



**ETUDES ET DOCUMENTS DU GRAESE**

**Migrant workers in industrial zones and  
return migration.**

**Case studies in Que Vo and Yen Phong industrial zones  
of Bac Ninh province and Van Thang commune of Nong  
Cong district, Thanh Hoa province, Vietnam**

**NGO Trung Thanh**



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## **PRESENTATION OF THE AUTHOR**

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## ABSTRACT/TOM TẮT

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It is clear that the important role of labor migration in development reflected through the impacts of remittance currently exists in many countries around the world. The complexed nature of migration that needs to interpret in a dynamic context and a changing society. Reviewing literature demonstrates the discourses of the motives of migration across many migration theories. Then, there are plenty of discussions of the motives of migration added from empirical research. However, there is still a lack of literature that requires discussion on why the domestic migrants leave their homes to work at places considered as exploitative and degrading, like industrial zones. In addition, migration is understood as an in and out process. Attempts have been made to explain the motive of out-migration, but few ones focus on return migration. Furthermore, existing literature focuses more on international return migration than internal return migration and the theories of return migration are subject to various debates. Since 1975, after the reunion of Vietnam, the government enforced a policy to restructure the population which led to inter-province migration. Many studies have been conducted on migration ever since, but few focused on return migration. This research survey 310 migrant workers in Que Vo and Yen Phong industrial zones of Bac Ninh province, and 68 returnees in Van Thang commune, Nong Cong district, Thanh Hoa province of Vietnam. Face to face interviews with two designed questionnaires have been applied to those samples. One is for migrant workers and the other is for returnees. Besides, some qualitative methods are also applied for supplementing the data collected by the questionnaires. Through those principle methods, this study found that the motives of migrant workers are complex. Push and pull theory by itself is not enough to explain these motives. The addition of the new economic theory of migration labor has made the explanation of migration motives more complete. Also, the research illustrated that the factors pushing rural people outmigration are, firstly, the local shortage of non-agricultural jobs, causing migrant workers to find alternatives in Bac Ninh industrial zones. More importantly, there is a shortage of cash for daily consumption. This itself, agricultural production, a prominent feature of rural areas, cannot be solved. Interestingly, the economic status of the household before the migration is not considered clearly as a push factor. But, migration to industrial zones is

the rural youths' way of life. Experiencing in these zones aspires those people due to a life different from the areas of origin, acted as a pull factor. Furthermore, migrant workers are all attracted by high labor demand that created easier access to employment in the industrial zones of Bac Ninh. This study also found that social network acts as both push and pull factor for immigrating to the industrial zones. Furthermore, it revealed that migrant workers, a major labor force for industrial zones, now face challenges created by the unstable model of development. The sustainability of the development of industrial zones in Bac Ninh is threatened by the fact that these zones follow the footloose of their development model exposed in the 1990s. Additionally, this study found that migrant workers in industrial zones in Bac Ninh faced a trade-off between accepting a hard life and accumulating capitals as well as experiences for an expected better one afterward. Furthermore, the migration undertaken by migrant workers in industrial zones of Bac Ninh seems to be circular. Regarding return migration, this study demonstrated that the motive to return not only results from potential failures related to the increased living costs of the future married life but also associates with children left behind at the home village with stayers. Returnees are all driven by a filial obligation to their parents, shaped by the norms or culture of the home community. Non-farm employment opportunities around home villages are more of a motive to return for single migrants. This study also found that women play an important role in agriculture development in Van Thang. This sector is likely a buffer for the negative impacts of the return while the returnees seek better nonfarm employment around their home villages.

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Rõ ràng là vai trò quan trọng của di cư lao động đối với phát triển được phản ánh thông qua các tác động của tiền gửi về đang hiện diện ở nhiều quốc gia trên thế giới. Bên cạnh đó, bản chất phức tạp của di cư cũng cần được giải thích trong bối cảnh xã hội đang thay đổi. Nghiên cứu tài liệu đã chứng minh rằng đã có nhiều thảo luận về động cơ của di cư về lý thuyết cũng như thực nghiệm. Tuy nhiên, vẫn còn thiếu những nghiên cứu thảo luận về lý do tại sao người di cư nội địa lại rời bỏ nơi xuất cư để đến làm việc tại những nơi bị coi là bóc lột và suy thoái, như các khu công nghiệp. Thêm vào đó, di cư được hiểu là một quá trình đi đến và trở về. Song, chỉ có một số ít nghiên cứu tập trung vào việc di cư trở về. Hơn nữa, các tài liệu hiện có tập trung nhiều hơn vào vấn đề di cư quốc tế trở về hơn là di cư nội



