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Development of Craft Making Industry: Changing the Patterns of Women's Spatial Mobility

A Case Study in Traditional Craft Making Village, Northern Vietnam*

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Abstract

Thanks to Vietnamese government policies on industrialization of rural economy and diversification of rural livelihood including the program of "leaving the rice fields but not the countryside", a number of traditional craft villages have been revived and grown in the trend of commoditization in Red River delta since the time of *Doi Moi*. The expansion of production in traditional craft villages has absorbed a considerable amount of labors, especially female labors. As a result, rural women increasingly play important roles in development of rural economy in general, in income generation for households in particular. Women participate in craft making industry not only as home-based workers, but also as mobile shopkeepers, traders, entrepreneurs, and contract labors outside the village.

The empirical data and information from a traditional woodcarving village have shown that the concepts of work and workplace should be redefined in the context of commercialization and industrialization of rural economy. Several home-based working women in Kim Thieu made decisions of their workplace due to their desire rather than their reproductive roles. Many people among them used to work outside the village, but now they come back to work at home. Further, home-based female workers in the context of woodcarving industry cannot be seen as to be confined in the domestic sphere because at present most villagers including male and female are working side by side at their family factories rather than outside the village. The meanings of domestic works, particularly food preparation in Kim Thieu also need to be contested. The reason is the fact that women prepare food not only to serve their family members, but also to feed their permanent contract workers. In such case, cooking is become paid work rather than unpaid.

The empirical data collected in the time of *Doi Moi* has also elucidated a significant change in the patterns of women's spatial mobility in terms of duration, distance, means of transportation and occupation in comparison with previous time. While before women just engaged in small trade activities surrounding the village, at present their spatial mobility is much related to woodcarving trade and sale in the big cities and abroad. The motive of spatial mobility is inspired not only by coping strategy for survival, but also by prosperity of their family and by individual reasons such as expectations of modern lifestyle and freedom. However, there is an existence of remarkable difference of patterns and motivations of spatial mobility among

women whose economic status is different. Whereas the village women leave their family for the cities or abroad to do business, other women from agricultural predominant communities come to Kim Thieu to replace them doing low paid and unskilled, even drudgery works. Although there is a differentiation in terms of motive of migration, most contract female workers are struggling for their survival strategies rather than for prosperity.

Despite the differences of patterns and motives of spatial mobility between village women and those who work as contract workers, they have similarly experienced the diverse ways in which they negotiate for their movement. All case studies have demonstrated that nobody among mobile women have attempted to make money outside by directly resistance to traditional perception of female reproductive roles and female identities. In contrast, they try to rearrange gender division of labor intra-family by employing different types of share and help from other family members as well as from modern house facilities. With respect to spatial mobility, have not only negotiated with traditional thinking of local femininity, but these women also have to struggle to a number of unfamiliar social relations at their workplace. Instead of subordinating to such complicated social relations, women know how to employ them for their successful business. Through their success in doing business, these mobile women have built their positive self-image and self-confidence which should be seen as a weapon to empower themselves.

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

It could be said that women have really become an important topic in the theoretical debates since the 1960s with the appearance of feminist schools of thought. Although they are different in their roots and their arguments, most feminist schools of thought try to find the reason that makes women subordinated to men in many aspects of life. For them, in most societies, especially patriarchal societies, women have been differentiated from men in many kinds of behaviors and activities, in which "mobility" is one of behaviors attracting a number of discussions.

The question is why "mobility" becomes the important topic in gender issues. The concept of "mobility" may be developed accordingly to the certain context. However, most of recent research perspectives define the notion of mobility related to *human's independence from geographical constraints*. This definition of mobility has been criticized because it narrowly concentrated on the material aspect of spatial mobility. Nowadays, human being is freed from geographical constraints thanks to the development of technologies, especially thanks to mobile computing technologies and services such as mobile phones and personal digital assistants. Even though, in this research, the term "spatial mobility" still focuses on this "narrow" definition.

Women's spatial mobility has been paid attention since the 1970s by geographical feminists. From that time onwards the debates on women's spatial mobility have been significantly changed. The contemporary geographical feminists not only focus on the material aspect of women's mobility, but they tend to put women in the complicated context in which social, cultural, political and economic factors are interrelated. As a consequence, women's spatial mobility is not always limited, and the factors that constrain women's spatial mobility are not only materials. Several contemporary geographical feminists place their emphases on the social and ideological factors such as patriarchal ideology of gender's roles and family structures in analyses of women's spatial mobility. Besides, they try to find out how women improvise their spatial mobility in the specific situations. The most important difference between the conventional and current ways of thinking about women's mobility issue is that the former considers women as passive victims of spatial entrapment, whereas the latter views women as active agents.

Vietnam has thousands of traditional craft villages, which are scattered around the country. Thanks to Vietnamese government policies on development of rural economy such as "leaving the rice fields but not the countryside" and diversification of rural livelihood, a number of traditional craft villages have been revived and developed in the trend of commercialization and globalization (Kabeer 2000). The expansion of production of craft making activities has absorbed a variety of labors not only in the village, but also from surrounding communities. Due to the high demand for labor, most of male and female villagers engage in the craft works. Component parts of rural work force have become more complicated because a number of outsiders who come from different locations participate as both temporary and permanent hired workers in the craft villages. Women participate in craft making industry not only as home-based workers, but also as traders, shopkeepers, entrepreneurs, and mobile-contract labors. This means that women are not always entrapped in the domestic and village spaces, but their spatial mobility is very diverse. The questions are the fact that when and by which way Vietnamese women, especially who are in the North, can create different patterns of mobility through their participation in craft making industry.

1.2 The Research Objectives

This research aims at:

1. Clarifying the factors which influence on rural women's spatial mobility
2. Identifying different commuting patterns of rural women who participate in craft making industry
3. Recognizing the ways in which rural women negotiate for their spatial mobility through participating in craft making industry

1.3 Research Questions

1. How/why restrictions of Vietnamese rural women's spatial mobility were constructed?
2. What are the main commuting patterns of craft making female workers?

3. How these women negotiate for their spatial mobility in context of commercialization of craft making industry?

2. Theoretical Perspectives of Women's Spatial Mobility

The perception of social scientists and economists on women's spatial mobility as well as of women's ability of migration has been remarkably influenced by structuralist thinking of gender differentiation and neoclassical model of spatial mobility. The advocates of structuralist school of thought tend to differentiate women from men in terms of space and their spatial mobility based upon the differences of their roles within family. People who follow neoclassical model of spatial mobility assume that women are followers of men or passive migrants. Both lines of thinking contend that women's spatial mobility is limited due to their reproductive roles in the family.

2.1 Patriarchal Norms and Values as the Limitations of Women's Spatial Mobility

The word *patriarchy* often refers to a social organization marked by the supremacy of a male figure, group of male figures, or men in general. Patriarchal society has imposed the certain values and norms on its members. Sometimes the local customs of a patriarchal community are much more important and influential than national laws. Some scholars state that the national laws are stopped at the gates of the villages (Kleinen 1999). Like other aspects, patriarchal ideology sets the rules of gender relations, in other words, it regulates what behaviors are relevant to men as well as to women.

In most patriarchal societies, women have been confined in the domestic space because of different reasons, but mostly relate to the biological traits of women. In some cultures, women's menstruation can be considered as the evidence of their impurity. So, menstruation becomes a reason which prohibits women from going to the public space, especially the reputable place during the menstrual period (Marglin 1992). In addition, menstruation is one of the reasons that make women weaker than men, so they may face with dangers in the public realm. Because of the fear and danger from outside, Malay young women are not allowed to go outside alone. They

need to be protected by male kin. Under the guise of protection, Malay men assert their control over women, especially young – unmarried women (Ong 1987). Similarly, Mills (2001) pointed out that Thai gender norms of spatial mobility consider young women's participation in urban employment and rural-to-urban migration carrying a different moral and cultural significance than the mobility of young rural men. Thai gender norms of spatial mobility are related to sexual behavior which carries different meaning between men and women. While sexual experience is generally considered as positive aspect of masculine identity whether within or outside of a marital relationship, female sexuality carries more ambivalent moral charge. Thus, mobility in space is perceived as a natural and valued characteristic for men, whereas women's bodies and their movement are subject to far greater restrictions. For Mills (2001), gender identity, spatial mobility and sex morality are interconnected. In other societies, like India and other Muslim cultures, female seclusion in the private domain is based on the norms of honor and shame. The patriarchal norms there are so strong that women cannot go out to work.

Patriarchal norms and values not only prohibit women from going outside in many societies, but also regulate where they can go. Vietnamese form of patriarchy may be as not strong as other Asian societies, but women's spatial mobility has been limited too. For example, the common setting of Northern Vietnamese village consists of communal house (*dinh*) and pagoda (*chua*). But, generally, *dinh* is assigned as male place, especially senior male villagers, whereas *chua* is considered as female place. Although there is not any written regulation, every villager strictly complies with this division. Gender bias here is that men can go to the pagoda if they want, but women are not allowed entering into the communal house (*dinh*). Nowadays, this separation is not so rigid as before, but men rarely go to the pagoda as well as women seldom go to the communal house.

Gendered space also can be seen in the discrimination of resource accessibility in most of African countries where men and women can access different types of land. Schroeder (1999), Susanne (2001) and Elias (2005) pointed out that African men appropriate fertile land where the commercial crops are grown for cash while women can merely occupied the exhausted land where the subsistent crops are planted. In Gambia "…men grow groundnuts and the coarse grains on upland fields during the rainy season and that their domination of groundnut production, the country's main

source of foreign exchange, translates into control over most of the cash income generated through agriculture... women grow rice and vegetables in swamps and low-lying areas, that their gardens constitute the only significant dry-season activity in the traditional Mandika labor calendar, that the bulk of the produce they grow is strictly for home consumption" (Shroeder 1999).

Patriarchal ideology of gender limits not only women's spatial, but also their social mobility. Patriarchal norms and values not only determine where women can be allowed to go, but also regulate the process by which women can transfer between economic and social groups. This means that what kinds of occupation women can enter as well as which locations they can choose their partners have been decided not by women themselves, but by senior male members in the family.

2.2 Capitalist Mode of Production and the Distinction Women's Space from Men's

It can be argued that capitalist mode of production is one of the most important reasons which inspired the gender divisions of space. Capitalism and its economic principles (neoclassical economics) developed the concepts of "work" and "productive labor" in order to serve its profit-seeking purpose. In doing this, capitalist mode of production tends to appreciate men's work and male labor over women's work and female labor.

Capitalist defines "work" as activities that are salaried/waged or financially remunerated and occurred outside domestic living space. This means that any activity which is carried out in the home space is non-work. For Gregson, this definition of work tends to promote for men because a number of activities in the domestic space have been implemented by women. Similar to Gregson, England and Lawson (2005) also contend that Eurocentric notion and capitalist idea developed the universal concept of "work" based on the separation the work from the home and on the differentiation work from non-work in which work used to be referred to men, whereas non-work used to be referred to women. Basically, the concept of "work" is shaped by the gendered site where it is performed. The implication of division work space from home space is the separation men's work from women's work.

Couple with the concept of "work", the definition of "productive labor" is one of the reasons which confines women to the domestic space. Capitalist mode of

production needs more labor which was considered as "productive". For this reason, it defines women as non-productive labors based on their natural traits and their reproductive roles. First, women's natural traits, especially menstruation, make them become weaker than men. Women cannot work for long hour with high speed as men. So, for capitalism, only men can be seen as "productive labor". Secondly, women spend much their time on their reproductive roles such as taking care of children and of other family members, providing food, and other chores. As a consequence, they have no time to participate in types of activity which was defined as "work". Moreover, women's time limitation does not allow them to access education and technology – two key factors creating high productivity, therefore, women become more relevant to the activities which were performed in the domestic/private sphere without demand for skill, education and technology. Several contemporary feminists claim that the capitalist distinction of the spaces between the work and the home as well as the differentiation of work and non-work has implied the devaluation of women's economic contribution in both public and private spheres.

2.3 Gender Implication of the Binary Thinking of Women's Spatial Mobility

Patriarchal norms and capitalist demand for productive labor seem to be intertwined in devaluation of women's economic contribution to household by putting them in the spatial entrapment. Gender implication in spatial mobility can be seen at different levels including family and workplace.

In the Family

According to the capitalist definition of work, so anything else has been done in the home space cannot be defined as "work" or income-generating activity. Hence, most of women's works are invisible, and viewed as less important than men's, their economic contribution has been devalued. In addition, most women's works which have been done in the domestic space such as providing food, caring for children and other chores are considered as unpaid/non-waged, "labor of love", "carer", and "good mother" (England and Lawson 2005). Patriarchal ideology of gender only posits men as the "breadwinners". Thus, even if women become main contributors to household economy their positions are not changed. Further, the meaning of male earnings is often superior to female's (Elson and Pearson 1997). By doing this, women's incomes

what have been generated from the home gardens and other home-based works are ignored. Incomes what men generate outside become more important and higher valued than women's. In other words, the meanings of money are differently determined based on that money was generated by whom.

In the Workplace/Labor Market

The dichotomous idea of relationship between home and work has influenced on the ways in which people discuss about women's ability going to work. The most popular discussion has emerged relating to the women's spatial mobility and their journeys-to-work. Susan Hanson and Gerry Pratt's work has played an important part in studying of home-work connections. However, due to the binary way of thinking, these authors seemed to confine women to the domestic space, so they tried to clarify how significant physical distance in shaping women's decisions over what type of employment and where is possible. According to this notion, women should work near home because of transport problems, childcare availability, and domestic division of labor. This line of thinking reinforces the occupational segregation between men and women in the labor market in the trend that women seem have fewer employment opportunities than men.

In the 1970s and the 1980s, neoclassical economists considered "women's spatial entrapment" is the main factor which causes the relocation of manufacturing factories. They supposed that firms moved from the central cities to the suburban in order to exploit cheap female labors those who cannot go to work far from their home. Although not all, but there are several multinational companies used women's disadvantage in "journeys-to-work" in order to get more benefit from low-waged exploitation. However, in *Spatial Division of Labor*, Massey (1984) showed that the relocation process of manufacturing factories to the suburbs or nearby the rural areas is not only because of cheap labor and low land rent, but also due to others such as social relations and local factors. Massey's arguments have been enriched with England's findings. England (1993) indicated that firms move from the downtowns to the suburbs used to keep high percentage of their former workers. So, most of personnel managers, who were interviewed by England, proved that their firms' relocated decisions did not depend on economic factor per se.

Even though, most of employers view women as inferior to men in the workplace/labor market because of their reproductive roles. This position supposes that domestic work is the most important women's tasks. So, they participate in the labor market only as "reverse army". This means that women increasingly join into labor market when demand for labor is high, and they will give up their outside work in the time of labor surplus. According to Elson and Pearson (1997), outside work takes the second position in the rank of women's tasks. Therefore, the advocates of this position argued that "women work only for 'pocket money' for luxuries or to make a secondary income contribution to families where the principle breadwinner is a male" (Lim 1997). As a result, women always work in the bottom of occupational rank and they have to accept lower-level of wage as well as worse working-conditions than men though they do the same jobs.

These analyses of women's position in the workplace countered to solution which has been proposed by Marxist feminists. For Marxist feminists, women can be liberated from patriarchal constraints and moved away from domestic space by joining to workforce. But, in fact, patriarchal system and capitalist economic principles are interrelated. Therefore, women's participation in the labor market sometimes makes their status become worse.

