

whether these factors did influence the school system in any way. My findings suggest that it is the rapidly evolving socio-economic environment, including the labour market, and the state of the school system itself that made parents hesitate at the cross-roads of choice regarding their children's future, between education and work.⁴ And more often than not, they do in fact opt for a reluctant decision that urges their children to leave school earlier than planned in order to be able to join the labour force. I suspect that decisions concerning children's education which may at first sight seem to be individual actions, *actually* primarily stem from a wider context of social change. As a starting point, I shall attempt to outline the major trends in the behavior of dropouts at a national level. I will then focus on the local school of Luong Dien where my field research was conducted.

Given the limited scope of my research conducted at the village level, it is not my intention to provide answers to all questions related to the current state of education in general. However an understanding of educational developments in the rural areas would help to shed some new light on the phenomenon of large scale involvement of children in the work process after economic reforms of *Doi Moi* were implemented.

Dropouts⁵

While one may consider class repeat a rather normal occurrence in school life which may vary from year to year, the fact that substantial numbers unexpectedly leave school before finishing the required levels is a serious problem which deserves to be looked into. Available statistics on education indicate such a phenomenon was already noted in the nineteen eighties, when several economic reforms were introduced in the agricultural sector where collective production was replaced by the 'output contract system' (*che do khoan*).⁶ Increasing rate of dropouts occurred at all three levels of general education (primary, secondary and upper secondary schools) and reached at peak in the academic year of 1990-1991. These statistics particularly point out that the majority of dropouts were at the low secondary level, among pupils between the age of 12 to 16.

Looking at the enrolment statistics at the primary level (age group between 6 and 12), we may see an actual increase in school attendance, from 8.1 million in the school year of 1981-82 to 8.9 million in 1990-91. However, the increase of enrolment for this age group between 1981 and 1991 was only 1.1 percent per year while annual population growth was 1.4 percent during the same period. This means that dropout already occurs at the primary school.

As statistics indicated (moet 1994: 11-12), dropout rates were already high at the very first grade of primary school, the rates decrease somewhat at grades 2, 3 and 4 and climb up again at grade 5, the last grade of primary school. High

dropout at grade 1 can be attributed to the collapse of pre-school system (kindergarten and crèche) in many areas since de-collectivisation, where agricultural cooperations were no longer able to take care of these pre-schools, therefore depriving children of the necessary preparations to enter primary school.

Statistics also indicate the highest dropout rates occur at the secondary level as compared to the primary level. Between the school years of 1981-1982 and 1990-1991, enrolment at the secondary school decreases by 14.8 percent and at the high secondary school by 25.3 percent.⁷

Table 1 School dropout rate in Vietnam by levels and school years (in percentages)

<i>school years</i>	<i>primary</i>	<i>secondary</i>	<i>highsecondary</i>
1981-82	13.4	19.5	14.9
1982-83	10.0	19.1	11.7
1983-84	11.4	14.0	9.0
1984-85	9.4	11.8	7.8
1985-86	9.3	12.4	9.1
1986-87	9.0	13.5	11.5
1987-88	12.2	24.0	23.2
1988-89	14.1	29.5	21.0
1989-90	12.7	27.0	19.4
1990-91	N/A	21.3	12.0

Source MOET, *Nghien Cuu Giao Duc* 3.1994: 11-12.

The high dropout rates in recent years has changed the composition of school attendance within the general education system in which the number of secondary school pupils has dropped considerably. As reported by the Ministry of Education (moet 1994: 12), among 100 pupils entering primary school, only 30 would continue to the low secondary and just 6 to higher secondary level. Dropout rate varied considerably according to geographical areas. For instance, in the school year of 1989-1990, the dropout rate in Hanoi was 5.05 percent at the primary level and 12.96 percent at the secondary level while these rates were much higher in rural areas.

Although data on education during the nineteen nineties show an increase at a certain rate at primary and lower secondary levels, available statistics also indicate an unequal access to education for the poor children. According to Vietnam Living Standards Survey 1992-1993, the lowest literacy rate is in quintile 1 (poorest), increasing over quintiles and highest in quintile 5 (richest), (spc-gso 1994: 17). As indicated in table 3 below, the aggregate enrolment rates mark significant differences between income groups. This statistics tend to show that while the poorest group could manage to send a substantial proportion of their children to primary school (age group 6 to 10), only a few were able to make it to secondary levels and remarkably, non of them was at the tertiary institutions. It

is no doubt that costs to the family were the main reasons to explain why most poorer children fail to get beyond the primary school, which were required to pay official tuition fees under the 1990 educational law. The survey results also point out that while in quintile 1 (poorest), the average annual education expenditure per pupil was just 37.13 thousand *Dong*, the quintile 5 spent 314.62 thousand annually, which is more than 8 times higher (spc-gso 1994: 18).

Table 2 Differences in dropout rate by areas in Vietnam in the school year of 1989-1990 (in percentages)

<i>provinces</i>	<i>primary</i>	<i>secondary</i>	<i>high secondary</i>
whole country	12.78	27.00	19.45
Hanoi	5.05	12.96	8.09
Ho Chi Minh city	6.65	23.88	18.86
Nghe Tinh	12.15	24.09	16.58
Tay Ninh	21.47	38.73	37.50

Source MOET, *Nghien Cuu Giao Duc* 7.1992: 6.