địa trở về và các lý thuyết về di cư trở về vẫn còn là chủ đề còn nhiều tranh luận. Kết quả của nghiên cứu này cho thấy động cơ của người lao động nhập cư rất phức tạp. Lý thuyết đẩy và kéo tự nó không đủ để giải thích những động cơ này. Việc bổ sung lý thuyết kinh tế mới về lao động di cư đã làm cho việc giải thích các động cơ di cư trở nên đầy đủ hơn. Ngoài ra, nghiên cứu cũng chỉ ra rằng các yếu tố thúc đẩy người dân nông thôn di cư trước hết là do tình trạng thiếu việc làm phi nông nghiệp tại địa phương, khiến người lao động di cư phải tìm các giải pháp thay thế ở các khu công nghiệp tại Bắc Ninh. Quan trọng hơn là thiếu hụt tiền mặt để tiêu dùng hàng ngày. Điều này, bản thân sản xuất nông nghiệp, đặc thù nổi bật của nông thôn, không thể giải quyết được. Điều thú vị là tình trạng kinh tế của hộ gia đình trước khi di cư không được coi là một yếu tố thúc đẩy rõ ràng. Tuy nhiên, di cư đến các khu công nghiệp là cách sống của thanh niên nông thôn. Trải nghiệm ở những khu vực này là mong muốn của họ do cuộc sống khác với những khu vực nơi xuất cư, đóng vai trò như một yếu tố kéo. Hơn nữa, lao động di cư đều bị thu hút bởi nhu cầu lao động cao, tạo điều kiện dễ dàng hơn cho việc tiếp cận việc làm tại các khu công nghiệp của Bắc Ninh. Nghiên cứu này cũng chỉ ra rằng mạng lưới xã hội đóng vai trò là nhân tố thúc đẩy và kéo người nhập cư vào các khu công nghiệp. Tiếp đến, nghiên cứu này cho thấy lao động di cư tại các khu công nghiệp ở Bắc Ninh phải đánh đổi giữa việc chấp nhận cuộc sống khó khăn và tích lũy vốn cũng như kinh nghiệm để có một cuộc sống tốt hơn sau này. Cuối cùng, quá trình di cư của công nhân di cư tại các khu công nghiệp của Bắc Ninh dường như là mang tính chu kỳ. Những công nhân di cư này có xu hướng quay trở về nơi xuất cư hoặc không gắn bó lâu dài với các khu công nghiệp tại Bắc Ninh. Về vấn đề di cư trở về, nghiên cứu này đã chứng minh rằng động cơ quay trở về của người di cư không chỉ là kết quả của những thất bại tiềm ẩn liên quan đến việc gia tăng chi phí sinh hoạt của cuộc sống hôn nhân trong tương lai mà còn liên quan đến những đứa trẻ được gửi lại quê nhà với những người ở lại. Những lao động di cư trở về cũng là do nghĩa vụ hiếu thảo đối với cha mẹ, được định hình bởi các chuẩn mực hoặc văn hóa của cộng đồng, gia đình. Ngoài ra, các cơ hội việc làm phi nông nghiệp quanh khu vực quê nhà đã tạo ra động lực nhiều hơn đối với những người di cư độc thân quay trở về. Nghiên cứu này cũng chỉ ra rằng lao động nữ di cư trở về đóng vai trò quan trọng trong phát triển nông nghiệp ở Vạn Thắng. Lĩnh vực nông nghiệp có khả năng là một vùng đệm cho những tác động tiêu cực của việc trở lại trong khi những người trở về tìm kiếm việc làm phi nông nghiệp tốt hơn xung quanh làng quê của họ.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1. Problem statement

### *1.1.1. Why study the motives of the migrant workers in the industrial zone?*

Labor migration in development reflected through the impacts of remittance currently exists in many countries around the world. However, the complexed nature of migration that needs to interpret in a dynamic context and a changing society (De Haan 1999). There is still a lack of literature that requires discussion on why the domestic migrants leave their homes to work at places considered as exploitative and degrading (Deshingkar, Zeitlyn, and Holtom 2014). Those workplaces were referred to industrial zones that numerously established in many developing countries as a strategy of development to promote economic growth (Milberg and Amengual 2008).

Like many developing countries, industrial zones have been developed rapidly for more than 20 years in Vietnam. Since the first establishment in 1991, 347 industrial zones had been built by the end of 2015 (AHA 2015). Together with the formation of those zones, the number of employment has increased from one million in 2006 (Phong 2007), to 1.6 million in 2011 (Vinh 2012), and to 2.1 million in 2013 (Thu and Xuan 2014). It also found that migrant workers contributed the majority labor force in industrial zones. According to Thu and Xuan (2014); Lê and Hiền (2014) the proportion of migrant workers reaches 70 percent of the total. However, some literature documented that both the migrant workers in industrial zones have had both negative working and non-working environment. For example, the study of Ngo (2009) found that low wages and unstable employment in Que Vo industrial zones in the Bac Ninh province were not attracted the labors of the land loss households. Hải (2013) reported that the working hour in industrial zones lasted for 10 to 12 hours per day. Sometimes, workers agreed to extent it to 14 hours per day for extra earnings. Lê and Hiền (2014); Do and Masina (2017) added that the average migrant worker's space in residential areas was only from 3m<sup>2</sup> to 4 m<sup>2</sup>, reaching about 50% of the national standards.

Further, gender and age structure were imbalanced. The industrial zones in Bac Ninh benefit women rather than men and young labors rather than older ones. This may put pressure on improving the non-work environment for young women leaving parental home (Puri and Cleland 2007; Shaw 2007). Moreover, migration to the industrial zones in Bac Ninh seems circular due to the current working spell of migrant workers that is inconsistent with the line of the development of the industrial zones. A common tendency of those immigrants is to return their areas of origin rather than to stay working permanently in industrial zones. Therefore, the areas of origin or rural settings will be challenged by the employment generation.

In addition, there exist many studies that elaborated on the motives of migration in Vietnam. However, few studies focus on the discussions of those who migrate to industrial zones. Instead, they paid more attention to the determinants of destination selection, like in the study of Nghi et al. (2012) or job stress, like in the study of Ngoc Khuong and Yen (2016). Also, it found commonly that the motives of migration almost included in rural-urban migration, for example, in the studies of Phan and Coxhead (2010); Phuong and McPeak (2010), and Duc Loc, Raabe, and Grote (2015). Meanwhile, the industrial zones which are commonly in rural settings do differ from urban areas in terms of infrastructure and social facilities like education and health care. Those might cause different influences on migrant workers' livings. After taking into consideration the about discussions, it could be interesting to question why rural labors migrate to industrial zones. Whether they would achieve what they expected before migrating to industrial zones? Is it a trade-off between the economic desires the youth of rural labors?

### ***1.1.2. Why study return migration?***

Migration is understood as an in and out process. Attempts have been made to explain the motive of out-migration, but few ones focus on return migration. Furthermore, existing literature focuses more on international return migration than internal return migration (Hirvonen and Lilleør 2015). Meanwhile, recent studies have shown that the internal return migrations also bring a positive impact on the development of areas of origin. (Wang and Fan 2006; Démurger and Xu 2011a).

Although the phenomenon of return migration is not as common as outmigration, the more there is out migrants, the more there might be returnees (Hirvonen and Lilleør 2015). Return migration can be found in both developed and developing countries. Among internal migrants, the proportion of return accounts for 26% in Finland (Kauhanen and Tervo 2002), 23% in Germany (Hunt 2004), 17% in Tanzania (Hirvonen and Lilleør 2015), 26% in Thailand, 31% in Vietnam (Junge, Revilla Diez, and Schätzl 2015) and about 25-38% in China (Zhao 2002; Wang and Fan 2006; Démurger and Xu 2011b)

Since 1975, after the reunion of Vietnam, the government enforced a policy to restructure the population which led to inter-province migration. Then, from 1986, migration bloomed due to the reform of the economy, *Doi Moi* (UN 2010). Many studies have been conducted on migration ever since (Resurreccion and Van Khanh 2007; De Brauw and Harigaya 2007; Bélanger and Linh 2011; Malamud and Wozniak 2012; Duc Loc, Raabe, and Grote 2015; De Brauw 2010), but few focused on return migration, especially in Vietnam. Furthermore, a huge number of rural labors have migrated to industrial zones where existed unstable employment (Rondinelli 1987; Kusago and Tzannatos 1998). Moreover, according to Thanh (2016) most of the migrant workers in industrial zones do not stably engage with the zones. Thus, this research will discuss which differences between migrants returning from workplaces inside and outside industrial zones to continue the discussions of the case study of Bac Ninh; which motives to return according to workplaces before the return; and how returnees generate employment on the return through the lens of gender.