The binary way of thinking also impacts on the idea of developers and policy-makers in the 1970s. The *Shady Practice* (Schroeder 1999) witnessed that developers tried to erase spatial segregation in land access between men and women in Gambia by integrating women in the vegetables marketing project. According to the aim of project, vegetables were grown in both home garden (where women can access) and up land areas (belong to men). Several developers believe that freeing women from male economic dependence will liberate them and help them to improve their status in family and community. In fact, most of Gambian women who take part in gardening project suffer not only double burden, but also jealousy from men in both family and community. In these cases, it can be said that all women are really freed in the familial level, but very few women can achieve. Moreover, in communal level, they still face with discrimination from male leaders and male landowners.

In sum, throughout the 1970s and until the early 1980s, this dichotomous way of thinking has enveloped the interpretation of women's spatial mobility. It used to separate home space from work space, in which, home space is related to

reproductive, domestic, non-waged, leisure, and female activities, whereas work space is defined as outside home with productive, public, waged, and male activities. By arguing so, this line of thought has ignored many kinds of home-based works which even have important contributions to household economy. In addition, the binary way of thinking fixed women in certain identities, and considered them as victim rather than active agents. The appearance of anthropological feminism and other forms of feminism in the late 1980s has questioned the conventional ways of thinking. By doing this, they paved the way for a new point of view in looking at women in relation to space.

2.4 Critiques of the Conventional Thinking of Women's Spatial Mobility

Since the late 1980s, there was an emergence of criticism of the dichotomous thought of the relationship between women and space. Most of critics have contended that the traditional way of interpretation was trapped in the modernism's shortcomings such as universalism, essentialism, and unrealistic. The paper also pays attention to these weaknesses which were presented in the way conventional scholars looking at the relations of the spaces between home and work, between work and what so-called non-work, especially at different groups of women who live and work in variety of contexts.

Home-Work Interconnections

Feminist scholarship in human geography has criticized the gender biased definitions of the home, emphasizing that the household, considered as a physical and social space, is not private and static place only for reproduction. Feminist geographers view the home as a dynamic space where production also takes place, and the distinction between private and public is blurred (Silvia 1997).

Gregson (2000) in her argument on home-work connections also indicates that it is difficult to differentiate home space from work space. She starts to discuss on the relations between the spaces of home and work by re-conceptualizing "work". She contends that "work" is no longer defined as activities happened outside home, but has been extended to encompass all those activities necessary for social reproduction. So, "work" includes domestic labor and childcare; and it also includes unwaged labor, such as volunteer work and "family work". Because "work" encompasses all these

things, the spaces of work also need to redefine. They are no longer offices or factories, but homes too.

Home-working is pervasive in over the world, from developed to developing countries, especially after the relocation of manufacturing factories from First World to Third World countries. Especially, home-working becomes more popular when companies apply the "flexible" production systems and subcontracting networks. All types of home-working bring the spaces of home and work together: this means that the relations of family and of paid work coincide spatially. In many Asian and African developing countries, home-working is not only based on the large-scale industry as subcontracting, but it is a form of self-employment. For example, in Vietnam, there are a numbers of handicraft production households in which most of employees are family labors. Like other countries, this form of work is relevant for women in patriarchal societies, who are responsible for dual roles – as a mother and as a worker.

Gregson demonstrates that, even in the male high-tech industry, it is not easy to differentiate the spaces of the home from the work. In this case, the home space is erased or invaded by paid work that frequently involves evenings, weekends, and public holidays, and that overrides holiday entitlements, and it is invaded by studies, home computers and modems. In addition, Massey (1984) demonstrates how scientists' minds are often still at work even when their bodies are doing "things domestic", for instance, thinking whist playing with children. This means that whether in the manual or intellectual forms, the spaces of home and work are interrelated. However, the interrelations of home space and work space are different in accordance to the different forms of work. In the case of home-working which is prevalent for women, paid work and domestic labor coincide in home space and conflict, whereas in the instance of male scientists – paid work invades and erases the space of the home. These differences can be interpreted by the conventional gender division of labor. Men can bring paid work to their home and continue to work as the same in their offices without paying any attention to domestic chores.

Home-work relations are not only diverse according to the forms of work, but they are various in different contexts. For Gregson (2000), home-work relations are situated places within the broader context of radical political economy and the grander stories about gender relations. This way of thinking advocates postmodernism when asserting that home-work relations are specific for particular types of households in

different places/regions. These relations are even different in the similar households but they locate in different cities.

Through the critiques of the dichotomous notion of the spaces between work and home, the conclusions that can be drawn are: (i) both spaces of work and home are not fixed but dynamic, they can be interrelated, but not separated; (ii) many activities which are performed in the home-space are really paid works; and (iii) women work in home-base jobs not always because of their spatial entrapment, but due to their own strategies.

Heterogeneity of Women Categories

Western sociologists and many feminists fixed women in the domestic space and reproductive sphere, and considered that women are subordinate to men in any context. They asserted that confined in private sphere and doing non-productive works are sources of women's oppression everywhere. As a result, women are confined the space of home in any society. By claiming so, these scholars have merely touched on the relationships between women and men in some societies. Kabeer (2003) indicates that women's spatial mobility varies even in patriarchal cultures according to different geographical regions. For instance, in the very strong form of patriarchy in western Asia, North Africa, and some other Muslim countries, women seem to be prevented from going outside, even going to the field for farming. So, Boserup (1970) pointed out what so-called "male farming systems" in these areas. On the contrary, in the less rigid patriarchal regions such as Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, women's spatial mobility also faces with less strict regulations. In these regions, women can work daily in the fields and can be largely responsible for trade, though there are present of some restrictions such as how far women can go, and what kinds of economic activities women can join in.

Apart from the different forms of patriarchy, even if women in a given society are not homogenous, they are diverse in class, race, ethnicity and age. Hence, spatial mobility may be limited to one woman, but not to other. Ong (1987) indicates that Islam and Malay patriarchal norms of spatial mobility tend to be strict to young-unmarried women rather than middle aged-married women. In Vietnam, the trend seems to be opposite. Vietnamese single girls can go to work far from their home while married women tend to work nearby their hometown. Main reason that

constrains Vietnamese married women is their domestic role. Like in China, Vietnamese women are assigned most of domestic work, even if they go to work frequently as permanent workers in the factories or as day labors. Besides, women's race also impacts on their spatial mobility. According to Ann (2000) "the claim that women work closer to home than men because of their dual roles as mother and waged worker does not hold for Black and Hispanic women". Unlike white women, who are strongly restricted by western patriarchal customs, the Black and Hispanic women commute as far as Black and Hispanic men, and they even spend more time on commuting than white males and females.

Besides, women are different in economic and marital status. Throughout the Global North and the Global South, it is not difficult to find married women who live in the very poor families. These women often face with weaker constraint of spatial mobility than those who belong to the middle- or high class. England (1993) also demonstrated that there are a lot of women who are responsible for not only taking care children, but also covering all living expenses for them without any support from their partners. They are may be divorcees or unmarried women with children, thus, they become real "breadwinners". For these women, spatial mobility seems to be unlimited because of their survival strategies.

Women – Active Agents in the Complicated Social Relations

A popular critique of conventional approach of women's spatial mobility concentrates on the way it looks at women. By focusing on women per se, the conventional approach became "unrealistic" because a woman has never existed alone without any social relations. Feminists as well as feminist geographers who advocate this kind of approach seemed to fall into a trap of neoclassical economics which introduced the concept of "autonomous agent" and "economic man". According to the definitions, autonomous agent or economic man can make choice based on the competition and utility maximization individually. They are not limited by any from a set of complex and multiple social relations. This idea of rational individual was criticized as romantic because, in fact, nobody can live and make choice without dependence on anyone. Relied on the concept of "autonomous agent", most of feminist geographical works which have conducted in the time of the 1970s and the early 1980s emphasized on the issues of women's "journey-to-work" including material distance of home-to-work and access to transportation. Most of the

conventional research works examined female workers from the negative aspect. In doing this, they fixed women in certain identity, and constructed their images as "disable" just because of their short-commute ability.

In reality, a woman is not an isolated subject, but she engages in all kinds of activities as part of human being. However, changing from single subject to the plural in social sciences in general and feminist geography in particular has just occurred since the appearance of postmodernism. As a result, recent feminist geographical researches have paid attention to complex social relations within which women as well as men make their decisions of work. Moreover, recent feminist geographers posited women as active actors, not docile bodies. Thus, women can negotiate for their spatial and social mobility not only for going to work outside the home, but also for other non-employment activities.

2.5 Women's Negotiation for Their Spatial Mobility in Different Contexts

The most important change of general feminists and geographical feminists is that they changed the way in which women are perceived. According to the conventional approach, women used to be considered as passive and victimizable. In addition, they are usually put in the secondary part of the traditional dichotomies such as men/women, male/female, and culture/nature. The contemporary approach turned women from victims to the active agents. This "new" approach may be originated from the "actor-oriented approach" which was developed by Norman Long. According to Long (1992) "… social actors are not simply seen as disembodied social categories (based on class or some other classificatory criteria) or passive recipients of intervention, but active participants who process information and strategize in their dealing with local actors as well as outside institutions and personnel … The different patterns of social organization that emerge result from the interactions, negotiations and social struggles that take place between different kinds of actor".

As active agents, women are not always subordinated to men in any context and they are no longer confined in the domestic space with chores. By contrast, they engage in the myriad of activities in both the private and public places. So, going outside is one of women's desires which meet not only their want of economic independence, but also their need to access to modern life. The contemporary

approach of gender issues has been challenging the traditional feminist notion which considers women are dominated by men in all situations. Therefore, the conventional feminist positions used to claim for women's liberation from the private space should be questioned.

In fact, women keep negotiating in any context at different levels. A number of research works have demonstrated that women are not entirely accepted patriarchal norms of spatial mobility as docile bodies, but they know how to negotiate. Mills (2001) indicate that Thai young women used the image of "good daughter" to negotiate with cultural and social prejudices of female migrant worker for their spatial mobility. Thai (Isan) young women, who migrated to work in Bangkok, monthly send money to support their families, especially their parents in order to convince for reason of going work outside. However, like other circumstances, these young women only send a small proportion of their salaries to their families while much larger proportion will be used for "consuming modernity" including fashionable cloth, cosmetic, and modern food. Apart from sending money to family, these young women prove their dutifulness by coming back their hometown in the time of peak season to help their parents to do the farm works. The image of "dutiful daughter" has been applied as popular tactics not only in Thailand, but also in other patriarchal societies.

For married women, the tactics may be more diverse. They not only stop at negotiation with patriarchal ideology of gender roles, but they know how to situate in specific conditions. Married women are not homogenous, but there are remarkable variations among them. They are different in terms of age, educational level, class, race and economic status. Moreover, they live in different structures of household. As a consequence, their ways of negotiation for their spatial and social mobility are very diverse. Through the case studies of several feminist geographers and my own observations, women's strategies to negotiate for their spatial mobility can be presented in the following cases.

First, similar to young women, married women use the images of "altruist mother" and "good wife" to negotiate for their spatial mobility. However, in this case, married women seem to accept patriarchal ideology of gender roles in order to get the "permission" of male family members, especially senior male members and their husbands, to go work outside. This way of negotiation is popular in the strong patriarchal societies as in Northeast Asia. Women in traditional Chinese society

obtained their status from men, such as father, husband and sons; as such women's social activities were only considered as subsidiary to men's activities. In the period of industrialized economy, although women with paid work gained more influence and power over their family matters, they are still expected to play out their traditional family roles and they are still responsible for childcare and housework. Therefore, when women go out to work, they have to face with multiple roles. As a result, the more women work outside, the heavier burden they have to suffer. This way of negotiation seems to put women in the passive position, but it still happens in real life, especially in the case of low-income nuclear family.

Secondly, women who live in the multi-generations family can have larger scope of spatial mobility by calling for domestic helpers such as their parents, their parents-in-law, and other relatives. Interview conducted in a Vietnamese handicraft village showed that most of women, who go to work as day labors, have been supported by their parents-in-law, especially mother-in-law in the domestic work. They have leaved behind domestic tasks in order to become one of main contributors to household economy. Apart from their parents-in-law, a number of working-day women choose the way of talking directly to their husbands. So, as showed by England (1993) and Schroeder (1999), several men have shared domestic tasks with their wives when they go to work outside. This means that the domestic sphere always belongs to women, whereas men are only responsible for the work in the public space. However, sharing domestic works by husbands is not common in the strong patriarchal societies such as China, Hong Kong, and Japan. Although, in these societies, husbands also give their wives some helps when they go to work outside, Lee (2002) points out that most of husbands unwillingly do the domestic work. She cited a story of a working woman that: "*My husband does give me help at home as long as the task is not a hindrance to his work. After a long day at work, I have to hurry home to do the marketing and prepare dinner. I have to look after children as well. I'm really exhausted and I like my husband to help out. He would sometimes share the household work with me, but he would also complain that I would have done a bad job as a wife.*" Therefore, in strong patriarchal societies, rural working women prefer to ask for help from their older children to their partners. They are mostly shared the domestic roles by their older daughters during the time they work outside. Most of Vietnamese older daughters can take over their mothers in a number

of chores when they reach the teenage. These daughters are able to strongly help their mothers in cooking, taking care young children, washing clothes, even in some minor farming works.

Thirdly, integrating in the local networks, especially neighborhood is one of the most popular tactics of women for their spatial mobility negotiation. Martin (2002) defined neighborhood as social networks of people who share the common territory, namely, a residential area in a city or a village. Neighborhoods may connote community for many people who shared the residential location, but not necessary share identities based on social categories of race, ethnicity, religion, language, and household types or family structures. Martin also indicated that "neighborhoods" create not only a common physical space of residents, but also a social space, in which residents (both women and men) can share experience and help each other. England (1993) gave an interesting example of how a working woman manipulates her neighborhood in caretaking her children. Several poor women, who are both major childcarers and contributors to household economy, have considered help from neighboring families as an effective resolution for completing their familial roles.

Fourthly, one of the common strategies for liberating from domestic roles of poor married women for going out to work is that they exploit different kinds of social services and state facilities. Most of women in developing countries can send their children to different levels of school from the nursery to high school. Thus, during the day time, they can freely go to work. As a consequence, nowadays a number of Vietnamese women are able to work in the public places such as universities, research institutes, factories, and offices from early morning until evening without worries of taking care of their children. Women's spatial mobility also becomes the less important problem when social services are increasingly diverse. The proliferation of public transportation means help women can go back and forth easily. Japanese women, therefore, are able to be responsible for both paid work and domestic roles. Besides, the availability of processed food reduces the time that women used to spend on preparing food for their families. For these reasons, women today not only engage in the workplace surrounding their residential location, but they tend to choose the paid based on their capability and skill, rather than relied on the short commuting.

In sum, the first four strategies seem to be more suitable to married women who live in the low-income households than the middle-and high class women. Most of poor women have attempted to go work outside and faced with difficulties of spatial mobility because of their economic purposes. In one case, they may want to contribute to their family economies as a complement for the low incomes generated by their husbands. In other case, they must be responsible for the role of "breadwinners" because of the partners' absence.

Lee's study (2002) in Hong Kong society realized that there are education and class differences in the effect of balancing multiple roles in order to go work outside, especially go to work with long commuting. Emotional distress due to employment appears to be greater among women in high-paying white-collar jobs than women in low-paying blue-collar jobs. In generally, employed women experience more emotional distress with respect to their marital relationships than do non-employed women. Furthermore, women with high salaries experience greater emotional distress in relation to their marital relationship than do women with low-income jobs. This same pattern is also true with respect to the relationship between educational level and emotional distress. As a result, the tactics that high-income working women have selected in their negotiation for spatial mobility are different from low-income working women's ones.

