

Le Corps professoral de  
Gembloux Agro-Bio Tech - Université de Liège vous prie  
de lui faire l'honneur d'assister à la défense publique de la dissertation originale que

**Monsieur NGO Trung Thanh,**

**Titulaire d'un diplôme de master *of rural development with specialisation in livelihoods  
and natural resource management in Vietnam,***

présentera en vue de l'obtention du grade et du diplôme de

**DOCTEUR EN SCIENCES AGRONOMIQUES ET INGENIERIE BIOLOGIQUE,**

le 28 mai 2020, à 10h00 précises, en visioconférence,

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Cette dissertation originale a pour titre :

« *Migrant workers in industrial zones and return migration: Case studies in Que Vo  
and Yen Phong industrial zones of Bac Ninh province and Van Thang commune of Nong  
Cong district, Thanh Hoa province, Vietnam* ».

**Le jury est composé comme suit :**

Président : Prof. J. BOGAERT, Professeur ordinaire,

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## Abstract

It is clear that the important role of labor migration in development reflected through the impacts of remittance currently exists in many countries around the world. The complex nature of migration that needs to be interpreted in a dynamic context and a changing society. Reviewing literature demonstrates the discourses of the motives of migration across many migration theories. Then, there are plenty of discussions of the motives of migration added from empirical research. However, there is still a lack of literature that requires discussion on why the domestic migrants leave their homes to work at places considered as exploitative and degrading, like industrial zones.

In addition, migration is understood as an in and out process. Attempts have been made to explain the motive of out-migration, but few ones focus on return migration. Furthermore, existing literature focuses more on international return migration than internal return migration and the theories of return migration are subject to various debates. Since 1975, after the reunion of Vietnam, the government enforced a policy to restructure the population which led to inter-province migration. Many studies have been conducted on migration ever since, but few focused on return migration.

This research survey 310 migrant workers in Que Vo and Yen Phong industrial zones of Bac Ninh province, and 68 returnees in Van Thang commune, Nong Cong district, Thanh Hoa province of Vietnam. Face to face interviews with two designed questionnaires have been applied to those samples. One is for migrant workers and the other is for returnees. Besides, some qualitative methods are also applied for supplementing the data collected by the questionnaires.

Through those principle methods, this study found that the motives of migrant workers are complex. Push and pull theory by itself is not enough to explain these motives. The addition of the new economic theory of migration labor has made the explanation of migration motives more complete. Also, the research illustrated that the factors pushing rural people outmigration are, firstly, the local shortage of non-agricultural jobs, causing migrant workers to find alternatives in Bac Ninh industrial zones. More importantly, there is a shortage of cash for daily consumption. This itself, agricultural production, a prominent feature of rural areas, cannot be solved. Interestingly, the economic status of the household before the migration is not considered clearly as a push factor. But, migration to industrial zones is the rural youths' way of life. Experiencing in these zones aspires those people due to a life different from the areas of origin, acted as a pull factor. Furthermore, migrant workers are all attracted by high labor demand that created easier access to employment in the industrial zones of Bac Ninh. This study also found that social network acts as both push and pull factor for immigrating to the industrial zones.

Furthermore, it revealed that migrant workers, a major labor force for industrial zones, now face challenges created by the unstable model of development. The sustainability of the development of industrial zones in Bac Ninh is threatened by the fact that these zones follow the footloose of their development model exposed in the 1990s. Additionally, this study found that migrant workers in industrial zones in Bac Ninh faced a trade-off between accepting a hard life and accumulating capitals as well as experiences for an expected better one afterward. Furthermore, the migration undertaken by migrant workers in industrial zones of Bac Ninh seems to be circular.

Regarding return migration, this study demonstrated that the motive to return not only results from potential failures related to the increased living costs of the future married life but also associates with children left behind at the home village with stayers. Returnees are all driven by a filial obligation to their parents, shaped by the norms or culture of the home community. Non-farm employment opportunities around home villages are more of a motive to return for single migrants. This study also found that women play an important role in agriculture development in Van Thang. This sector, is likely a buffer for the negative impacts of the return while the returnees seek better nonfarm employment around their home villages.