## **1.2. Objectives of the study**

### **1.2.1. Overall objective:**

- Investigating how rural labors to migrate to the industrial and consequences of return migration

### **1.2.2. Specific objectives:**

- Objective 1: Investigating the determinants of workers' migration to industrial zones in Bac Ninh province of Vietnam.

- Objective 2: Investigating working environment in the industrial zones in Bac Ninh and living environment of migrant workers while working in the industrial zones of Bacs Ninh.
- Objective 3: Investigating the determinants of return migration and managing employment after returning.

## **1.3. Methodology**

### **1.3.1. Study sites**

This study selected two industrial zones of Bac Ninh, a province located in the Red River delta region, for surveying migrant workers, and one commune in Thanh Hoa, a province in Central North of Vietnam, for surveying returnee. Bac Ninh was selected for data collection because of the significant development of industrial zones in this region. Compared to other provinces in the region, it has 15 industrial zones, ranked the second in terms of quantity and the total area, and the first in terms of employment creation. The industrial zone of Bac Ninh created about 190 thousand employments<sup>1</sup>. This province also showed migrant workers in the industrial zones accounted for approximately 70% of total, rather high comparing to the others.

Que Vo and Yen Phong industrial zones are the two largest industrial zones of Bac Ninh province in terms of size and the employment provision. According to Management Board of Industrial zone of Bac Ninh (2015), The Que Vo industrial zone covers 600 ha and offers 58,017 employments including 50.4% migrant labor, whereas the Yen Phong zone spreads over 1,200 ha and provides 71,879 employments including 82.2% migrant labors. Que Vo has nearly doubled migrant labors and Yen Phong has more than triple ones compared to the third, Tien Son industrial zone. Furthermore, these zones have been considered as the pioneer of industrial development in Bac Ninh. Que Vo was established in 2001, followed by Yen Phong in 2005.

Thanh Hoa province was selected for further analyze on return migration based on the result of the survey in 2015 (see section 1.3.2). It demonstrated that most of the migrant workers in the industrial zone of

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.izabacninh.gov.vn/?page=news\\_detail&category\\_id=3734&id=8249&portal=kcnbn](http://www.izabacninh.gov.vn/?page=news_detail&category_id=3734&id=8249&portal=kcnbn), accessed 24/6/2014.

Bac Ninh were from Thanh Hoa province and most of those migrant workers had an idea to return baseline villages (Ngo, Lebailly, and Dien 2015). The research pays attention to Van Thang commune as a site for collecting data because residents in Van Thang started migrating out of the commune since the mid-1990s. Based on the pre-survey for the national election conducted by Van Thang's authorities in March 2016, about 600 migrants who were working out of the commune and 162 returnees who already resided within the commune for at least one year were identified

### **1.3.2. Data collection**

The primary data of this research was collected in three main surveys. The first was for 190 samples who are migrant workers in Yen Phong and Que Vo industrial zone from, March to September 2015. The second was for 68 samples who are returnees in Van Thang commune. It took place in August 2016 (then returned in May 2017). The last one was a 120-migrant survey in the last part of Yen Phong and Que Vo industrial zone.

The sample size was calculated by the following equation suggested by (Yamane 1967):

$$n = \frac{N}{(1 + N * e^2)}$$

where n = sample size; N = total population (189.465 migrant workers and 162 returnees); e = sample variance (assumed at 6% for migrant workers and at 10% for returnees). For these parameters, n = 277 (migrant workers) and 62 (returnees) were supposed to generate. However, after cleaning the data, still 310 sample for migrant worker and 68 sample for returnee have been used for analysis.

Secondary data regarding the information of industrial zones of Bac Ninh was provided by Bac Ninh Management Board of Industrial Zones, a provincial level. The information used for setting up interviews was obtained from communal authorities (Dong Tien, Long Chau, Nam Son and Phuong Lieu in Bac Ninh and Van Thang in Thanh Hoa). Thanks to the supports of local authorities, accessing the interviews in the villages became more convenient.

### ***1.3.3. Data analysis***

This study adopted the push and pull model to analyze both the motives of out-migration to industrial zones and return migration. Therefore, the factors impacted on migration arose from the areas of origin (Push factor); from destination (Pull factor). This means that the decision to migrate out is both influenced by pushing force from the origin, and by pulling force from the destinations (industrial zones of Bac Ninh). Pushing forces may arise from the failures of agricultural production in cash income and from accessibility to non-farm employment at the areas of origin. Pulling force, meanwhile, may arise from the high demand for labor, availability of cash incomes, the expectation for a better working environment, and new life values in the destinations.

In contrast to the outmigration process, the returning migration is probably influenced by the pushing force that originates from the difficulties encountered at work and living conditions at the destinations. Meanwhile, the pull factor may arise from the migrant's desire to reunite his or her family after a long period of outmigration or from the social values dictated by the community of the areas of origin.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEWS

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### 2.1. Push and pull model of migration

E.S. Lee (1966) firstly contributed to the push and pull model of migration. In this model, migration is decided by factors such as areas of origin, areas of destination, intervening obstacles, and personal characteristics. For Lee, people respond to the areas of origin and destination in both positive (plus) and negative (minus) ways according to the personal characteristics of migrants (Reniers 1999). According to Passaris (1989) Lee's analytical framework is referred to push and pull model of migration.

Basically, the push and pull model relies on individual choices supporting the neoclassical model at the micro level (Haas 2007). It means that people do choose to make migration decisions, but it does not imply that they choose it freely. People have to choose to migrate or to stay. The direction of migration is largely determined by their network (De Haan 1997).