The relative high wages of the middle- and high class women has enable them to employ live-in domestic helpers, namely maids or nannies. However, this has not entirely released working wives from family responsibilities. "Manual and simple household tasks have been delegated to another women; but wives in these households assume the supervisor role, assigning tasks to the helpers and organizing their daily household job activities" (Lee 2002). Several scholars contend that the relationship between the host women and their maids is characterized by ambivalence, in which, on the one hand, the hosts know that they cannot maintain their lifestyles without the help of the maids; on the other hand, having a domestic helper means having to tolerate an outsider who does not speak the same language, eat the same food, and share the same child-caring habits, so it may sometimes cause the tension in this employer-employee relationship. In many working wives' views, although they delegate all housework to their maids including cooking, shopping, washing, and taking their kids to school, the maids cannot substitute their roles as mothers and

wives, especially in the emotional aspect because in fact, their children and husbands want their mothers and wives care for them.

For these reasons, a variety of middle-and high class working women replace the option of employing live-in domestic helpers by exploiting the modern facilities. Aside from the myriad of social services as mentioned above, in the era of industrialization, there are a number of comfortable domestic facilities which can help housewives, especially working wives, to reduce their time and power for domestic work. It can be said that the appearance of washing machine, rice cooker, refrigerator, micro wave and so on can be seen as one of important factors which improve women's living standard. As a consequence, they have more opportunities to commute long distance for both employment and non-employment activities.

Nevertheless, live-in domestic helpers and modern domestic facilities have not redefined husband and wife relations and roles in the patriarchal societies, nor have they changed the ideology of gender that assigns family responsibilities to women. Rather, the employment of women as maids reinforced the traditional gender division of labor. Domestic tasks are still women's responsibility, employing maids or nannies amounts to transfer chores from a woman to the others. In addition, application of modern facilities to domestic work amounts to stick women into the traditional identities. So, changing in women domestic roles should start from the changing in the gender relations, especially gendered attitudes to work.

3. Overview of the Study Area and Research Methodology

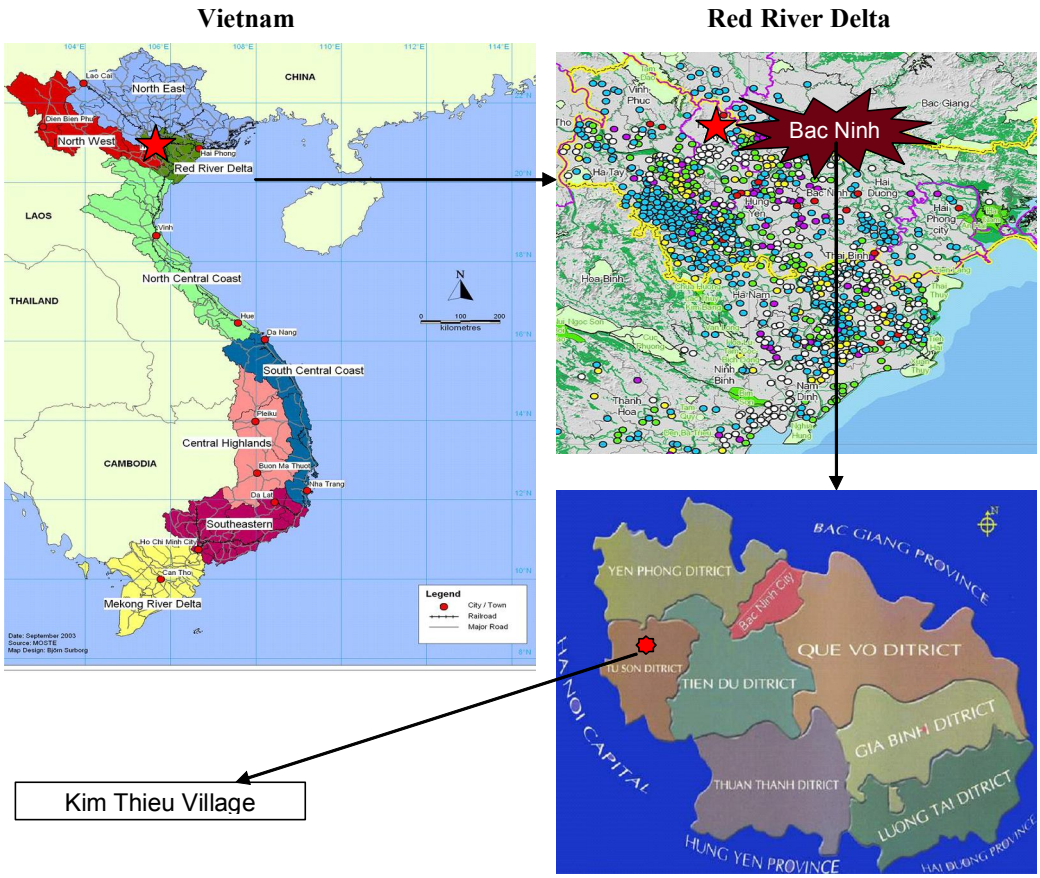
3.1 The Village

Located in Red River Delta, 30 km far from Hanoi capital, Kim Thieu is considered as a traditional craft village with age-old history. In 2007, Kim Thieu had 1726 inhabitants who lived in 411 households (*ho*) of which 315 households operated craft activities. Apart from woodcarving industry, Kim Thieu villagers still cultivate in agricultural land what they were allocated by state since 1988. Total cultivated area of the village is 36.72 hectares (1020 *sao*[†]), so the agricultural land area per capita is about 200m^2 which is considered as the lowest in the region, so that people cannot

[†] One sao equals 360 m^2

survive based on such small area. There are only 33 households whose income is mostly generated from agricultural production. The prevailing crop-pattern is double rice per year. Most of villagers grow rice for self-consumption rather than for sale. Thirty per cent of households have stopped farming but they still keep their farmland by lending to others. It can be said that the villagers here no longer rely on farming because their income is generated from and almost all their labors are devoted to woodcarving industry. However, up to seventy per cent of households develop their livelihood strategies based on the combination of farming and woodcarving activities. Farming activities nowadays are mostly conducted by hired labors come from surrounding communities because up to 91.61 per cent of village labor force make their living chiefly from off-farm activities, of which 89.27 per cent are involving in traditional woodcarving industry.

Figure 1. Location of the Research Site



All villagers assert that woodcarving industry is their traditional occupation, though nobody can know when it was appeared in Kim Thieu. Several senior

villagers suppose that there were thousands of woodcarvers who had to go to China for working as slaves since the period of Chinese invasion in Vietnam. There was also a hypothesis which contended that woodcarving might be present in Kim Thieu as well as surrounding villages thanks to the appearance of Thang Long capital under the Ly dynasty (eleventh century). In common with other woodcarving villages in the region, Kim Thieu artisans have been considering Lo Boc and Lo Ban (two Chinese men who invented one kind of traditional Chinese ruler) as woodcarving ancestors. There has been a temple to these ancestors located in the Thiet Ung village where all woodcarvers used to worship in the 6th January of lunar calendar. Some senior artisans told that Vietnamese ancestor of Kim Thieu woodcarving industry was a man who belonged to Nguyen lineage. He trained the following generations of most lineages in the village. Since that time, woodcarving activities had been developed as they have been seen. Although Kim Thieu villagers are not able to know exactly the time when their ancestor lived, they can assert that it must be very long time ago. Several woodcarvers who were seen as direct students of ancestor became a legend. It is told that one of them could carve the throne, whereas the other could carve a herd of elephants in a bean as well as a sea-battle in a very small piece of wood (Binh 1999).

In the Feudal period Kim Thieu woodcarvers used to provide labor for constructions of temple, communal house, pagoda, and the imperial palace. In addition, they were required to decorate for the Royal and the rich's houses. Generally, woodcarving industry related to spatial mobility of woodcarvers. Unlike other craft activities, which were self-consumed at the beginning and gradually become commoditized production under the effects of social/economic changes, woodcarving was commoditized since the first appearance. During the Le dynasty (from 15th century to 17th century), with the establishment of 36 Hanoi guilds (*phuong*), craft production had grown than ever before. Kim Thieu craftsmen not only supplied carving services, but also produced handicrafts for sale. This was also the time appearing many professional organizations, especially guilds in craft as well as trade villages. Guilds of Kim Thieu woodcarvers comprised all carvers in the village. Guild was gendered according to the products, for example, guild of carpenters never consisted of female members, whereas guild of weavers rarely comprised male members. The reasons for that way of gender division of labor were very diverse, but

mostly concentrated on the biological differences between women and men as well as the distinction between reproductive and productive roles of women and men. Nevertheless, women's participation in woodcarving industry in Kim Thieu village has remarkably changed according to the variations of economic conditions. The following section, I will discuss about such changes.

3.2 Historical Perspectives of Women's Spatial Mobility in Woodcarving Industry

In the Pre-Collectivization Period

In this period, villagers lived mainly on farming, animal rearing, gardening and partly on craft making. The reason was the fact that rice cultivation alone was not able to make a village a complete economic cell (Tung 1993). As mentioned in a variety of oral histories, there was not clear gender division of labor in farming. Men and women worked together in their own small plots or they worked as tenants for landlords in the village. For this reason, unlike other patriarchal societies, women were not totally confined in the domestic sphere. Instead, they could go to work with male kin in the field.

Like other villages in Red River delta, handicrafts provided villagers with a particularly significant source of subsidiary income, especially in the case of starvation (Scott 1976). However, craft making activities were merely considered as "supported activities for household economy" in this period. The peasants reserved only their leisure time for craft works, doing them after finishing their farm work in the field. The oral histories of Kim Thieu village indicate that most of artisans who had to go to work outside the village were no-land or landless peasants. Landlords and middle-peasants did not need to seek jobs outside their hometown. As a result, jobs which related to spatial mobility or "mobile works" were devalued.

Although woodcarving was seen as equal even lower position than farm work in terms of economic gain, it was more privileged in cultural aspect because of patriarchal social constraints and differentiations between men and women. Both old female and male interviewees contended that in the Feudal period, only men could participate in the craft works because of two reasons. Firstly, the craft works were related to constructions of temple, pagoda, communal house, imperial palace and making a roof where women had been excluded from due to the gender ideology of

spirituality. Secondly, provision of woodcarving services and selling products in Hanoi city needed the labor's mobility which was one of major constraints for women in patriarchal society. Both spiritual and mobile restrictions prohibited women from involvement in traditional woodcarving activities. Women merely took part in such industry based on their conventional roles in the family as the followers of their husbands and sons. This argument was supported by some folk songs, for example:

Anh đi làm thợ nơi nao
Để em gánh đục gánh bào cùng đi
Wherever you (male carvers) go to work
I (carvers' wives) will carry chisel and plane and go with you[‡]

The folk song demonstrated female villagers used to go with the team of woodcarvers in order to look after not only their husbands and sons, but also other team members such as food providing, washing, and doing some minor works as active helpers.

In sum, in the pre-modern time, villagers' economic activities were mostly carried out within the village. People might make their living outside the village because their farmland was so small that they could not survive. The most popular mobile work of Kim Thieu villagers was providing woodcarving and carpentry services. All woodcarvers and carpenters were men. The pattern of gender division of labor in their families was that men went to work outside the village after finishing farm work while women stayed at home with farming activities, animal raising and children care taking. Only few village women went with their husbands and team of woodcarvers as the followers to provide some helps.

In the Collectivization Time

At the end of the 1950s, Vietnamese government implemented policy reform on agricultural and rural economy. The main content of agricultural and rural economic reform was to collectivize all means of production. By doing this, all households in the village were gathered in the agricultural cooperative (*Hop tac xa nong nghiep*). Similarly, village craftsmen were organized in handicraft cooperative (*Hop tac xa tieu thu cong nghiep*). The cooperative regime contributed to the equalization of male-female relations by transforming wives, unmarried daughters and

[‡] Chisel and plane are key tools of woodcarving industry

daughters-in-law from unpaid family labor to cooperative paid members. This way of women's liberalization had been carried out not only in agriculture but also in other sectors including rural industry, craft making, and rural trade. In other words, in the time of collectivization, women's works were remunerated by the same system as the male members in their family.

Immediately after the establishment, Handicraft Cooperative's Management Committee in Kim Thieu village invited lecturers from Hanoi University of Fine Art going to teach fundamental theory of carving for its members including both men and women. However, many male and female interviewees supposed that women workers were only allowed to carry out the simple works. Particularly, during the late 1960s and the early 1970s, Handicraft Cooperative seemed to stop carving wood but changed to carve ivory products based on the contracts between Central Art Import-Export Company with Indian Companies. Women could not engage in ivory carving because – in the idea of cooperative authorities – "it was so difficult that only high-skilled male carvers could do". In the late 1970s (around 1978 – 1979), due to the withdrawal of Indian Companies, Handicraft Cooperative changed to sculpt statues and to carve wooden pictures in order to export to Eastern European countries. Unlike ivory, women workers were allowed to participate in all stages of statue and picture carving. Several women could complete these products with quality as high as men do. Handicraft Cooperative employed the industrial model to its productive process which was specialized by the stages. In specialization of production, gender division of labor occurred in the trend in which male carvers were responsible for the main and more important stages such as assembling and basic carving while female carvers only completed or made the products better.

There were a lot of changes in craft making activity in the time of collectivization in comparison with in the previous period. One of the most important changes is that the skills of craft making were no longer kept secret within small group of male carvers. All men and women in the village were able to access to the so-called "know-how" of woodcarving because these skills were taught as other scientific knowledge by modern methods. As a consequence, artisans' position was no longer important as before, and meaning of craft work was also changed. The most significant change was the fact that craft work was not male dominated occupation any more, but women were able to participate.

Nevertheless, women's liberalization and gender equality in the period of collectivization in Vietnam could be seen as a "myth" because of the following reasons. Firstly, though women can go and work in the same unit with men, they are usually in the lower rank of work in comparison with men due to their lack of education, of skill, and of productivity. Secondly, there were less women can reach to the leading position as men in the productive organizations such as cooperatives and factories. Lastly, women could go and work in the same unit and do the same work as men in the workplace, but they had to spend the same time for the domestic works including cultivating in private plots and home gardens and keeping animals as before. The fact that even if women can go to workplace like men, they continue "to be subordinated, but in the new form of socialistic patriarchal family, socialist working conditions, far from having liberated women, doubly burdened them" due to patriarchal customs (Rofel 1999).

In this period, spatial mobility related to seeking jobs outside the village was limited because of state's economic policies. As pointed out, almost all villagers had to join either agricultural or handicraft cooperative. They had to devote most of their time and energy to the collective works which had been done within the village space. As a result, they had rare chances to make living outside the village. Further, almost all individual economic activities, especially those related to spatial mobility like small trade, were prevented by state. The popular pattern of spatial mobility of rural labors under collectivization regime was going from their homes to the collective fields or collective factories. Even though, there were some villagers including both women and men conducting small trade for improving their living standard. Those people did not neglect doing the collective work, but they just did it in the peak season. During the leisure time, some male villagers went to the mountainous provinces such as Phu Tho, Thai Nguyen and Lang Son in order to buy sweet potato and cassava to subsidize their families overcoming the period of food insufficiency.

