the parents, the couple became KT2 (KT2 is for people registering a permanent residence in one place but living in another place at the same city). Nevertheless, in their former quarter, they conserve their KT1 status. Therefore, their child has to return to Phu Nhuan, their former quarter, in order to profit by the public school reserved for the KT1. He has to take a motor-taxi, that causes supplementary costs to them. If their child wanted to go to school in Binh Than, they would have to register him in an expensive private school and he could stay there for the morning. Only the KT1 can stay there for the day and they take priority of everyone else concerning the reservation of the places. According to Lam Van Dam's daughter, "the best schools are reserved to the KT1".



LE LIEU STREET/ District TAN BINH

Computer, hi-fi system, instruction [...]. Phap's nephews are already wealthy in comparison to most migrant-children of the first generation. However, Phap still has to work a lot before he can afford the large house of his dreams.



FORMER SWAMP ZONE / District 6: Apartments with terrace and modern comfort ...

Space is one of the main trump cards of HCMC. Any natural barriers seem to stop the horizontal development. Every day, the country deviates a little more. Every day the urban net concentrates a little more. Close to the centre, prizes are rising and the vague terrains, often occupied by rudimental collective shelter, are divided into lots. Expulsion after expulsion the migrants are pushed back towards a periphery more and more remote.



XE PHAN VAN FAMILY, District 6

One of Xe's daughters is employed by a private person in an informal way to peel garlic 12 hours a day, seven days a week. Being paid for kilos, she receives a monthly income that is about 400,000 Vietnamese Dong (23 Euro).



NGUYEN HUU CANH STREET/ District BINH THANH

Lan is 25 years old and came to HCMC thanks to her brother who resides there for 15 years. Seven days a week she is selling "Chau Long" supper to the construction workers at the neighboring building-site. A supper costs 3,000 Vietnamese Dong (0,18 euros). Lan lives in Than Binh District, a quarter where lots of migrants are established. She leaves HCMC only once a year for the Têt celebration that she wants to spent together with her parents.

Translation from French: B. Kuck