Clearly, push and pull factors when they are related respectively to a household crisis caused by hardships in areas of origin and a better hope at destinations. Although a huge body of literature has tried to analyze drivers of out-migration, push and pull factors are still complex. It is no doubt that household hardships may arise from natural disasters like a typhoon, flood and drought that damage household assets and cause negative impacts on income generation activities of labors who are then pushed to alternative income activities, including outmigration (Ishtiaque and Ullah 2013; Nguyen, Raabe, and Grote 2015; Gröger and Zylberberg 2016). Besides, push factors may result from less development in the areas of origin where employment is inadequately provided. Indeed, low living standards and income are not enough to sustain labors' lives and their families (Fan 2005; Korra 2010; Phuong and McPeak 2010; Fukase 2013; Lamonica and Zagaglia 2013; Sridhar, Reddy, and Srinath 2013; Narciso 2015). However, this argument is inconsistent with the study of Lamonica and Zagaglia (2013) who stated that economic conditions in the area of origin do not cause an effect on migration decisions. Even when economic growth and urbanization progress taken place, the realized modern lifestyle that has not been fulfilled at the areas of origin created a desire to leave (Bal 2014).



In addition, the increasing consumption pressures resulting from a larger household size and a higher household's dependent ratio also motivated outmigration. According to Tegegne and Penker (2016), the probability of outmigration was up to 48% when household size increased one unit, and the more dependent members were, the more out-migration took place to generate income for dependent ones. Xu et al. (2015) showed that one labor in the households increased, the probability of inter-province migration increases 51.7%, while one child who attends to school increased, the probability of inter-district migration increases 46.3%. Referring to the household's assets, it found that land scatter also pushed rural labors out of their home village. Due to traditional inheritance, agricultural land was divided into smaller pieces for siblings' inheritance that insufficiently sustained their livelihoods, thus, outmigration could be a reasonable option (Tegegne and Penker 2016). This argument is consistent with Bezu and Holden (2014) who stated that decreasing farm size pushed youth labors to migrate. However, the study of Xu et al. (2015) demonstrated no significant impact of arable land per capita on outmigration decision. A possible explanation was that although arable land per capita was low, 0.067 ha, the proportion of off-farm income, accounting for 71.9% of total household income was significantly higher than that of farm income.

Referring to pull factors, the empirical analyses have concentrated on a better expectation at the destination. For example Korra (2010), Ngo (2010), Fukase (2013), Sridhar, Reddy, and Srinath (2013), Ishtiaque and Ullah (2013), and Shrestha (2017) who stated that higher expected income and employment availability, both non-farm and off-farm employment created by informal sectors of urban spheres and formal sectors of industrial zones attracted migrants from rural areas. Also, Lucas (2015) also found better amenities such as schools, health centers, electricity, and greater security that provide better living or working conditions highly encourage immigration. Similarly Iqbal and Gusman (2015) added that the culture of destination where migrant workers could integrate with acted as pull factors. In the same vein, S.W. Lee (2017) revealed that giving easy access to an institution put an emphasis on attracting immigrants for education.

Although the push and pull model of migration significantly added new values for school of migration, it is criticized for the different factors that

impact on migration decisions are enumerated in a relatively arbitrary manner. Besides, such factors alone cannot explain why people move. They migrate because of expectations for a more satisfying living, not for less population pressure. Moreover, different scales of analysis of the model seem to be confused. It became unclear from individual to the global scale. In addition, push and pull factors are vague in terms of boundaries. Push factors overlap pull factors sometimes and vice versa (Haas 2007). Moreover, the aspirations of people that crucially cause an impact on the trend of migration have been ignored by the push and pull model (Petersen 1958).

## **2.2. Return migration**

As literature reviewed both economic and noneconomic factors determine the motives of return migration. Since it was mentioned by the neoclassical model of migration, return migration is determined by the failures of migration experience (Cassarino 2004). Before leaving out of villages, migrants have brought an expectation that their status would be improved. When their efforts fail to achieve, migrants were more likely to return home (Farrell, Mahon, and McDonagh 2012; Piotrowski and Tong 2010). The failures regarded to this approach consider negative human capital selectivity as a determinant of return. It found that migrants with lower educational level have a higher probability to return because of getting lost in the competition labor market (Piotrowski and Tong 2010; Hirvonen and Lilleør 2015; Lindstrom and Massey 1994). Meanwhile trained and more educated migrants found less to return, keep the migration on the move (Wang and Fan 2006). However, by comparison to non-migrants, returnees are not failed by the low educational levels. It demonstrated higher educational levels among migrants than non-migrants (Constant and Massey 2002). Even among returnees, higher education appears to regional return rather than local return (Piotrowski and Tong 2010; Newbold and Bell 2001).

Coming closer to the approach of new economic labor of migration, when migration is viewed as a strategy to diversify the household's income, return migration is somehow determined by the success. Farrell et al. (2014) illustrated that return was motivated when migrants accumulated sufficient funds for elaborating a business or purchasing accommodation

or gaining a satisfactory experience. Furthermore, empirical data analyzed by Démurger and Xu (2011a) showed that experiences gained during migration help returnees to obtain self-employment as entrepreneurial activities in the areas of origin. It found that migrants return to rural Zimbabwe with more skills and experiences than when they left the village. Therefore, returnees were more advanced compared to local ones in terms of searching for employment (Dziva and Kusena 2013).

Referring to noneconomic factors, return migration is considered as a process of re-embeddedness with social economic, social psychology and social network at the area of origin. It found that personal characteristics (age, gender) and cultural circumstances (ethnic, religious) were shaped the embeddedness (van Houte and Davids 2008). In addition, family ties are considered more important than financial interaction to sometimes pull migrant homes. The initial attempt of migrants to return is desired by filial obligations (Binh 2016). The fellow feeling of home communities seems to pull migrants to return whenever they achieve their goals at destination (Farrell et al. 2014). Hence, the more returnees have, like children, spouse, and mother in the areas of origin, the more they return (Piotrowski and Tong 2010; Junge, Revilla Diez, and Schätzl 2015). Especially, when migrants gave birth or when it appears a member of the family got a severe illness, the forces to return increased (Farrell, Mahon, and McDonagh 2012). The social networks from the family or friend of returnee support for their income generation or employment at the area of origin (Farrell et al. 2014; Niedomysl and Amcoff 2011; Gashi and Adnett 2015). By contrast, the migrants who married in migration destinations were less to return, meanwhile, the amount of sending remittance home did not cause an effect on the decision of return (Piotrowski and Tong 2010). For another reason, origin, or rural setting itself was considered as a value that attracts migrants to return. In this vein returnees perceived ancestor worship, safe, closer relationship, community and a place for the family to become more important than other factors that impact return decision (Farrell, Mahon, and McDonagh 2012; Jellema 2007). Finally, the return perceived by migrants as a natural progression of family life. When migrants left their village, it was hidden a promise to return (Le Mare, Promphaking, and Rigg 2015).