Similar to previous period, very few village women joined trading activities. Mrs. Thich who was the most active village woman at that time recalled:

> Although I was one of the best "plowmen" in the cooperative and I could get a lot of work-points every season, I could not live on what cooperative distributed each year. My husband passed away so early that I had to feed my son alone. You would not imagine that my son and I were just distributed 19

> kg of paddy per month even if the number of my work-points was over the standard so much. How could we survive with this small amount of rice? I had to go to make our living from other activity. I could not go far away like male villagers because I had to take care of my son. So, I went to Bau market in Hiep Hoa district, Bac Giang province (about 20 km far from Kim Thieu) to buy rice and bamboo baskets in order to sell in the village market (Me market). By doing this, I could make money not only for buying more food, but also for saving. At that time, there were very few village women to participate in such trade activities. Together with me, there were some those who did small business by buying chicken from villagers then selling them to urban consumers. (Nov 2006)

In short, the state's program of collectivization was more or less prevented both men and women from economic activities which related to spatial mobility. Villagers, who used to be either farmers or craftsmen, had to work in the cooperative fields or in the cooperative factories within the village. Although there were some villagers improving their living standard based on mobile jobs, they were mostly men rather than women.

In the Period of Economic Liberalization

Since the initiation of de-collectivization of both agricultural and handicraft cooperatives in the late 1980s and its more recent acceleration by new land reforms, agriculture and rural livelihoods in Vietnam have experienced great transition (Tuan 1995). The peasant household economy has become the most important mode of production. In the period of economic liberalization, peasant livelihoods in Kim Thieu village are no longer depended on rice cultivation, but on a number of economic activities including on-farm and off-farm. Villagers can make their living both inside and outside the village. Peasant livelihoods nowadays become more related to global markets of both inputs and outputs of woodcarving industry. As a result, gender division of labor has been changed so much at family as well as at community level.

All male and female labors are able to expand their spatial mobility for making their livelihood thanks to the changes in economic policies such as: (i) in agriculture, de-collectivization and the introduction of the household contract system released farmers from farmland and the collective works; (ii) in non-farm sector, the emergence of industrial and handicraft centers attracted migrant workers from rural

areas to the places where such industries concentrate; (iii) woodcarvings are mostly sold by individual producers with small amount either in the border trading zone between Vietnam and China or in the inland cities, so that several village women work as shopkeepers there either temporarily or permanently; and (iv) the household registration system has been eliminated, people can leave their hometown to live, work and register as residents wherever they want.

3.3 Research Methodology

3.3.1 Selection of Study Site

Among several traditional handicraft villages in Bac Ninh province, Kim Thieu is selected as the study site of the topic which relates to women's spatial mobility because of the several reasons, which are:

First, unlike other traditional occupations such as cake making, weaving and small trading, women's roles in woodcarving industry in Kim Thieu village has been changed from helpers to unskilled workers, then to skilled workers and entrepreneurs, from less to more and more important. These changes of women's roles in the so-called "male dominated work" are much related to the alteration of spatial mobility.

Secondly, thanks to the renovation of economic policies since late 1980s, woodcarving industry in the village has been recovered and intensively developed. Its products not only meet the demand of domestic market, but also are exported to China and other East Asian countries. Thus, it has brought about the significant transformation in the labor force of woodcarving industry. High demand for labor of woodcarving industry has absorbed not only all male but also female labors. As a result, women can engage in an industry which used to be considered as male occupation. Reality in Kim Thieu has witnessed that there are increasingly village women with different economic positions, educational levels, and marital status participating in woodcarving production, marketing and trading.

Thirdly, by joining to woodcarving industry, those female labors differently cope with various patterns of journey to work. Through my observation in the field site, I have recognized that not only village women, but those who come from outside also engage in the so-called new patterns of journeys-to-work when they participate in woodcarving industry in Kim Thieu.

Fourthly, the reality of women's spatial mobility in Kim Thieu nowadays demonstrates that the conventional theoretical debates on women's spatial entrapment due to their reproductive roles should be questioned. The reason is the fact that women can decide where they should work. Further, women are not homogeneous, so different women will make different decisions based upon their conditions including economic, intra-family relationship, life cycle and so on.

Lastly, unlike previous studies which have been conducted on women's spatial mobility or their spatial entrapment paid much attention to urban women or those who work in industrial and service sectors (England 1993; Winton 2005), this research aims to rural women engaging in woodcarving industry. Additionally, this research does not concern so much with women's journeys-to-work in comparison with men as done by several scholars, but its major objective is to find out why different women make different options of their workplace.

3.3.2 Data Collection

Ethnographical approach has been applied in doing research. The secondary information and data on development process of woodcarving industry are gathered from different sources including both written and oral histories. Moreover, the results of previous researches are employed. Primary information has been collected from interactions in everyday life of the author and different categories of women in the fieldwork. However, to thoroughly explore questions surrounding the spatial mobility of women requires individual-data level. A variety of primary data were collected from September to December 2007 based on questionnaires (a combination of closed-ended, fixed-lengthy, in-depth, interactive interviews with interviewees). The main interviewees are selected from different groups of women who participate in woodcarving industry. These groups of women consist of those who live in Kim Thieu but work either in or outside the village, and those who live outside but come to work from other locations. As pointed out in the previous section, women in each group are very diverse, so they can be categorized by distance of journeys-to-work, age (generation), class (economic and social position), female owners or contract labors, educational achievement, and marital status. In

addition, occupation is also considered as an important indicator in classification of women who are selected for interview.

The main objective of this research is to identify how different women, who participate in woodcarving industry, deal with the spatial mobility in the context of commercialization. However, the interviewees are not only women, but also men for cross-checking information and data which are collected from women. Like women, men also are not homogenous, so male interviewees should include entrepreneurs, colleagues, husbands and male kin of women. The sample of the research is shown in the table 1.

The first group – women live and work in the village consists of female labors who are either entrepreneurs or home-based or contract workers. For this group, I would like to know why they choose to work in the village rather than going outside and which factors inspire their decisions. The second group – village women work away their hometown consists of people those who work as shopkeepers as well as private company owners. Similar to the first group, I would like to identify the reasons for which they come to make money outside the village and the ways in which they can negotiate for their "female roles" in the family as well as in the workplace. The last group of women is composed of outside women who come to work as hired labors in the village.

Table 1. Categorization of Interviewees

Interviewee	Persons
1. Different categories of women	120
Of which: - Women live and work in the village	50
- Village women work far from their home	20
- Hired female labors come from outside	50
2. Entrepreneurs	10
3. Husbands of these women	30

The data gained from the survey is utilized to show why a woman makes decision to work at home as a self-employed worker or to go to earn outside the village as a trader or shopkeeper. Regarding to the reasons which cause the differences of patterns of women's spatial mobility, the information is concentrated on their age, educational level, marital status, family style (nuclear or extended),

numbers of children which they have and so on and so forth. The majority of the interviews with home-based working women and their husbands took place in their home where is used as both accommodation and workplace while the interviews with hired female labors were carried out in the labor market place, and interviews with male entrepreneurs took place in their family factories. The interviews with "mobile village women" were carried out both in their furniture shop at Fuzhai – a border trading zone between Vietnam and China (in the Chinese side) and in their home (when they return). The interviews with village women lasted approximately two hours, whereas those with their husbands, hired female labors and entrepreneurs lasted from a half to one hour.

Together with personal and household surveys, a variety of participatory techniques have been used to elicit the relevant information from informants, including focus group interviews, key informants, seasonal calendars, and problem analysis tools. Gender-sensitive participatory group meetings are also organized in the village, involving both women and men from households.

3.3.3 Data Analysis

The data gathered through focus group meetings, personal interviews and key informants is on the process of cross check through field observations and secondary information in the form of relevant other studies and reports. The data is processed by Excel software.

Unit of analysis in this study is "social relations", especially gender relations. However, gender relations here are differentiated into many levels in specific contexts. Gender relations imply not only men-women, but also relationships of women-women in different generations, classes, and native-born places. In addition, gender relation analyses go beyond gender division of labor in order to concentrate on the complicated social relations.

Analyses of women's spatial mobility in this research are focused on both levels of ideology and practice. At ideological level, the study pays much attention to the factors which confine women in domestic sphere, then restrict women's spatial mobility. At practice level, the real patterns of journeys-to-work of women are identified in order to argue against the assumption that women usually have shorter

journeys-to-work than men have. The study not only stops at descriptive stage, but also goes deeper to understand why/in what way women negotiate with gender relations for their spatial mobility.

4. The Results and Discussions on Women's Spatial Mobility

4.1 Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics of Female Interviewees

Table 2 shows that there are few differences between home-based working women and non-home-based ones in terms of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. In our sample, the majority of women obtained education level at secondary school (84.62% in the first group and 100 % in the second). This data reflects general situation of education of girl students in rural areas of Vietnam. The idea of son preference still exists in several regions, so that most of parents willing to invest in son's education rather than in their daughters.

For both groups, two-third of women fall in the between thirty and forty years of age category. All of female interviewees are married. Although Vietnamese Law of Marital and Family regulates that women are allowed to get married at the age 20 years, almost all village girls got married under such age. They avoided the government law by unregistered wedding – villagers call "*cuoi chui*". Several illicit couples have to wait for some years after their wedding until their ages are enough to register. For this reason, there very few single girls fall in the twenties in the village.

Like the movement in other developing countries, the family model in Vietnam has remarkably changed from extended to nuclear families since the 1970s. The surveyed data indicates that two-third of interviewed households in both groups are nuclear families while the one-third of households still maintains the traditional model of family. The extended families in the village normally consist of three generations such as grandparents, parents and children, except for some families include four generations. However, the couples who keep living together with their parents mostly are young and recently got married. Thanks to the state program of Family Planning, the family size in Kim Thieu village has been significantly reduced. Most of couples just give two children, so the average numbers of children for one couple have been decreased from four in the early 1980s to around two in the first years of twenty first century.

Table 2. General information of village women engaging in woodcarving industry

Variables	Home-based working women N = 50 (%)	Non-home-based working women N = 20 (%)
Educational Achievement		
Primary	7.69	0.00
Secondary	84.62	100.00
High School	7.69	0.00
Age		
20 – 30 yr	15.38	33.33
30 – 40 yr	61.54	66.67
Over 40 yr	23.08	
Marital Status		
Married	100.00	100.00
Single	0.00	0.00
Family Model		
Nuclear	61.54	66.67
Extended	38.46	33.33
Numbers of Children (child)	2.5	2.2
Main Occupation		
Woodcarving and Farming	86.62	16.67
Trading and Woodcarving	15.38	83.33
Starting to work in woodcarving at ... (age)	19.07	14.66

Source: Household Survey, 2007

As analyzed in the previous section, since the time of *Doi Moi*, traditional woodcarving industry has been revived and developed in Kim Thieu village under the state program of rural industrialization. As a result, villager's livelihood strategy becomes more diverse. People no longer merely rely on farming, but they can make their living from the combination of woodcarving and farming. The data in the table 2 also shows that the structure of women's occupation has been changed in the trend of off-farm domination. Although majority of women in both groups assert that their main occupation is woodcarving, there is a big difference between them. Whereas most of women in the first group spend their time on woodcarving production in combination with small farming, those in the second group are much related to business and very few people among them maintain farming. Almost all village women have engaged in woodcarving industry at very young age (from 15 to 19 years

old). This data can interpret why a large proportion of village women stop their schooling at secondary level.

In summary, the data in table 2 demonstrates that socioeconomic characteristics of two groups of female interviewees in Kim Thieu village are quite similar. Thus, the explanatory variables such as educational level, age, marital status, model of family, and numbers of children can be eliminated from the factors which impact on women's decisions of working at home or going to work outside the village.

4.2 The Influential Factors on Women's Spatial Mobility

To investigate the factors which impact on women's spatial mobility, I have tried to answer why these women decide to work at home, whereas the others choose to go outside based on both quantitative and qualitative information. First of all, the reasons for what women decide to work as self-employed workers rather than to seek outside jobs are identified.

Most of commuting studies examining gender differentiations in work-trip patterns conclude that women generally have shorter mean journeys-to-work and more often to work as self-employed workers than men (England 1993). The reason is the fact that they are rooted in the conventional perception of gender division of labor. For that notion, the domestic division of labor usually means that women have greater domestic responsibilities than men, and are more likely to trade off commuting time or work at home to accommodate their domestic roles. Although this line of thinking is advocated by a number of scholars, empirical studies have produced contradictory results, especially when the differences among women are considered.

Table 3 can show us the statistical results of factors which constrain women to go working outside the village. Nevertheless, the quantitative data cannot help us to understand more deeply in specific context. For this reason, the case studies become more useful in order to identify different factors which impact on women's decision on their workplace as well as their occupation.

Table 3. Reasons for decision as self-employed workers

Reasons	Percentage
Don't like to live far away family	34.62
Taking care of children	73.01
Taking care of parents	26.92
Domestic works	46.15
Husband's attitude	11.54
In fear of risk	26.92
High economic status	15.39
Limitation of Financial Capital	42.31
Availability of job opportunity in the village	30.77

Source: Household Survey, 2007

Data in the table 3 indicates that 73 % female respondents contend that taking care of the children is one of the important reasons which inspire their selection of the workplace. These women scarify their spatial mobility to their children's future. Mrs. Dao Thi Nghia – a thirty six year old married woman said:

> I used to want to seek jobs outside the village when I was young, but now I give up that intent. The reason is the fact that I have recognized that children of several outside working mothers become depraved because they are not carefully looked after. So, I think that income is very important for our lives, but children are the wealthiest properties. I know that as a home-based worker, I have to work harder because I must be responsible for both domestic chores and production. However, I feel secure about my children's future. Besides, my household has many regular customers who come to buy at our factory, so I do not need to open the shop outside the village like other producers.

The question raised here is that whether Mrs. Nghia will work at home if she has not regular customers and if her products cannot be sold or she also has to open a shop then go to sell products elsewhere like other villagers. Mrs. Quy's response can be considered as the answer for that question. Quy is a forty two year old married woman. Among a half of home-based working women, she also asserts that working at home allows her to respond to both productive and reproductive roles. However, one more reason for that she decides to work at home is the fact that she does not believe that her husband can well conduct production process at their factory. So, she wants to replace

him in the position of an entrepreneur. For Mrs. Quy, her option of workplace is depended upon earnings rather than female domestic roles.

> My family used to have a furniture shop in Fuzhai - the Chinese border market from 1998 to 2001, but now we stop making business there because we have many regular customers who come to buy directly at our factory in the village. Actually, I prefer doing business at the hometown if it is convenient and profitable. But if it does not bring us high economic return enough, I will continue to do business outside when my children graduate. I think that doing domestic works is my responsibility. My husband never pays attention to the chores. I usually wake up at 5:30 to do morning exercise, preparing and having breakfast; going to market at 7 AM; coming back and bringing woods to the contract labors' houses; looking after hired labors at home and cleaning the house; 11:30 stop working to cook for whole family; 14:00 starting to work again until 17:00; then preparing meal for dinner. I don't want my husband to touch on the domestic works because he cannot do the good job. He is also very bad at doing business. (Mrs. Quy, Oct 2007)

Among 50 women working in their village, 34.62 per cent of women suppose that they decide to become home-based workers because they do not want to live far from their families. More than a quarter of total respondents choose to work within their hometown as they are in fear of risks. There are a lot of women responding that they cannot go to make business outside the village because of the limitation of financial capital while one-third of total respondents suppose that they do not need to seek jobs far away their hometown due to the availability of job opportunity in the village. Mrs. Nguyen interprets the reason for which she works at home is the fact that it is easily to find jobs in the village. There are a number of family factories want to hire her and her husband to chisel and to whittle as contract labors because of their good skills. Moreover, as she is one of rare women in the village who possess very high skill and many experiences of woodcarving, she can make money by teaching a lot of apprentices at home. Even though, she also wishes to build a private factory in order to produce and to export products like many households in the village. For her, producers and exporters can make much bigger profit than high skill contract labors.

Unlike Quy, Nghia, and Nguyen, Mrs. Hoa contends that the more important reason to become home-base labor is the fact that she does not want to work outside

any more. She has experienced as a migrant worker when she was young, so she found that it is not easy for rural girls to make living in the city. She told that:

> Before getting married, I used to work as a woodcarver in HCM city for a private factory. After I got married and gave birth I do not want to work far away anymore. In my opinion, as a married woman, I should stay at home to take care of my children and my husband. In addition, I do not want to cope with difficulties of urban life. Working outside the village we – rural girls have to face with risky situation. Although we can get higher income, we have to consume more. Further, I think that working in HCM city is not relevant to a woman like me, so I decide to come back and work in my hometown.

Moreover, like other village women who used to work away their home, in Hoa's point of view, the wage rate from woodcarving activity in Kim Thieu village is relatively high at present, so that villagers do not need to seek jobs outside the hometown. Four case studies discussed so far are all related to women either who used to think about job opportunities outside the village or those who used to work far away. Although these women have different reasons to work as home-based workers, they are similar on the point that they can show certain factors for which they either have to stay at home or do not want to make living away their families. Mrs. Vuong's case is totally different from them. She is a thirty seven years old/married woman. She lives in a nuclear family with two children and husband. Although she started to work in woodcarving industry when she was 13 years old, her occupations now are both woodcarver and farmer. She has never worked outside the village. After getting married, she has to take care of her husband because he is not well. They usually work as contract labors for other villagers and they have never thought about to build a private factory as well as to seek better jobs outside the village.

Despite the fact that almost three quarters of respondents see taking care of their children is the reason of their home-based working, only 19.23 per cent women have to do the domestic works, especially looking after children alone. Most of them (80.77 per cent) can share domestic works with their husbands, grown-up children, parents, and parents-in-law. However, in order to get the support from other family members, especially male and mother-in-law, these women have to negotiate within intra-family relationships. One young married woman expresses her experience that: "*I always work hard in both woodcarving production and domestic works. So, when I*

need any help, my husband seems to be ready. But, in order to get the so-called ***ready help*** *from husband, I must behave kindly towards him*". Similarly, although Nhung also got her mother-in-law's assistance when her sons were small, it was not easy for her because her mother-in-law usually thinks that doing the domestic works is much harder than productive works. Thus, Nhung and her husband used to take time to persuade her mother-in-law to get her support.

Interestingly, there are only 11.54 per cent of home-based female workers suppose that they decide to work at home because their husbands disagree to them to go outside. However, the interviews with their husbands show an opposite results. Despite the fact that almost all husbands do not explicitly prevent their wives from working outside home, ninety per cent of interviewed husbands seem not advocate their wives going out to make money even if they are poor. Mr. Hau – Vuong's husband is one of example. Hau shares his idea that: "*For me, to work at home is more convenient for both my wife and my family as a whole. I'll agree with my wife about the decision of going outside to work when she can earn from triple to four times higher than home-based working. In addition, she should often visit our family*". Most of husbands affirm that they can be responsible for all domestic works including taking care of their children when their wives do not stay at home, but they still do not want them to leave their families for making money. These husbands use the guise of "bread-winners" to keep their wives working at home. Mr. Viet – Nguyen's husband claims that today husband and wife are equal in terms of decision making and contribution to household economy. However, he does not encourage his wife to work away the hometown. For him, "*working outside the village may not hard as in the village, if not unburdened for women. But, I am afraid that my wife may be trapped in the temptation of the outside world which will disturb our family. Further, I am willing to work hard to make money rather than to do the domestic works. I don't want to become a sleazy man in other villagers' eyes*". Similar to Viet, several village men desire to keep their male image in front of the others by refusing to do the domestic works. In fact, they can share with their wives within their families, but they are afraid to be recognized by others.

Women have their own reasons to work within the village, 50 per cent of respondents still want to go to make earning from outside while 46.2 per cent do not, and 3.8 per cent have no answer. Among those who would like to make living from

outside, 84.62 per cent answer that they aspire to improve their household income while 30.77 per cent contend that working away their home can bring them more freedom. However, if we question further, the respondents will indicate varied and deeper personal reasons for their desire of working outside the village. There is a desire to experience different places, to learn new knowledge, to meet new people, and to practice "*going a day journey, getting a basket of knowledge*". These young women were also motivated to leave rural for urban areas because it will give them the opportunity to become "modern" or to learn new way of living, and more important motivation is to be free from family constraints.

To sum up, this section emphasizes on finding out the key factors which inspire women's decision of working within the village. Both quantitative and qualitative data reflect that a number of rural women decide to become home-based workers because of their reproductive roles. However, the reasons which are unwilling to live away their families; scarify for children's future; fear of risk; avoidance of intra-family conflict and availability of job opportunity in the village can be considered as the important factors that strongly impact on these women's option. Women's desire of spatial mobility is changed according to their life cycle. The evidence is the fact that a number of women who are working in the village at present used to work away their hometown when they were young or single. Further, several women who have been categorized in this group also want to change their workplace when the economic conditions changed or when their children are grown up. Thus, the meanings of working as home-based workers are different from those of spatial entrapment in the context of Kim Thieu village.

4.3 The Patterns of Women's Spatial Mobility

It must be asserted that the patterns of women's spatial mobility have been changed thanks to the revival and development of traditional woodcarving industry. As pointed out in previous section, women's as well as men's spatial mobility was limited in the time of collectivization and in the early period of *Doi Moi*. Almost all male and female villagers have mainly made their living within the bamboo hedge, though there is no denying the fact that many villagers generated their income outside the village. Since the early 1990s, woodcarving industry has been remarkably

developed. Kim Thieu woodcarvers produce more diverse wooden products than they have done before. If in the feudal period craftsmen only produced worshipping/cultural items and provided woodcarving services and in the collectivization they passively produced based on contracts with the State Own Enterprises, then nowadays they have been supplying "goods" in accordance with the market demand.

According to communal staff, there have been variations of types of woodcarving products since the late 1980s onwards. However, most of woodcarving households in Kim Thieu produce art furniture such as bed, wardrobe, many kinds of chest, and tea-tables and chairs. The classification of woodcarving households in the village is reported in the table 4. Among the groups of woodcarving products, three first types have been chronically produced while the last two groups have been only produced when the customers specially ordered. Most of senior carvers suppose that, for the last twenty years, the types of woodcarvings have become more diverse, but not so much. Even though, the models of woodcarvings within each group become more and more sophisticated.

Table 4. The classification of woodcarving households by their main products

Types of product	Number of engaging households (households)	Proportion in total (per cent)
Tea-tables and chairs	200	75.76
Beds and decorating chest	4	1.15
Souvenirs	47	17.80
Of which: - Wooden pictures	7	14.89
- Wooden statues	10	21.28
- Picture frames	30	63.83
Clock-shelf	5	1.89
Other items	8	3.03
Total wood carving households	264	100.00

Source: Communal Statistical Section, 2006

For several producers, the diversification and sophistication of woodcarving products have been inspired by two main reasons. First, the foreign customers who mostly come from China and some East Asian countries have ordered the styles of furniture as well as pictures or statues that are relevant to their cultures. As a result,

these styles impact not only on the production process, but also on the attitudes of domestic consumers. Secondly, with the relatively high income, many middle- and high class customers have given up the simple models of their furniture. They instead tend to buy very sophisticated woodcarving products not only for material consumption (e.g, bed for sleeping, wardrobe for stuff keeping, and so on), but also for the other demands.

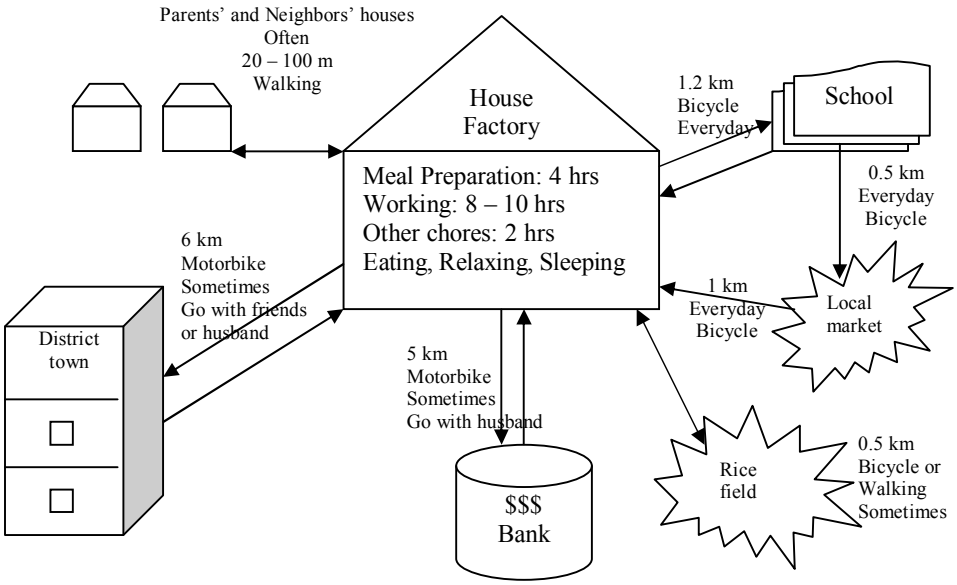
Regarding to domestic markets, Kim Thieu's wooden commodities are sold in many big cities in whole country such as Hanoi, Hai Phong, Vinh Phuc, Nha Trang, and HCM City where there are a lot of consumers whose income can effort to high quality products at very high price. Most of the products have been chiefly sold in domestic market by two ways which are: (i) the large scale producers individually or collectively rent the shops in the mentioned cities, then to send their family labors there, and (ii) the medium and small scale producers often sell their products to final customers directly or through the village traders. Besides, in order to export woodcarving products to China, there are about forty households who have rented stores in the Vietnamese-Chinese border trading zone (in the Chinese side). The shopkeepers there mostly are women whilst men conduct the production process in their family factories. Even though, village women cannot suddenly jump into the so-called "traditional woodcarving industry" and swiftly run from the village to the border trading zone. In contrast, the reason for which many village women become woodcarvers, traders and shopkeepers of art furniture can be explained as a complicated and lengthy negotiation process. Nevertheless, the ways in which women negotiate for changing the idea of "male dominated occupation" and for expanding their spatial mobility will be discussed in the following section.

In this section, different patterns of women's spatial mobility are analyzed for three groups of women as described in the table 1 including home-based working women, the village women working away their home, and contract female labors from other location going to work in Kim Thieu village.

Spatial Mobility of Home-based Working Women

The below maps show the everyday spatial mobility of a couple (Mrs. Nhung and her husband) whose time is remarkably devoted to craft making industry in the village.

Figure 2. Nhung's map

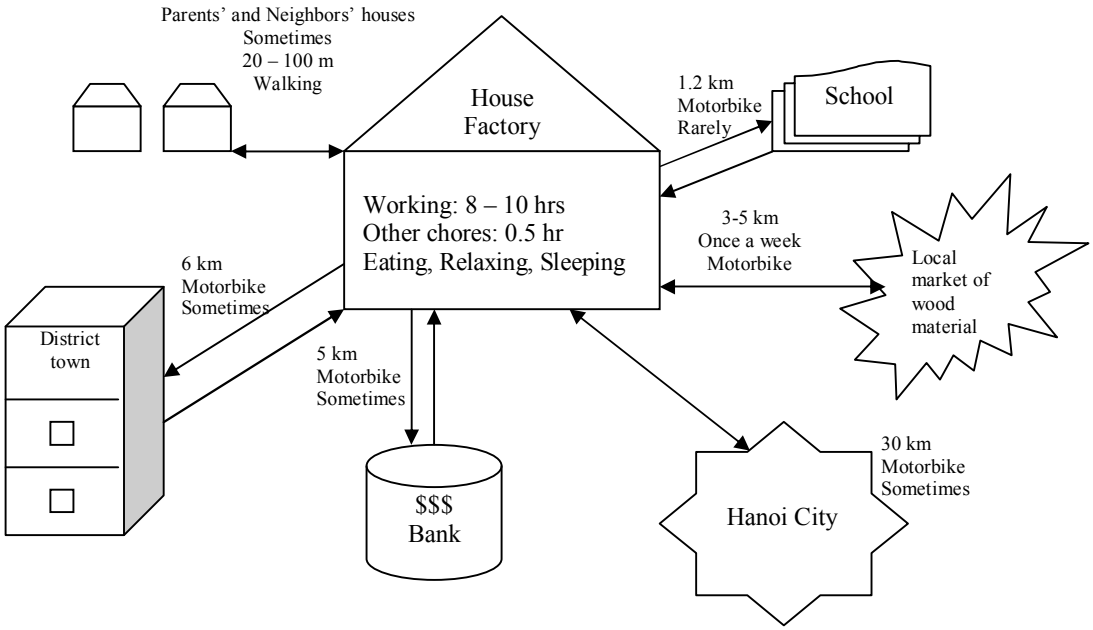


Nhung's map of her everyday spatial mobility demonstrates that home-based female workers spend most of their time at home. During my field work, I found that the spatial mobility of this female group is mostly related to their domestic roles in the household. Nhung has to send her children to school in the morning and to pick them up in the late afternoon. On the way back from local school, she usually drops in the local market to buy food for all family members and permanent contract labors those who work and live with her family. She has to cook not only for her family, but also for all labors who permanently work in her family factory. In Nhung's case, the concept of domestic roles should be questioned because cooking should be considered as both reproductive and productive works. Most of Nhung's works take place within the village. However, she also sometimes goes outside to get loan from the bank and to buy things in the district town market. When she goes farther, her means of transportation is changed from walking or bicycling to riding motorbike. Everyday or every two days, she visits her parents' and closed neighbors' houses for chatting.

Unlike from Nhung, her husband's pattern of spatial mobility is more much related to productive works rather than domestic roles, though he also sometimes helps his wife to send children to school and to buy food in the local market. Like findings of the former studies on gendered spatial mobility, Nhung's husband has longer and more diverse journeys-to-destination. Further, his means of transportation

is always motorbike rather than bicycle. Apart from going for income generating activities, he occasionally visits local restaurants and entertainment places with other male villagers. However, the differences of spatial mobility between Nhung and her husband do not exactly mean that she is left behind or secluded from society. Through two maps of their spatial mobility, we can recognize that they sometimes go together to the bank and the cities. Additionally, their reproductive and productive roles can be exchanged one another whenever they need.

Figure 3. The mobile map of Nhung's husband



At present, these home-based female workers have more limited spatial mobility in comparison with the time of collectivization. Although in the collectivization period, most of women and men merely moved around their village, they had more time to work outside the home. They had to go to the collective fields and factories everyday, so they had more time to communicate one another. Since the time of revival and development of traditional woodcarving industry, a number of village women become home-based workers so that they spend most of their time to work at home for both income generation and domestic roles.