No way out of the ordinary outmigration is determined by low economic development and lack of employment in the areas of origin. The return is

based on the similarities in the area of origin compared to the destination, possibility to return is more realized with the rise of employment opportunities (Farrell et al. 2014; Niedomysl and Amcoff 2011). Nevertheless, the growth of regional nonfarm employment determines both regional and local returnees in a certain context. For example, in Vietnam the nonfarm opportunities at the regional level encourage more local returnees than regional ones. Closed distance to the township allows returnees to implement commuting daily. Meanwhile, in Thailand regional returnees are more pulled by the growth of regional nonfarm than the local returnees (Junge, Revilla Diez, and Schätzl 2015).

## 3. RESULTS

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### 3.1. Migration determinants: views from the areas of origin

Migrant workers in Yen Phong and Que Vo industrial zone of Bac Ninh were found as young labors, concentrated from 22 to 24 years old. Most of them are female and come from rural areas. However, there exist some differences between those workers. First, in the 2016 national migration survey, most migrants were married, while most migrant workers in Yen Phong and Que Vo industrial zone did not. Second, both this study and the national survey on migration showed the diverse educational levels of migrants. However, this study did not find migrant workers under the secondary level of education, which appeared in the 2016 national migration survey. More interestingly, there was the presence of skilled workers in the position of unskilled workers. This fact somewhat suggests temporarily for migrant workers in those industrial zones.

Also, analyzing the household practice of migrant workers in Yen Phong and Que Vo industrial zone before migrating showed that the livelihood activities in their households are relatively diverse, including both agricultural and non-agricultural activities. Similarly, the economic status of these households is both well-off, average, and poor (Table 1). However, migrant workers, most of whom were unmarried, are relatively separated in their access to agricultural land. Most of their households in the areas of origin can access to agricultural land. However, the migrant worker's parents take all the decisions regarding agricultural land use at the time they migrate. They are probably the next generation to decide the use of that agricultural land when their parents are aging.

**Table 1: Household's economic status and main livelihood activities before migration**

		Economic status before migration			
		Well-off	Average	Poor	Total
Plantation / Crops	Count	5 <sup>a</sup>	122 <sup>a, b</sup>	50 <sup>b</sup>	177
	%	2.82	68.93	28.25	100.00
Livestock and poultry	Count	0 <sup>a</sup>	32 <sup>a</sup>	7 <sup>a</sup>	39
	%	0.00	82.05	17.95	100.00
Non-farm	Count	11 <sup>a</sup>	66 <sup>b</sup>	17 <sup>b</sup>	94
	%	11.70	70.21	18.09	100.00
Total	Count	16	220	74	310
	%	5.16	70.97	23.87	100.00

*Notes:* Different subscript letter presents significantly different proportions based on a Z-test at the .05 level. Pearson Chi-Square test: P = 0.003.

*Source:* Data collection

Besides, analyzing the labor arrangements before and after migrant workers leaving showed the tendency of labor shortage in agricultural production. After migrant workers leaving homes, other household members also follow migrant workers to move to nonfarm employment. Indeed, the area of agricultural production in their households shrunken. The reason for this shift, according to migrant workers, is the shortage of cash for daily expenses which is not available due to the seasonal character of agricultural production. This practice suggests that the leaving of migrant workers is probably not because of the labor surplus in their households.

### **3.2. On the move to industrial zones of Bac Ninh province**

Although migrant workers decided unilaterally to leave homes for migrating to Yen Phong and Que Vo industrial zone, their decision relatively associates with family consensus. In addition, previous migrants, such as their friends and other migrants within the village, who have had nonfarm employment away from home were likely to pull migrant workers out of their family. However, the analysis showed that migrant workers seemed to hide a reason to leave those industrial zones later or return to their areas of origin in their initial purposes before migration (Table 2). The desire for a job before migrating illustrated that few migrant workers before leaving homes aimed at working like in the industrial zones of Bac Ninh. In the beginning, they aim at satisfying the current financial needs for themselves and their families, to meet the need to experience new life beyond the

boundaries of the village. However, the end of these initial aims is to return home.

**Table 2: Initial purpose of outmigration crossing groups of migrant workers**

Purposes		First moved	Secondary moved	Total
Earning money for self-expenditure	Count	69 <sup>a</sup>	43 <sup>a</sup>	112
	%	61.61	38.39	100.00
Earning money for supporting family	Count	88 <sup>a</sup>	49 <sup>a</sup>	137
	%	64.23	35.77	100.00
Earning money for setting up future business at baseline village	Count	12 <sup>a</sup>	11 <sup>a</sup>	23
	%	52.17	47.83	100.00
Getting away from agriculture	Count	9 <sup>a</sup>	1 <sup>a</sup>	10
	%	90.00	10.00	100.00
Obtaining self-experience	Count	13 <sup>a</sup>	11 <sup>a</sup>	24
	%	54.17	45.83	100.00
Others	Count	3 <sup>a</sup>	1 <sup>a</sup>	4
	%	75.00	25.00	100.00
Total	Count	194	116	310
	%	62.58	37.42	100.00

*Notes:* Pearson Chi-Square P = 0.361; Different subscript letter presents significantly different proportions based on a Z-test at the .05 level.

*Source:* Data collection

The obstacles in nonfarm employment access in the areas of origin probably pushed migrant workers to the industrial zones of Bac Ninh. There did not exist as many industrial zones in the areas of origin as in Bac Ninh, so laborers had fewer choices for nonfarm employment. Even if there existed industrial zones or clusters in some areas of origin, those places would not be attractive to migrant workers due to low wages, unsuitable requirements for recruitment, lack of appeal of the living environment, and unsuitable distance. Besides, the restrictions on access to local nonfarm employment outside the industrial zones or clusters in the areas of origin are likely to encourage migrant workers to move to the Bac Ninh industrial zones. Limited capacity and social relationships prevent them from accessing nonfarm employment in the state sector, while the lack of information does not allow them to achieve other nonfarm employment in the areas of origin before migration.

Comparing the first and second migration groups, there was no difference in their migration decisions. This suggests that the initial destination, outside or inside the industrial zones of Bac Ninh, did not relate to the initial

decisions and purposes of the migrant workers. However, first-moved migrants appear to be having more obstacles than secondary moved migrants to access non-agricultural jobs in the areas of origin.

Added to the reason of migration, the study found that the industrial zones of Bac Ninh has created a high demand of labor. To find labor resources, the enterprises in industrial zones in Bac Ninh not only carry out the recruitment at the company’s headquarters (in Bac Ninh) but also move to areas of origin to recruit. This has never happened at the beginning of industrial zones. Besides, the enterprises also simplified recruitment requirements by paying attention only to health conditions and even recruiting those with a secondary level of education. This also rarely happens in the early stage of industrial zone development in Bac Ninh. Also, the study results show that the migration decisions of workers in Bac Ninh industrial zones are guided by their relationships with friends and relatives (Table 3). These people proved as safety at the destination when migrant workers persuaded other members of their families. The presence of friends and relatives in Bac Ninh industrial zones seems a testament to an acceptable job. This is also the reason why migrant workers do not pay much attention to details on employment in industrial zones. Those who was concerned about probationary salaries and regular salaries as the most interested in accounted for less than 50% of the total sample.

**Table 3: Migrant workers’ friends and relatives at destinations**

	Pooled (N=310)	First moved (N=194)	Secondary moved (N=116)	Difference
First destination (%)	73.55	73.20	74.14	0.94
Bac Ninh Industrial Zones (%)	77.42	73.20	84.48	11.28**

*Notes:* Significances are based on Chi-square test of equality proportion.

\*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

*Source:* Data collection

### **3.3. Working at industrial zones – the migrant worker’s trade-off?**

Although the working environment in industrial zones in Bac Ninh has improved significantly compared to the early stage of establishment, this study still showed limitations that probably cause the dissatisfaction of migrant workers. It reported that the probationary period is too long compared to the time that they can get used to the works. Similarly, daily



working hours are reportedly longer than migration workers expected. Moreover, in the industrial zones in Bac Ninh, there remains a "compulsory voluntary" regarding the overtime options. Migrant workers wrote the application voluntarily to work overtime. However, they have no choice to refuse. With these working hours, the earnings of migrant workers are slightly higher than the national average. They can still save and can send money back to their family, although the spell of sending remittance lasted relatively long, from 8 to 9 months. However, migrant workers have satisfied with these earnings at a low level. Besides, the results of a recent study, arguing that overtime payment plays a critical role in reaching the living standard of those workers, suggests that migrant workers face hard employment. The study also found that migrant households use remittances for daily expenses at the highest rate. This is especially true for households of migrants whose main livelihood relied on agriculture.

Regarding the life of migrant workers after working hours, the study found more difficulties than advantages. Besides poor amenities, they also face poor non-economic life. Their main entertainment relies more on smartphones with virtual interactions than actual ones. They also face many obstacles in accessing social services such as health care and education services. On the one hand, the discussion in this chapter revealed that these obstacles probably result from the limitations of the Ho Khu system. On the other hand, the nature of the constraints probably arises from the responsiveness of the local communities where the industrial zones are located. The current educational facilities designed to sever the local dwellers could not cover numerous added populations, like migrant workers in industrial zones. Therefore, those workers were likely excluded from those educational services.

Finally, this study identified that the employment of migrant workers in industrial zones in Bac Ninh is more short-term than long-term. Migrant workers will leave these industrial zones in search of better opportunities outside industrial zones or mostly intend to return their home countries. This finding is consistent with discussions, discussed in the previous section, about the initial purpose of migrant workers to include the implications of leaving industrial zones or returning home.

A comparison between the two groups of migrant workers shows that the secondary moved migrant workers have more friends and relatives working in Bac Ninh industrial zones than the first moved migrant workers. They

were more likely than the first moved migrants to concern about the probationary period, probationary pay, working hours per day, official salary, and extra hour payments before selecting the current employment. They have migrated and most of them did not participate in recruitment at the place of origin as the first moved migrant workers. Therefore, they probably need more information to compare with the previous job. Differences between these two migrant groups continue to occur at the probationary period. It is probably because of working experience, the secondary moved migrant workers have a shorter probationary period than first-time migrant workers. Testing results do not show differences in other criteria such as working time of the day, over time in the day, overtime in the month, and satisfaction with overtime. Also, the two groups do not differ in income and remittances. However, the frequency of remittances of secondary moved migrant workers is higher than that of first-time migrant workers. The livings of these two groups of workers after working hours are similar, they both face the same difficulties. However, first moved migrant workers are likely to spend less on accommodation and food. The possible reason is that these workers share the room and kitchen. Finally, first moved migrant workers tend to leave the industrial zones and return to their home countries more than secondary moved migrant workers.

### **3.4. Return migration: reasons and consequences**

The findings of this section reflect the reliable intention of migrant workers to return as previously discussed. More women are returning from the industrial zone than men. The average working spell of returnees from industrial zones is at about 6.5 years and the returning age is at about 29 (Table 4). Like migrant workers in Bac Ninh industrial zones, most of the returnees married during migration and between the waves of migrations. Specifically, 23.64% of the returnee's marriage objected to those in the areas of origin, as the intention of migrant workers in the Bac Ninh industrial zone. In addition, the study results also show that those who return to marry during migration contain their intention to return. They often find their partner among the people from the same regions or the same areas of origin.