Picture 1. Home-based working women

The Mobile Women's Spatial Mobility

The second group of women whose patterns of spatial mobility is considered in this section consists of those who have furniture shops outside the village. There are totally sixty households who have furniture shops in the inland cities and abroad, of which forty located in Fuzhai (China – Vietnam border trading zone) and twenty located in the cities such as Hanoi, HCM city, Nha Trang and in some provinces. All shopkeepers are women who have to go back and forth from the village to the shop location because their families still live there. Their journeys and commuting are so diverse and different from each other. All of interviewees work as woodcarving sellers or traders, nobody works away home as workers. The journeys-to-work of these women is witnessed in the table 5. However, women's journeys are not straight and simple such as from the village to the shop location, stay there and come back home. In fact, their patterns of spatial mobility are so complicated. For example, Hoa not only travel from Kim Thieu village to Fuzhai market, but she sometimes also follows Chinese customers to enter further inland China in order to look for new business opportunities as well as to investigate the changes of market demand. She has gone to Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou, Xian, Guangzhou, Fukien, Shangdong, and Shengzhen several times. Hoa has also been in Cambodia and Lao to seek material sources for expanding her family factory.

Frequently, the shopkeepers and woodcarving traders come back home once a month. This group occupies over a half of total. However, the patterns of commuting

and durations of stay away family vary among the group of mobile women. Hoa's family has two furniture shops at Fuzhai market, but she does not need to go to the border trading zone quite often. She merely goes there in order to sign a new contract or to deliver products to big customers. Her longest duration staying in Fuzhai merely is from two to three days. Sometimes, she goes to the Chinese border market in the early morning and come back in the evening. Like other village female traders, Hoa usually takes the public car from the village to get to Fuzhai.

Table 5. The journeys-to-work of village woodcarving sellers

Location	Distance from village (km)	Number of household	Means of transportation
Hanoi	30	10	Motorbike, private car
Vinh Phuc province	60	2	Public car, motorbike
Hai Phong	150	3	Public car, bus
Fuzhai market	200	40	Public car
Vinh	300	1	Train, bus
Nha Trang	1700	2	Airplane, train, bus
HCM city	2000	4	Airplane, train

Source: Personal Survey, 2007

From the field work, I have recognized that it is not any difficulty in transportation though those women have to travel very long journey. The reason is the fact that there are some households in Kim Thieu and surrounding village who provide daily transport service of passengers. Anyone who wants to go just needs to call them and book the seat before one day. The driver comes to pick them up at "local stations" where they have made appointment with one another. Similar to Hoa's case, Tuyet also told us that the duration which she has to stay in Fuzhai varies according to specific context. She even went there in the morning and came back in the evening. Her longest duration is a two-week stay. Totally, she stays in Fuzhai trading zone two months a year. She lives and works in the village almost all the remained time.

Whereas Hoa and Tuyet can conduct their business outside the village but do not need to stay there, most of their colleagues usually live and work at the shop location. They only go home in the special occasions such as in traditional festivals of

the village, in the death anniversary of their parents and ancestors, and in the New Year occasion. This group of women can be divided into three categories. The first category consists of those who have to stay in the shop all the year round. They are people who have recently started their business outside village. Thus, they should be present all the time in order to set up the network of regular customers. Moreover, as new comers, they have not enough money to hire an expert Chinese interpreter who can deal with both interpretation and business responsibilities on behalf of the owners. Among those who have a long stay at the shop, some women recently gave birth, so they brought infants there to meet their convenience. The second group consists of those who are willing to stay at the furniture shop for long term. They are those whose children are grown up so that they can take care of themselves and take over their mothers to do the domestic works. The last group is constituted by women whose shops are located so far away the village such as in Nha Trang and HCM city.

To compare with the spatial mobility of village women before *Doi Moi*, there are a lot of changes in the patterns of mobility from the physical to emotional elements. Table 6 indicates the major changes.

Table 6. Changes in women's spatial mobility

Elements	Before *Doi Moi*	Since *Doi Moi* onward
Position	Mostly, followers of husbands	Active agents
Distance	Surrounding communes	Far cities and abroad
Duration	Permanent migration or daily commuting	Flexibility in each context
Motivation	Seeking for survival	Seeking for prosperity
Occupation	Farmer, carpenter, small trader	Shop keeper, businessman
Means of transportation	Walking, bicycle, small boat	Car, bus, motorbike, train, airplane

Source: Personal Survey, 2007

Patterns of Spatial Mobility of Contract Female Workers

Aside from two groups of village women, there are a number of female labors who come from other locations to work in Kim Thieu village as daily and permanent contract workers. All of these female workers go to Kim Thieu from surrounding areas where off-farm job opportunities are not available. The survey

data shows that 100 per cent hired workers have similar social and economic backgrounds of middle-to-low income families, predominantly in farming.

Table 7. Characteristics of hired female labors working in Kim Thieu

Characteristics	Results
Age	
Under 20 yrs	22.22 %
From 20 to 30 yrs	44.44 %
Over 30 yrs	33.34 %
Marital Status	
Married	66.67 %
Single	33.33 %
Average Educational Level	Secondary
Average Distance from Kim Thieu	10.34 km
Time of Work	
Permanent	44.45 %
Temporary	55.55 %
Kinds of Work	
Carving only	66.67 %
Farming only	11.11 %
Carving and Farming	22.22 %
Means of Transportation	Bicycle (100 %)

Source: Personal Survey, 2007

During my field work, I have seen hundreds of women who come to seek jobs in Kim Thieu village since early morning and return home in the late afternoon or evening. Their ages vary from 15 to 45 years old, of which about 22 per cent fall in the category of under 20 years of age, 44.4 per cent centre on the group of age from 20 to 30 years old, and one-third of total belong to the group of older than 30 years old. The married women occupy two-third of total interviewees with the average number of children is 2.5 per one mother. Regarding to educational level, almost all respondents stop schooling at secondary school while very few people can obtain the level of high school.

Among those I have interviewed, 55.6 per cent respondents never have certain destinations of work. They usually gather into the crossroads between Kim Thieu and Me village and create a market place of daily contract labors. All workers arrive at the market place by very old and sleazy bicycles with the average distance from Kim

Thieu village is 10.3 km. The one who comes from farthest community has to cycle about 18 km of rough road and to cross a river by ferry. These women stand at the place which is called “labor market” to wait for villagers come to hire. All things what they wear are so simple and plain in comparison with native women. Apart from usual clothes, they wear summer gloves and cover their faces by cloths in order to avoid sunshine and dust. It is very difficult to discover totally their faces instead of seeing their eyes. It can be easily differentiated them from the female residents based on their dresses. Aside from their clothes, traditional hats also show economic and social position. Some of them take food along with them for lunch in case they can find the job. The others even take some simple farming tools along with in order to work in case somebody hires them to do the farm work. Almost seventy per cent of hired labors willing to work for craft making industry only, whereas 22.22 per cent of labors accept to do any kind of work as long as they can get some money.

Picture 2. The differentiation of village women and female hired labors

By talking to women during the time they were waiting for work, I have recognized that their patterns of work are different. The young-unmarried girls seem to go to work more often than middle-aged-married women. More than 40 per cent of

young girls work in the craft making industry in Kim Thieu village as permanent contract labors. They come there to work everyday except the special occasions such as village festival, memory-worshipping ancestor, the peak season of agricultural production at their hometown, and sickness. These permanent contract labors can receive wage daily or monthly depended upon their choices.

According to young girls' opinion, working as a casual labor would get higher wage than as a permanent labor can. However, they still want to work permanently because it is more stable. Moreover, working for certain owner helps them to reduce the time waiting for work every early morning at "labor market place". Casual labors not only have to wait for job, but they also are unable to seek job so that they have to return home sometimes. As a researcher, I could not imagine how hard they were because they have to cycle from thirty to forty km a day without any earning.

Wage level is not fixed, but it varies according to the verbal agreement between the owners and contract labors. Nature of the agreement depends so much on the attitudes and other characters of the owners as well as of the labors. The young owners seem to be easier than the old ones in choosing labors and more generous than older in wage bargaining. For instance, a sixties-female owner seemed very difficult to decide who should be hired. She also bargained and discounted every thousand VND[§]. Whereas the young owners willing to pay 23 to 25 thousands VND per a manual working day, this old one tries to discount to 20 or 22 thousands VND. Apart from the verbal agreement between the owner and labor, wage rate is determined by types of work which can be undertaken by each labor. Although most of female labors come to Kim Thieu village to work in craft making industry as polishing workers, they are diverse in terms of skill, experience, and health. While someone who can polish wooden things by machine is paid from 32 to 35 thousands VND, people doing the same kind of manual work can only get from 20 to 25 thousands VND per day.

To investigate the motivations of female labors come to work in Kim Thieu village, I have started with the question: "*why do you come here to work*?" for women at different ages which I can guest their ages through my surface observation. The following case studies will demonstrate different motivations of going to work.

[§] One VND equals to 1/16,500 USD or 1/500 THB.

Case Study 1: The middle-aged women go to work as daily hired labors

> My village is very poor. Before rice production is not enough for eating. Many people were in the situation of hunger. In recent years, our villagers can produce enough food for eating, but we are still poor, especially in comparison with other communities in the area. I come here to work in order to get money to pay for school fees of my children. In addition, my wage is used to buy meat, fish, and fruits as the way of improving my family's living standard. If I don't go to work as hired labor here, I have to sell rice when I need money for my children education as well as other purposes. By doing this, my family will be trapped in the situation of food insecurity. (Mrs. Hoa from Duc Hau village, Soc Son district, Hanoi province)

Similar to story of woman who comes from Duc Hau village, other female workers at her age just go to work in Kim Thieu when they finished all farm works. The reasons for which they go outside to make more earnings are mostly explained by cash demand. Although they can afford for food, they are still cash hungry because cash nexus nowadays becomes very popular in rural areas. People need money not only for children's education investment, but also for maintenance of social relationship in their community. If before rural people could use rice that is grown themselves as wedding present, banana which is collected from their garden as offerings to a deceased person, and eggs that were laid by their hens as a gift for an infant, today these kinds of gifts and offerings have been turned into cash. As a result, while these women go to work as daily contract workers in Kim Thieu village, their husbands also migrate to work as construction workers in elsewhere.

Case Study 2: The twenty-unmarried poor girl

> I gave up school after I finished the primary level because my family is very poor. I became a polishing worker here since I was fourteen. My parents passed away so early that I have to stay with my older brother and sister-in-law. I seem to give all money which I have earned to my sister-in-law because I would like to help my brother's family in raring their children. I work as a permanent worker here, so I can get money every month. Sometimes I also keep a small amount of my earning in order to buy something for me such as clothes, shampoo, and other sundries. (Ms. Thanh from Vinh Tho commune, Yen Phong district, Bac Ninh province)

Similar to Thanh's age and marital status, but Ngan's motivation of going to work in Kim Thieu is different. Although Ngan's family lives in rural area, the economic status is not so bad. Among a few girls, she is invested to finish high school level. She goes to work in order to get money for her own expenses. She does not need to give money to her parents. In contrast, her earnings have been spent on new fashionable clothes, shampoo, and chatting in the local internet shops. During the time of waiting for somebody to hire them, Ngan always enters in an internet shop which is nearby the "labor market place" for chatting while her friend – Thanh stands outside to wait for her instead of entering together.

Most outside women go to work in Kim Thieu village have to cope with class differentiation between village owners and hired labors even if their economic situation is not so distinct from each other. The discrimination is expressed not only between the female owners and labors, but also between other villagers and contract labors. Some village women consider female contract labors as subordinate to them, though they never hire them. However, the owners have more friendly relationship with village contract labors than with the outsiders. This means that the differentiation is created based on not only relationship between the owners and labors, but also between insiders and outsiders – one traditional discrimination in rural area in Northern Vietnam.

In brief, this section tried to synthesize different patterns of women's spatial mobility which are related to development of craft making activity. It can be said that the revival and development of traditional woodcarving industry in Kim Thieu village should be seen as a critical factor which inspires the change in the patterns of women's spatial mobility. Although there are a lot of village women decide to work at home as self-employed workers, they are not spatial entrapped as several writers have claimed. In comparison with male villagers, home-based workers seem to have shorter distance of spatial mobility while the mobile women have much longer journeys-to-work. Whereas the spatial mobility of female woodcarving traders and shopkeepers is motivated by their desire of prosperity, the one of female hired workers is much related to their sustainable livelihood, especially their cash demand. Despite the fact that women engage in spatial mobility with different motivations and status of occupation, they are similar in terms of the way in which they have to negotiate with other family members as well as with conventional perception of female occupation for their mobility.

4.4 Negotiation for Spatial Mobility

The discussion in this section is emphasized on the ways in which both village and outside contract female labors negotiate for their participation in woodcarving industry at different stages and levels, but for the same purpose that is livelihood sustainability. As a result, the discussion will be concentrated on two groups which are: (i) village women who actively engage in the marketing process of woodcarvings; and (ii) contract female labors who take part in woodcarving industry in Kim Thieu village as daily or permanent workers.

4.4.1 The Village Women

Negotiation for Traditional Female Roles

In the case of traditional woodcarving industry, village women have to negotiate for their participation at first and then for their going outside the village as furniture shop keepers or traders. As pointed out elsewhere in this paper, village women have formally engaged in woodcarving industry since the collectivization regime. However, they have intensively participated in this traditional occupation – even in very sophisticated stage of production process since the time of economic renovation or *Doi Moi* in Vietnam. The reason is the fact that the expansion of woodcarving industry needs a big workforce so that it has absorbed almost all male and female labors. Even though, village women cannot promptly jump into the traditional male occupation. In contrast, these women, particularly the young ones, have experienced a long process of negotiation. Similar to the findings in Mills (2001), village women often use the image of "good daughter" to negotiate with cultural and social prejudices to negotiate for their participation in to the so-called "male dominated work". In process of negotiation, they have to struggle not only with their parents and peers, but also with themselves because of patriarchal differentiation of work. Ms. Tuyet, one of the rare chiselers in the village at present said:

> I have spent four years to study how to chisel. At that time, I was the only girl in the class. People think chiseling need physical strength, so it should be "male work". Many senior villagers and my peers ask why I want to chisel rather than to whittle or to polish products as other village girls. According to them, I don't have "real characteristics" of a girl such as gracefulness and

> gentleness. I may have problem with my sex. Thus, I had to convince my parents by saying that I can help my father to chisel, so he does not need to hire outsiders any more. Additionally, I can help them to earn money to pay tuition fees for one younger sister and two younger brothers because wage rate of chiseling worker is twice higher than one of whittling worker. Up until now, I am still the only chiseler of my generation in the village. (October, 2006 - *Tran Thi Tuyet, twenty-one-year-old girl*)

Further, like Thai (Isan) young women who migrated to work in Bangkok in Mills's work (2001), young women in Kim Thieu village also spend small amount of salaries to their families while much larger proportion will be used for "consuming modernity" including fashionable clothes, cosmetic, and keeping as private property. Apart from giving money monthly to her mother to buy food, Tuyet usually gives her parents money to hire farm labors in the peak season of agricultural production. By doing this, she both shows the image of "dutiful daughter" and avoids working in the muddy and sunny field.

Thanks to the renovation in state trade and tariff policies, traditional woodcarvings have gradually occupied not only domestic, but also international market since the early 1990s. As mentioned in previous section, there are a lot of village producers who have established furniture shops in the cities away their village. Further, they also export a number of art furniture to China through small trading. Most of these producers rent the shops to put up their own products for sale while few village traders establish the shops for selling both theirs and others' products to make profit from price differences. Regarding to gender division of labor in trade of woodcarvings, the shopkeepers and traders used to be men, not any woman. So, the question raised here is that why and when village women have involved in the marketing process of woodcarving products.

In the early 1990s when traditional woodcarving industry has been revived and developed, almost all woodcarving traders were men. At the same time, there were few village women went out for making money. Instead, they mostly lived and worked within the village area. At ideological level, outside working people have to face with several inconvenient conditions which are not relevant to female workers. Additionally, many male interviewees suppose that women can do the domestic works better than men, though they do not differentiate female from male in terms of

economic roles. Nevertheless, some years passed with male traders and shopkeepers, many households in Kim Thieu village trapped in bankruptcy so that they even cannot recover until now. Mr. Tuan – a middle man told us his experience of exchange the roles between him and his wife in woodcarving industry:

> During the period from 1993 to 1998, most of traders and shopkeepers outside the village were men, whereas women stayed at the village to conduct both farming and craft making production. But, we have recognized that men cannot significantly contribute to household economy by working away their family. As woodcarving trade brought us a lot of money, many of us committed harmful temptations such as gambling, smoking and drinking. As a result, they had to face with bankruptcy. Women have replaced men's roles in woodcarving trade and marketing since the late 1990s not only because they can save and manage money, but also because they possess characteristics which are more suited to marketing and price bargaining. In addition, men are more relevant with the responsibility of conducting production processes at the village because our knowledge of material, size, carving skill and design much better than women. (Nov, 2007)

Unlike Tuan's story, Mrs. Chinh decided to go doing business outside the village due to her parents' convincement. Her parents have furniture shops in Fuzhai market since the early 1990s, but she has never come there before she got married. After Chinh separated from her family, her parents persuaded her come to do business together with them in the Chinese border trading zone. They allow her to share their shop at first. After a half year, she decided to rent a private shop. Her big family possesses totally five shops in Fuzhai market. If kinship plays an important role in Chinh's decision to do business outside the village, Tuyet seems to rely on her neighborhood when she was looking for opportunities to open a furniture shop in Chinese border trading zone. She said: "*There are several villagers selling products at Fuzhai market, so I went there with them to look for business opportunities. I rented a shop together with 3 other persons from Thiet Ung village which is next to my hometown. I have started to do this business since 2005*".

If we look at the path to success of village women in doing business from outside, it seems to be very advantageous, in fact these women have to negotiate with their intra-family relations for changing their spatial mobility. Hoa recalls the first days when she started to engage in woodcarving trade:

> My parents-in-law disagreed with my decision of doing business outside because they did not believe that I could become a trader. So, I sent our products to the shop of my husband's sister at first to ask her selling them. I have recognized that our designs became best selling among products which were exhibited in her furniture shop. Then, I decided to go there to seek business opportunities. At the starting point, I shared shop with two sisters of my husband then separated from them some months latter. As I have good skill in carving and designing, so my husband assigns all marketing works to me.

Similar to Hoa's case, almost all mobile women have experienced a process of negotiation and persuasion in order to get their families', especially their husbands' agreement on their decision to make living away their village. Although gendered differentiation of economic contribution rarely exists, conventional gender division of labor in terms of work is maintained in the context of woodcarving industry in Kim Thieu village. The tendency is that men fall in the works which need strength and high skilled while women are responsible for less skilled and flexible manner. However, as discussed in previous section, many male villagers disagree with the strategy in which their wives conduct the marketing affair outside while they stay at home to manage production processes and to do chores. For this reason, these mobile women must cope with patriarchal constraint of female roles even if their contribution to household economy is appreciated by male members at family as well as community level.

The commonest way in which several mobile women employ to sustain their dual role as mother/wife and as female entrepreneur is that they go back and forth from the village to the shop location. Returning to Hoa's case we can see that her longest stay in Fuzhai market is two or three days. She must go there from 5 to 8 times per month to conduct her business. During the time being home, she spends most of her time on doing domestic and managerial works. Hoa is not only a brilliant entrepreneur of Kim Thieu village, but she is also a good cook. She cooks not only for their family everyday, but sometimes for contract workers who permanently work for her factories. According to her opinion, "*you can get loyalty from hired labors if you treat them kindly*". For this reason, Hoa tries to show her kindliness to contract labors, especially those who live in the same village. She does not want villagers to think about her as an arrogant woman who has a lot of money. Similarly, she tries to avoid all types of conflict which can be happed between her and her family-in-law due to

the changes of her lifestyle. So, she always shows her respectable attitude towards her husband, particularly when there is a presence of others. For Hoa, doing domestic works today does not consume so much energy and time thanks to the strong assistance of house-machines such as electronic rice cookers, microwave and washing machine and so on. Many village women also contend that they are emancipated from domestic works due to the appearance of house-machines.

Why Hoa as well as other women can remotely control her business outside the national border? Like other woodcarving traders, she has hired two Chinese persons who work as both interpreters and shopkeepers since 1996 when she started to do her business there (ten years ago). Those Chinese interpreters are allowed tp decide whether sell products or not instead of waiting for their owners. Therefore, she merely goes there to sign a new contract or to deliver products to big customers. Her interpreters have been paid monthly equal to two per cents of total revenue. Besides, Hoa often rewards them in cash when they help her to sell big volume of products or gives them some presents on special occasions. She also invites them to go to restaurant having lunch or dinner when she goes to Fuzhai. According to Hoa, her interpreters have been so loyal that she can totally believe in their accounting reports. By creating good relationships, especially trust with two Chinese translators, Hoa has more time to help her husband to manage the production processes not only in their own factories, but also in twelve satellite factories surrounding Kim Thieu village. More importantly, she is still responsible for domestic works as a "good mother" in a patriarchal society.

While Hoa has assigned most of business works to Chinese interpreters, the others employ their kinship for both tasks: doing business and taking care of family. They create the so-called family corporation in woodcarving trade outside the village. Chinh's mother and two her sisters conduct woodcarving trade together, though they have their own shops. Thus, they can call for help and share from one another. The mother can help all her daughters to look after their shops when they have to come back for domestic roles for some days, and even for a week. This kind of collaboration allows women to conduct their business outside the village without difficulty.

Women who live in the extended families can ask the help from other family members for taking care of their children during the time they are absent. The popular strategy is to that women have to talk with husband and parents-in-law to get their

agreement and supports. Some of them can easily get the support and encouragement, whereas the others were complained by their husband's family members. In the perception of mothers-in-law, their daughters-in-law prefer working outside the village because of their individual freedom rather than of economic contribution. For this reason, many mobile women take their babies along with them while the others left their children for their parents, siblings or husband.

As discussed in the section of literature review, Lee (2002) exemplified that the relatively high income of middle class women allows them to employ live-in domestic helpers such as maids and nannies. However, in Kim Thieu village, there is not any household who hires labors to do domestic works. Among the interviewed women who are working as traders or shopkeepers outside the village, the most popular tactic is that they attempt to travel frequently back and forth between workplace and hometown. By doing so, they can deal with their female roles together with business work. Those who have to stay relatively long in the shop location mostly ask the help from other family members or kinship. But, the helpers' attitudes toward doing domestic works are differential according to their relations to those who give their support.

Negotiation for Successful Business

Before conducting this study, I used to be influenced by the thought that female migrant workers as people who have to cope with bad working condition, high exploitation, insufficient living condition, unstable income, and sexual harassment (Barrón 1994). Therefore, one of the important questions raised in my mind is that how rural women can deal with business activity of high valued products away their hometown, even outside national border without the help of male members at the workplace. Additionally, they whether have to cope with the problems which have claimed by several researchers who have been doing on gender issues or not. The answer has been found out after my field trip in the Chinese – Vietnamese free trading zone, especially in Fuzhai market where a lot of furniture shops are located.

I walked around the market and counted total furniture shops out. There are about 500 shops of which 40 ones belong to Kim Thieu villagers, but the shopkeepers are much more than that number. As mentioned above, there are so many shops which have been shared by two or three, even four sellers. The big traders often rent shops in

two stories buildings in which the first storey is used for product store and exhibition while the second storey is utilized as accommodation. The medium and small traders tend to rent the shops in the house with corrugated iron roof. These shops are employed as places of product exhibition and store as well as accommodation. Even though, the living condition of shop keepers there is comfortable enough.

These female shopkeepers have grouped together based on their kinship, original hometown, and the locations of their shops. They have created a community of furniture shopkeepers in which they can help and share among one another. By so doing, they form a collective power not only in bargaining with Chinese customers, but also in avoidance of perils such as sexual harassment and kidnapping.

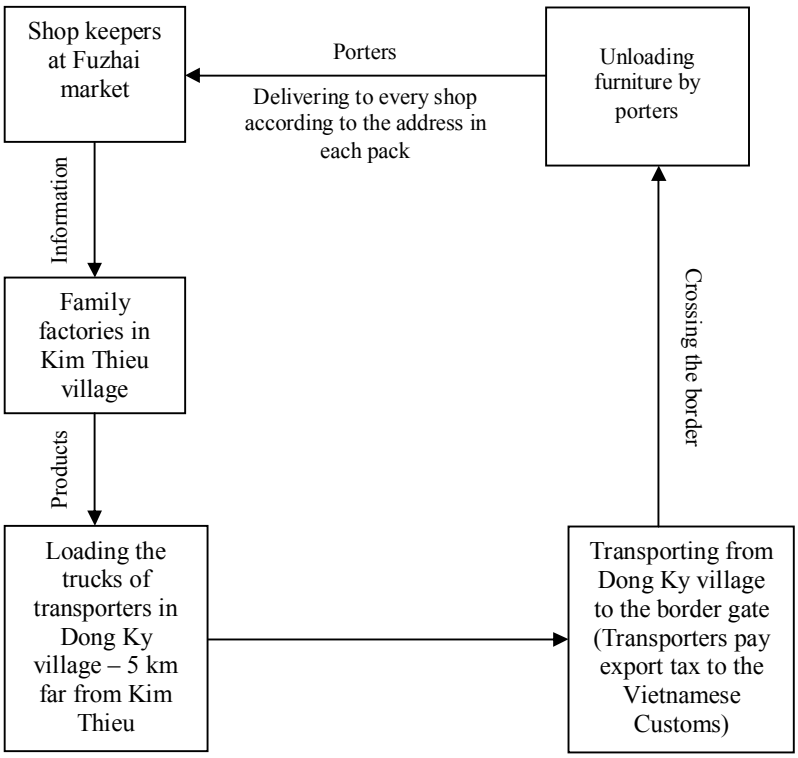
Picture 3. Wooden Furniture Market at China – Vietnam Border

According to these female traders, selling furniture at Fuzhai market is not hard. They have merely to induce Chinese customers to buy their products when they are still in hesitance, and then to discuss with them about the prices. If Chinese traders want to order a big volume, they must sign contract first and transfer products latter. All drudgery works such as transportation, unloading from the truck and carrying to the shop have been done by Vietnamese porters who come from the borderland. The shopkeepers, transporters and porters have set up a network which is mainly based on the reliance rather than on the formal economic contracts. The mechanism of this system is described as in the figure 4. It can be said that the convenience of the transportation and delivery systems of wooden furniture which

used to be considered as very heavy works allows women to take part in the so-called extreme male dominated occupation.

Another work also used to be seen as risky for women who conduct business away home is money transferring. The annual revenue from selling wooden furniture varies from 100 mils VND to one billion VND in accordance with the business scales. As a result, it was so dangerous for women when they had to collect and to transfer money to their hometown. Recently, the development of bank services and the availability of Chinese middlemen in transferring money through private bank accounts allow the female traders to avoid risks.

Figure 4. System of Furniture Transportation from Kim Thieu to Fuzhai



Aside from utilization of collective power, transportation and delivery systems and bank services, almost all these female traders know how to employ other kinds of social relations to advantage their business activities at the border trading zone. Like other female traders, Mrs. Hoa has created close relationships with both Chinese and Vietnamese government staff who work as border-guards. So, she can easily cross the border without any document. She is seen as a wise woman in establishment of social capital. Hoa seems to employ the "benefit sharing" method to build interrelationships

between her and her counterparts. Husband of her interpreter is a staff in Chinese border-guard force. Not only inviting them for meals, she sometimes gives both Chinese and Vietnamese border-guards money as a gift. For her, that behavior should not be seen as the way of corruption, but it should be considered as "*a type of fuel which makes her business easier and smoother*".

In spite of these conveniences and successes, the female traders also face with problems and failures in their business. One of the most difficulties is language barrier because very few traders and shopkeepers are proficient in Chinese language, so they have to communicate with Chinese customers through the translators. Tuyet's experience witnesses that some Chinese translators are reliable while most of them try to make money wisely as much as possible from both Chinese buyers and Vietnamese sellers. "*Their common tactic is to translate incorrectly the price what is asked by us and the one offered by buyers. In doing this, these translators can get money from price distances which sometimes are much higher than their formal salaries*." – Tuyet recalls. When I asked them why they don't study Chinese to communicate with customers directly, Tuyet said that "*translators here are not just language interpreters, but they play an important role in our business. We sell our products in the Chinese side of the border, so we also need some other helps from them outside the language. Some Vietnamese traders used to take Vietnamese translators along with them, but Chinese customers seem to suspect what they have interpreted*."

Another problem which is reported by village woodcarving traders is their lack of business skill or knowledge in economics. They rarely sign written contracts with Chinese customers. Thus, these female traders occasionally face with tricky buyers. Meanwhile, there is not any business protection system of Vietnamese government. The reason is the fact that all of them are small traders and their business is spontaneously developed. There are a variety of village traders and family factories trapped in bankruptcy because of contract breach and money cheating.

Together with difficulties of language difference and customer's tricky, the shop rent has been increased year by year so that profits from woodcarving trade tends to decrease. In spite of reduction profits which can be made from product selling at Fuzhai trading zone are still much higher than what people can get from selling the same product at the village. For this reason, while some shopkeepers give up their business at the border market, several new traders come to replace them.

It can be said that to succeed in doing business outside the village even outside the national border, Kim Thieu female traders have to negotiate with conventional constraints of domestic roles intra- and extra-family. Moreover, they also must struggle with several difficulties which happen at the workplace. To overcome these difficulties and traditional barriers, these women know how to manipulate different types of social relations. According to evaluation of local leaders, "*these women have significantly contributed to the development of traditional woodcarving industry in Kim Thieu by their trade outside the village. Additionally, their trade activities also help to introduce Vietnamese culture to the outside world*." – Nguyen Van Man – Chair of People Committee. With respect to these women themselves, working away the hometown can be considered as a means of empowerment.

4.4.2 The Contract Female Labors

One of the crucial female workforces involving in the development of woodcarving in Kim Thieu as well as surrounding village is the daily hired labors who come from agricultural-based communities. Unlike village women, major occupation of contract female labors is farming, so they casually come to work in Kim Thieu in the leisure time after transplantation or harvest. However, as shown earlier, there is remained a differentiation among them. Those who got married and have children tend to participate in contract labor market as "reversed army". In contrast, those who are young and still single tend to work as permanent contract labors for certain owners. The way in which the latter group negotiates for their spatial movement is not different from other case studies that have done by several researchers. The most popular reason is "helping their families financially" (Williams 2005). These girls understand that with low educational levels and without any working experience, they have little chance to seek a secure job guaranteeing good pay in urban areas. Thus, they decide to go to work as unskilled daily contract workers in Kim Thieu.