**Table 4: Returnee's age, gender, and direction of the first move**

	Pooled (N=68)	Inside industrial zones (N=34)	Outside industrial zones (N=34)	Difference
Male (1=Yes; 0=No)	41.18	20.59	61.76	41.18***
First destination (1= industrial zones; 0= not)	54.41	82.35	26.47	55.88***
Age of return (year)	29.8676 (8.350)	29.0882 (8.775)	30.6471 (7.958)	1.5588
Go back and forth (times)	1.5147 (0.855)	1.3824 (0.779)	1.6471 (0.917)	0.2647
Migration spell (year)	7.2941 (4.633)	6.4706 (3.492)	8.1176 (5.476)	1.6471

Notes: Standard deviations in parentheses. Significances of the mean differences are based on a t-test for continuous variables and the proportion differences are based on N-1 Chi-square test for binary variables. \*  $p < 0.10$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$

Source: Data collection

Regarding the motives for returning, this study shows that insufficient earning at destinations push migrants back baseline villages. After leaving the village with the hope of a better life, returnees realized the harder life in the destinations than they imagined, especially when the family size is expanded. Getting married and having children creates a burden on their family life. At that time, their income seemed smaller than what their family needed. In this context, the return likely reflected a failure of the migration process. Moreover, the returnees are also pulled, perhaps strongly, by the factors arising from their home villages. They feel their responsibility to their extended family (including their parents and children) is increasing as their parents get aging and their children growing up. More importantly, for male migrants, their return is part of the responsibility of their ancestors. This partly explains the phenomenon that the migrants who succeed in migration still return to baseline villages.

Regarding the employment of migrants after returning, this study shows gender differences. More female than male returnees are able to access agricultural land after returning. Although female returnees do not receive as much agricultural land as male returnees, they can rent or borrow more agricultural land from villagers, mostly relatives. The tendency of laborers to leave the village to work far from home leads to an abundance of agricultural land, making it easy for female returnees to rent or borrow. Because of this, soon after returning, female returnees tend to work in

agriculture more than male returnees. However, later those people tend to move to nonfarm employment. In the early stage of return, female returnees have worked in this area as a buffer, while waiting for non-farm jobs thereafter. More interestingly, this study revealed the movements of labor from agriculture to non-agriculture. Although, 45.29% of those returning to work in agriculture in the early stage of return, 10% of them turn to non-agricultural jobs afterward. Meanwhile, 29.41% of returnees were engaged in nonfarm employment, nearly 20% were added to this proportion later.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

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### 4.1. Determinants of workers' migration to the industrial zones of Bac Ninh

Following De Haas (2010) who argued that plural approach needs to integrate to migration studies, this study shows that push and pull theory is inadequate to explain the motives of migrant workers in Bac Ninh industrial zones. They are complex and influenced by a variety of factors. The intention to leave industrial zones by migrant workers in Bac Ninh and returning migrants in Van Thang showed that migration always associated with their family background. Despite the individual migration decisions of migrant workers, they always expect the consensuses of their families. Besides, they left baseline villages in part due to the labor arrangement in their households. The lack of nonfarm employment at baseline communities may result in fewer opportunities. However, even in some places of origin, when existing availability of nonfarm employment, these workers still decide to migrate to industrial zones in Bac Ninh. In this case, it can be explained that migrant workers' motivations for migration stem from their desire for more independence from their family life.

This study pointed out several factors that push workers to migrate to Bac Ninh industrial zones. Firstly, the shortage of opportunities for nonfarm employment in the areas of origin pushes migrant workers to find alternatives in Bac Ninh industrial zones. In most of the areas of origin, there reported no industrial zones where the opportunities for nonfarm employment were probably available like in the industrial zones of Bac Ninh. In addition, accessing formal nonfarm employment outside industrial zones in the areas of origin faced obstacles that lead to the left of these migrant workers. More importantly, this study revealed that push factors probably arose from a shortage of cash for the daily consumption that failed to achieve in agricultural production, a feature of rural areas in Vietnam. Accordingly, the migrant workers objected to the industrial zones in Bac Ninh, where they earn monthly cash. Also, the discussions showed that most remittances using by the households of migrant workers for the daily expenses provided a clearer complement for this argument. Interestingly, the desire for new values of living differing from those in the villages of migrant workers hidden behind this cash shortage. Furthermore,

migrant workers' propensity to return reflected that migration to industrial zones is the rural youths' way of life. Therefore, these aspirations function as the key factors that promote the migration decision of young migrant workers in Bac Ninh industrial zones. This argument is consistent with (Bal 2014) who demonstrated that modern lifestyle in urban areas created a desire to leave.

Besides, this study argued that the economic status of the household before the migration is not considered clearly as a push factor. On the one hand, the study found migrant workers were all in well-off, average, and poor households before the migration. Then, their household's livelihood activities engage with both farm and nonfarm. On the other hand, if migrant workers were out of their home because of household economic problems, remittance would play an important role. Conversely, the finding does not support a correlation between remittance, household status, and main livelihood activities before the migration. Thus, the main reason for outmigration maybe the economic problem of individuals who desire cash for daily expenses.

Regarding pull factors, this study revealed that migrant workers were likely attracted by the high labor demand of enterprises in industrial zones in Bac Ninh. However, the availability of nonfarm employment in the industrial zone itself is not enough to pull migrant workers out of their homes. Instead, having easy access to employment over there is also important. It allows us to explain partly why the migrant workers fail to try to search nonfarm employment in the areas of origin, even in some cases, it is available. Unlike the early stage of establishment, these enterprises have currently undertaken recruitment in the areas of origin along with that in their headquarters. They even accepted secondary level-educated workers. Also, simple recruitment procedures and requirements made it easier for migrant workers to access jobs in these industrial zones. This argument is partly consistent with Lee (2017) who revealed that giving an easy access to a destination attracted immigrants.

However, these both push and pull factors seem unclear when migrant workers decide to work in Bac Ninh industrial zones based on their social relationships. Lack of social networks in the areas of origin prevents migrant workers to obtain nonfarm employment. Meanwhile, the availability of those networks in industrial zones in Bac Ninh encourages rural labors to come. This point of view proves the argument of Xu et al.

(2015) that the more social network rural labors have, the more opportunities of outmigration are. In fact, social networks facilitate initial settings on the first move. Employment information provided by relatives and friends who have been working in the industrial zones is a trust to encourage rural labors to migrate out.

It is more interesting when research results demonstrated that the factors from the place of origin, commonly known as the push factor, are related to the more pull factor. Many migrant workers claimed that their motive for migration comes from the previous migrants who were in the village. These people returning to their hometowns during Tet brought a different image to the destinations. This has created an attraction for rural workers. Finally, analyzing the initial purpose of migrant workers in the Bac Ninh industrial zone illustrated a hidden promise to return behind these goals. Only few migrant workers have an original purpose that suits their current job. Most of them wanted other jobs or accumulated capital to return to their hometown or gain experience to find better jobs after that.

#### **4.2. Working and non-Working environment in industrial zones of Bac Ninh**

This study found that migrant workers in industrial zones in Bac Ninh faced a trade-off between accepting a hard life and accumulating capitals and experiences for a better one afterward. Most of the migrant workers in those zones suffered from working environments because of long hours of schedule and “voluntary compulsory” scheme of work. Besides, a non-working environment provides inadequate facilities for migrant workers’ stable living while they are working in the industrial zones of Bac Ninh. They were residing in places with minimum requirements for their living. Emigrating to industrial zones with a hope to change the better way of life differing from rural hometown, however, migrant workers failed to achieve even a basic social service, except accessing to internet. Therefore, migrant workers’ propensity is leaving rather than staying on works at these zones. This argument is in line with the study of Cirera & Lakshman (2017) who illustrated that working hour inside industrial zones was longer than that was outside the zones sometime and workers in industrial zones still suffered from compulsory extra hours. Besides, it is similar to the study of

Shaw (2007) who argued that migrant's living surrounding industrial zones was poor.

In addition, working and non-working environment in industrial zones of Bac Ninh combined with migrant workers' characteristics and initial purposes create circular migration. Those zones function as a place for young rural labors to enter the nonfarm labor market rather than to provide them long-term employment. Most migrant workers tend to keep on their minds a promise to return to their areas of origin or to move out of the zones after several years of staying on their works.

### **4.3. Return migration in Van Thang**

Regarding the return of migrants, the findings in this study reflected the reliable intention of migrant workers in industrial zones to return. Adding to migrants who marry after returning, those who married during migration and among waves of migration also contained their intention to return. The common marriage strategy for these people was to find partners in areas of origin.

Besides, the return of migrants in Van Thang likely arises from a failure rather than a success. As the family size of migrants expanded, returnees realized that the earnings at the destination were not enough. Additionally, the obstacles in accessing basic social services as discussed in the case of migrant workers in industrial zones in Bac Ninh likely occur in the case of returning migrants in Van Thang. Sending their children to the baseline villages to cope with the limited income at the destinations has created a force to pull these migrants to return. More importantly, the moral values shaped by the norms in the home communities also added a factor that pulls returnees to return. They cannot ignore filial obligation to their parents, who are aging, and unable to ignore the responsibility to worship their ancestors that seems a part of the lives of returnees. These arguments, on the one hand, support the study of Junge, Revilla Diez, & Schätzl, L (2015) who demonstrated that the stayers left behind urged migrants to return. On the other hand, they are consistent with the study of Binh (2016) who emphasized filial obligation as a critical motive of return.

Concerning employment after returning, this study demonstrated a gender difference. The female returnees were more likely to engage with



agricultural work than male returnees. This suggests an important role in agricultural production for female migrants after returning to Van Thang commune. However, the appearance of few farming households with much larger than the usual scale in Van Thang commune suggests an accumulation of agricultural land. Although currently this phenomenon is arranged by returnees through verbal contracts.

However, due to limited resources this study just refers to the case of Bac Ninh and Thanh Hoa province. It might differ from other provinces further to the south of Vietnam where industrial zones are also well developed. In addition, adopting mainly descriptive statistics combined with qualitative methods to analyse motivation of migration to industrial zones and lack of advanced quantitative appliances might prevent a deeper understanding of determinants that are presented in this study.

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## GRAESE : Groupe de Recherches Asie de l'Est et du Sud Est



Le **GRAESE** (Groupe de Recherches sur l'Asie de l'Est et du Sud Est) regroupe des chercheurs concernés par les problèmes du développement en Asie Orientale et Sud Orientale. A son origine se trouvent des académiques et des chercheurs ayant participé à des projets de recherche, d'enseignement et de coopération dans cette région du monde depuis le milieu des années 1990. En Belgique, ces activités ont associé, dès le début, des chercheurs de l'UCL, des FUSAGX, et de l'ULG qui poursuivent une coopération régulière depuis une quinzaine d'années. En Asie ces activités ont concerné un grand nombre de chercheurs et d'académiques de diverses universités et institutions vietnamiennes, laotiennes, cambodgiennes, thaïlandaises et chinoises. L'Université Agronomique de Hanoi (UAH) est un partenaire privilégié depuis le début. Ces activités ont concerné particulièrement les projets de développement agricole, les composantes socio-économiques du développement rural, les rapports villes-campagnes et les politiques affectant ces différents domaines. En outre plusieurs thèses de doctorat ont été réalisées dans le cadre de ces activités, et sous diverses formes de partenariat entre les universités belges et asiatiques concernées. Le **GRAESE** vise à donner une meilleure visibilité à ces diverses activités, à faciliter la circulation de l'information entre les chercheurs et centres de recherches concernés, et à appuyer et soutenir l'intérêt en Belgique et en Europe pour les problèmes du développement asiatique dans un public plus large.

En pratique le **GRAESE** a pour objectif :

- 1) de stimuler la recherche interdisciplinaire concernant les problèmes et les enjeux du développement en Asie orientale et sud orientale
- 2) de publier sous forme de Working Papers (format papier ou online) des résultats de recherche liés aux projets en cours et aux questions concernant les diverses thématiques du développement appliquées à l'Asie orientale et sud-orientale, avec une attention particulière aux thèmes évoqués ci-dessus.
- 3) de réaliser des publications scientifiques de divers types concernant ces problèmes et réalisées par des chercheurs des différents centres partenaires en Europe et en Asie.
- 4) de fournir un lieu de rencontres entre chercheurs concernés par ces thèmes, particulièrement dans le cadre des doctorats en cours.
- 5) d'organiser des activités d'enseignement et d'information sur les problèmes du développement de l'Asie de l'Est et du Sud Est, notamment à travers l'organisation de conférences et séminaires donnés par des académiques et chercheurs asiatiques de passage en Belgique.

En Belgique les activités du **GRAESE** sont coordonnées par Ph. Lebailly (UEDR-Gembloux-ULiège) et J.Ph. Peemans (CED-UCL). Le secrétariat du **GRAESE** est assuré par l'UEDR.

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