This section does not pay much attention to the group of young generation. Instead, the emphasize will be placed on the ways in which middle-aged-married women struggle with the constraints of traditional roles which impose on a female peasant in order to go to work and with complicated social relations at their work

place in Kim Thieu village. The first question raised here is how these women can arrange time for their combination of three categories of work including wage earning, expenditure-substitution, and domestic chores. Of course, they have to work longer hour than male members in the same family. However, they also know how to reduce their double, even triple burden. A forties-married woman who works as a seasonal migrant labor in Kim Thieu interprets:

> Thanks to the mechanization, fertilizer, pesticides and herbicides, time for agriculture now reduces so much in comparison with before. We merely cultivate two rice seasons a year, so we have a lot of free time but have no money. My husband and I therefore must find off-farm jobs in order to get money to spend on our children's education. I work as a polishing and as an agricultural worker here, whereas my husband works as a construction worker near my village. That's why he can help me to cook for my children as well as to feed some pigs. I just work here 8 hours per day, normally from 7 AM to 3 PM, so I can do my farm work in the late afternoon after I come back from Kim Thieu village. (November, 2006)

Like other rural women, this migrant female labor employs the agricultural technologies to reduce her time and energy which used to be devoted to farming activities. By so doing, she has more free time to work for cash earning outside the village. In addition, gender division of labor intra-family is also re-arranged for strategy of livelihood diversification. She usually gets up to prepare breakfast for whole family and to feed the pigs at very early morning before she leaves for job seeking in Kim Thieu village. Her husband seems to be willing to help her to cook and to feed pigs at lunch time. Unlike her, one younger woman who just gave birth has to employ the help from her parents and the situation seems to be worse:

> I merely go to work when I can ask somebody to help me to take care of my son because he is still very small. Further, I have to finish all the farm works first because my husband also goes to work as hired carpenter here, he cannot share with me. I often ask the help from my parents, though I live with my parents-in-law (*uneasy talk*). I still feed my son by breast milk, so I have to milk and leave him for my parents from morning until late afternoon. (Nov, 2007)

As income from working as hired labor in woodcarving industry is much higher than what people can earn from farming, a number of women have used the

trade-off between on-farm and off-farm works in building their livelihood strategies. A female hired worker told me that "*during the peak season of agricultural production, I have to hire labor in order to finish farming works as soon as possible so that I come here to work more often than others*."

Further, the second question is how these women negotiate in the workplace as female contract labors. By working together with two hired female labors at Mr. Sinh's factory, I found out that they just polish wooden furniture carefully when the owner of his family members appears. After lunch when all family members are taking rest, these two women still work but not hard and carefully enough. The reason is the fact that the wage is paid by timework not by piecework, so the workers just calculate the hours they must work and then get money from the owner. Some owners also contend that it is difficult for them to pay wage by piecework because of special characteristics of woodcarving industry. The owners even cannot exactly estimate the time for furniture polishing because it depends upon species of timber which is used. Hence, they must hire workers to polish day after day until the furniture becomes shiny enough. Most casual contract workers recognize the characteristics of woodcarving industry in order to save there energy. Even though, the attitudes of hired workers towards the work are not homogenous. The permanent contract labors tend to behave kindly towards works assigned by owners to sustain their jobs.

Although these women have found the ways for their going to work outside, by and large, diverse income-generating activities make them suffer from working longer hour than male family members as well as than women who just spend their time on farming. It is not easy to conclude whether their living standard is improved or not when their cash income is increased from the outsider's viewpoint. Thus, we should go further to investigate whether spatial mobility can help women empower themselves.

4.5 The Spatial Mobility as Social Capital and Means of Empowerment

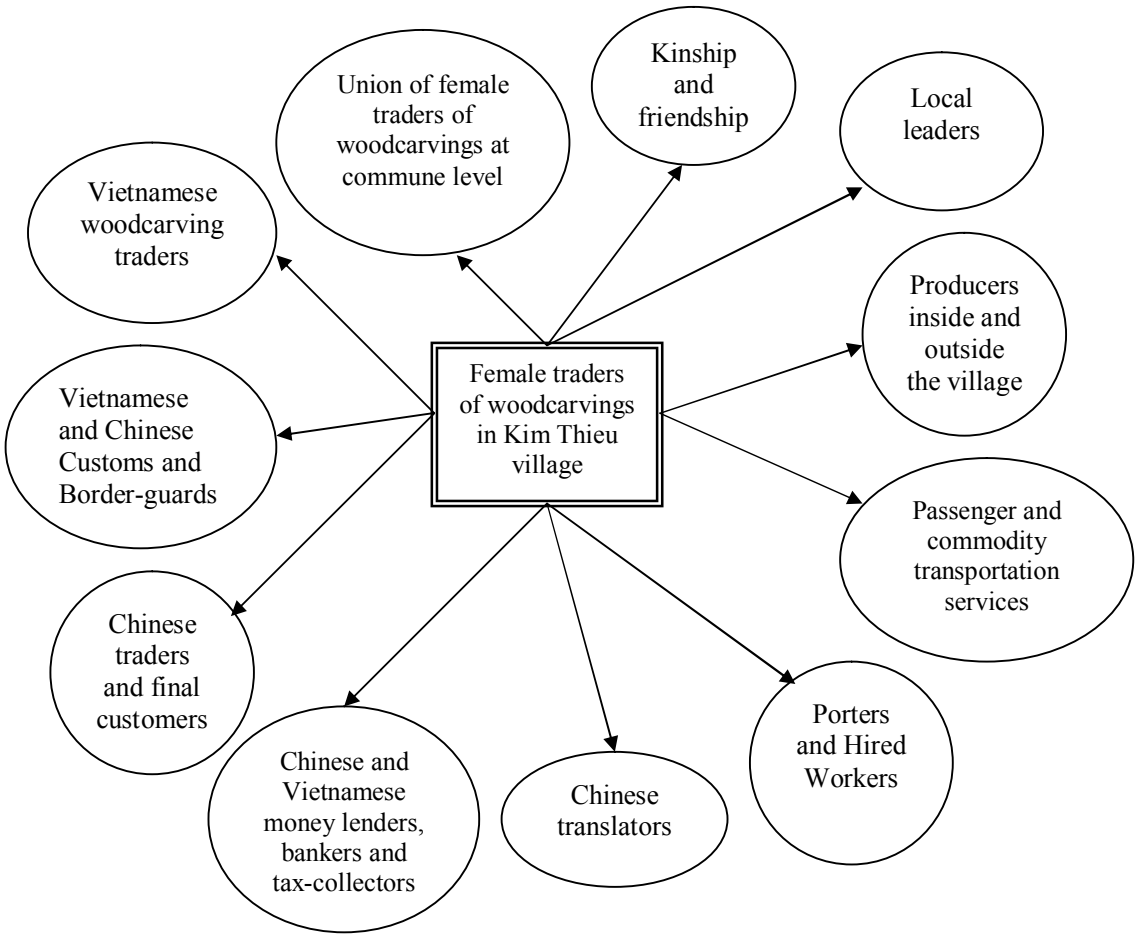
According to Young (1997), the term "empowerment" gained prominence in the closing years of the UN's Third Development Decade. The word empowerment itself inclines to claim for women. But, it is perceived and interpreted in different ways among feminist groups. For activist feminist groups, empowerment is about

people taking control over their own lives. This may include affecting the other people act and forcing changes in their behavior. But for feminists, empowerment involves in the radical alteration of the processes and structures which reproduce women's subordination as a gender. For them, strategies for empowerment must be put in the historical context that created lack of power in the first place, and must be viewed from the present processes. Although feminist theoreticians and activists emphasize on different aspects of empowerment, they maintain that women share a common experience of oppression and subordination. According to them, the parameters of empowerment consist of two proponents: (i) building a positive self-image and self-confidence; developing the ability to think critically; (ii) building up group cohesion and fostering decision-making and action.

Thus, in this section I borrow Williams's (2005) debates on gender and spatial mobility in order to discuss on why spatial mobility should be seen as social capital as well as the way in which women can empower themselves. It can be argued that spatial mobility allows women, especially female traders and shop keepers to engage in wider social networks with different social relations in order to enrich their "social capital" that plays a key role in sustaining their livelihood. The fact of Kim Thieu village seems to be counter to the discourse of globalization has produced female migrants as local subjects who are subordinated to, and contained within global capitalist economy. Further, the empirical data and information from the field also show that female spatial mobility contests a local perception of femininity, transgressing a spatial association with home and hometown.

Although women those who are self-employed workers also engage in the complicated social relations, they deal with them in the familiar context – their hometown - with the appearance and help of their family/kin. The mobile women have to experience and to cope with different social relations which imply multiple scales of power relations in the place and space which are distant from their hometown, from their families/kin, thus from their familiarity. Hence, the meanings of kinship and friendship for mobile women are quite different from those for home-based working women. One of the most important contributions of spatial mobility to women's social capital is that they become more and more self-confident in doing business not only in their country, but also abroad. With self-confidence, women can empower themselves at different arenas including family, community and labor market.

Figure 5. Social Networks of a Female Trader of Woodcarvings



As mentioned elsewhere Hoa used to be such a shy girl that her parents-in-law did not believe that she could go to make business outside the village. In addition, she had to drop school so early because of financial difficulty of her parents. She has not finished primary school yet. Hence, it is very important to employ different kinds of social relations to facilitate her business. She shares:

> I am the most frequent producer in Kim Thieu village has been sent to the district and provincial workshops and conferences on development of private sector in craft making industry. Those workshops and conferences are very good opportunities for me to advertise my business as well as to create new relationships with others, especially with big woodcarving traders in different locations. I also share with and learn experience from them. (Nov 2006)

Through Hoa's story we can see that as female traders and shopkeepers who go backwards and forwards between the village and the big cities as well as the border

trading zone, village women change their place and their roles all the time, they also change the way of life, way of being, and also way of thinking connected to their identities in specific situation. In the villagers' and her kin's perception, Hoa's image has been changed from a shy, low education, and poor original girl into a modern, active and successful female entrepreneur. With her economic contribution, Hoa's position has been remarkably changed not only in her nuclear family, but also in extended families. She helps all her and her husband's siblings to sell their products at Fuzhai market. Nowadays, almost all her relatives' factories have been turned to be her satellites. By this doing, Hoa becomes more powerful in her family and kin as well as in the community.

Even though, Hoa always tries to show that she is a traditional woman like the other villagers. She behaves kindly and amiably towards everyone, especially towards hired village labors working in her factories. She dresses traditionally when she stays in the village. She interprets that she does not want any villager to think about her as a dressy and snobbish woman. Her dressing and behaving towards villagers may be seen as the ways in which she can avoid the conflict of lifestyle with her parents-in-law. Moreover, during the time she stays in the village, she participates in all activities (e.g. singing and dancing) of local women's union as a real member. The head of local women's union has appreciated her as the most active members in the organization.

However when questioned further, Hoa's personal expectation is expressed differently from what she shows in community. She desires to have a "modern life" from basic needs (e.g. dressing and accommodation) to other demands (e.g. doing morning exercise and making up). She wishes to buy a new house in district town (Tu Son) where is 5 km far from Kim Thieu village. The reason is the fact that she wants to escape from traditional norms and customs to live in a more modern world. She always compares lifestyle of Kim Thieu village (traditional and backward) with the one of Dong Ky village (rapid changed and modernized).

As an active woman, Hoa is not confined in traditional lifestyle. By contrast, she knows how to negotiate with traditional norms in order to consume modernity as she expects. For instance, she often dresses well like an urban woman at home. One day I went to her house at night, I saw her in a very fashionable dress. But, she changed her dress immediately. Another example is the way she does morning exercise, Hoa often does at home with the support of sport equipments instead of running and walking outside. She said Dong Ky women can dress sportswear walking

along the village street without hesitance while it must be considered as a snobbish behavior in Kim Thieu.

Further, her dress as well as behavior is changed in accordance with specific context. As mentioned above her dressing is traditional when she stays in the village, she dresses up as a "high class woman" when she goes out, especially when she meets her customers and counterparts. Her behavior towards people is also changed. She never touches on any "direct work" when there is a present of Chinese customers and counterparts. According to her, it should be maintained a differentiation between the entrepreneur and manual workers. The owner should not do the same work as her hired labors. If the owner also does the work of labor, her/his image will become less privileged by the strangers.

It can be concluded that the ways in which Hoa and other village women construct their identities in specific context have witnessed that they have never been victims of traditional discrimination of gender under the protection of male members. Instead, they are active in dealing with different roles based on so sophisticated social relations. In doing this, their identities are constructed as unfixed, multiple, flexible and floating.

5. Final Remarks

Beyond the conventional thinking of gendered discrimination of spatial mobility, this working paper convinces that the so-called factors constraining women's spatial mobility should be flexibly considered. As indicated by empirical data and information, several among home-based working women in Kim Thieu made decisions of their workplace due to their desire rather than their female roles. Many people among them used to work outside the village, but now they come back to work at home for one or other reason. Further, home-based female workers in the context of woodcarving industry cannot be seen as to be confined in the domestic sphere because at present most villagers including male and female are working side by side at their family factories rather than outside the village. There is a differentiation between men and women in terms of doing the domestic works such as food preparation, house cleaning and children taking care. However, the meanings of domestic works, particularly food preparation in Kim Thieu need to be contested. The reason is the fact that women prepare food not only to serve their family members, but also to feed their

permanent contract workers. In such case, cooking is become paid work rather than unpaid. Moreover, in the situation of labor scarcity, if women are not responsible for domestic works, they must hire someone to do as a replacement. Thus, doing domestic works by village women should be calculated as a kind of trade-off between saving for themselves and paying somebody.

The empirical data collected in the time of *Doi Moi* has also elucidated a significant change in the patterns of female spatial mobility in terms of duration, distance, means of transportation and occupation in comparison with previous time. While before women just engaged in small trade activities surrounding the village, at present their spatial mobility is much related to woodcarving trade and sale in the big cities and abroad. Their motivation of spatial mobility is inspired not only by coping strategy for survival, but also by prosperity of their family and by individual reasons such as expectations of modern lifestyle and freedom. However, there is existence of remarkable difference of patterns and motivations of spatial mobility between middle-to-low economic women and middle-to-high ones. Whereas the village women leave their family for the cities or abroad to do business, other women from agricultural predominant communities come to Kim Thieu to replace them doing low paid and unskilled, even drudgery works. Although there is a differentiation in terms of motive of migration, most contract female workers are struggling for their survival strategies rather than for prosperity.

Despite the differences of patterns and motives of spatial mobility between village women and those who work as contract workers, they have similarly experienced the diverse ways in which they negotiate for their movement. All case studies have demonstrated that nobody among mobile women have attempted to make money outside by directly resistance to traditional perception of female reproductive roles and female identities. In contrast, they try to rearrange gender division of labor intra-family by employing different types of share and help from other family members as well as from modern house facilities. All of them always move back and forth from the traditional reproductive and modern productive roles. With respect to spatial mobility, have not only negotiated with traditional thinking of local femininity, but these women also have to struggle to a number of unfamiliar social relations at their workplace. Instead of subordinating to such complicated social relations, women know how to employ them for their successful business. Through their success in

doing business, these mobile women have built their positive self-image and self-confidence which should be seen as a weapon to empower themselves.

Finally, the concept of female spatial mobility or female spatial entrapment needs to be redefined. While studies on female spatial mobility in Western countries have mostly convinced that women have shorter journeys-to-work than men because of difficulties in transportation and of their reproductive roles, this research did not look at means of transportation and reproductive roles as main constrained factors of women's spatial mobility. Additionally, whereas several studies on female migrants in the South have indicated the difficulties which are faced with by female workers in urban areas, the empirical information in this research did not show these conventional problems. This does not mean that this study did not pay attention to these problems but we have recognized that as active agents, women know how to deal with them in the context of "unfamiliarity".

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