Table 3 Enrolment rate by income quintile (in percentages)

<i>age group</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
from 6 to 10	66.90	77.57	81.49	84.96	84.77
from 11 -14	18.58	27.82	34.90	44.60	54.65
from 15 -17	2.22	3.74	7.54	14.52	25.57
from 18 -24	0.00	0.61	0.65	1.90	4.56

Source General Statistical Office, 6.1994, table 9.2: 18

Notes Income quintiles ranged from 1 (poorest) to 5 (richest).

According to Vietnamese standard, age group between 6 and 10 is expected to attend the primary school, ages between 11 and 14 are in low secondary school, ages between 15 and 18 are in upper secondary school and ages between 18 to 24 are in vocational training or university.

At the national level, educational statistics indicate a high dropout rate and a decrease in school enrolment, particularly at the secondary levels. This is also true in rural areas, for example in the district of Cam Binh where the Giao village is situated and where I conducted my research.

At the school of Luong Dien where this field research was conducted, available statistics point to a declining trend in school attendance (see table 4).

Table 4 Number of school enrolment in Cam Binh district by school years (net number)

<i>school years</i>	<i>total</i>	<i>primary</i>	<i>secondary</i>	<i>percent of sec. pupils</i>
1977-78	44 198	28 138	16 060	57.07
1981-82	39 673	26 281	13 392	50.09
1987-88	37 927	25 544	12 383	48.47
1990-91	38 743	28 477	10 266	36.05
changed as compared to 1977-78	decrease 12.3%	increase 1.2%	decrease 36.0%	decrease 21.0%

Source Annual Reports by the Department of Education, Cam Binh district archives.

Note Population of the age group between 5 and 14 in Cam Binh in 1979 and 1989 was as follows: In 1979: 45.250 (1979 Census, Cam Binh archives). In 1989: 1.246 (1989 Census, Table 1-3: 16, TCTK).

Table 5 shows the situation of school enrolment in Luong Dien commune between 1985 and 1994. During these nine years, primary school enrolment increased only by 1.05 percent while secondary school enrolment decreased by 31.5 percent. The decline of the primary pupils entering the secondary school and common dropouts at the last grade of the primary level and the secondary level in general should be carefully considered. It may imply that at their age, dropping out was mainly to take part in the work force.

Table 5 Number of school attendants at the school of Luong Dien commune, 1985-1991 (net number)

<i>school years</i>	<i>total</i>	<i>primary</i>	<i>secondary</i>	<i>percent of sec. pupils</i>
1985-86	1 614	1 122	492	43.8
1986-87	1 539	1 136	403	35.4
1987-88	1 572	1 141	431	37.7
1988-89	1 566	1 175	391	33.2
1989-90	1 527	1 217	310	25.4
1990-91	1 598	1 290	308	23.8
1991-92	1 587	1 302	282	21.6
1992-93	1 512	1 211	301	24.8
1993-94	1 525	1 188	337	28.3

Source Annual Reports by the Department of Education, Cam Binh district archives.

Note Population of age group between 5 and 14 in Luong Dien Commune in 1989 was 2.304 persons (The 1989 Census, Table 1-3: 457).

Additionally, statistics on school attendance in Luong Dien commune seem to indicate a decrease of girls in both school levels. Their low ratio vis-à-vis boys in school enrolment perhaps reflect not only a high girl dropout rate but also a high possibility of their involvement in work.

Table 6 Proportion of girl pupils at the school of Luong Dien (in percentages)

<i>school years</i>	<i>girl ratio</i>	<i>primary</i>	<i>secondary</i>
1985-86	55.3	56.0	53.8
1986-87	50.0	49.0	52.8
1987-88	54.4	53.4	57.0
1988-89	48.8	48.3	50.3
1989-90	47.2	48.3	42.5
1990-91	46.8	47.4	44.1
1991-92	45.8	47.0	40.7
1992-93	47.9	48.9	43.8
1993-94	48.0	48.3	46.8

Source Annual Reports by Department of Education, Cam Binh district archives.

Note Ratio male/female of age group between 5 and 14 in Luong Dien commune was 49 percent in 1989 (The 1989 Census, Table 1-3: 457).

Leaving school for good?

As mentioned earlier, the vagaries of the education situation in recent years lead to general remarks by adults such as decline in motivation and efforts among pupils or pupils have been spoiled by 'bad habits brought about by a market economy', etc. These are, however, rarely based on the opinions of the children themselves. In an attempt to understand the depressed state of education and the children's attitudes towards education, I have designed a simple questionnaire with 3 major questions in consulting school children:

- 1 Why do you go to school?
- 2 After attending classes, what do you do (based on activities during the past few days)?
- 3 To which level do you want to continue your schooling, how do you feel about your own life at present (happiness, sadness, hardship, etc.) and what do you wish for your future?

These are not a structured questionnaire but rather open questions which may help pupils to think and answer independently. I then asked pupils attending grade 5 up to grade 9 at the school of Luong Dien to answer these questions in the form of a short essay.⁸ 116 essays from this sample were collected and analysed. Surprisingly, children's opinions were not in line with those expressed by adults. I will try to quantify briefly the results of this survey in table 7.

Initial results show that pupils at this rural school were not averse to schooling, in fact, far from it. While there was no respondent who explicitly said he/she just wanted to finish primary school, 87 percent did state they wished to follow up to higher levels, and more than 54 percent stated they wanted to finish the high secondary school and 17 percent even expressed the wish to enter uni-

versities. These last rates were higher among the older children (63 percent and 33 percent). However, it is clear that more boys wanted to enter the universities than girls (25 percent as compared to 7 percent). Those who said 'don't know' (12 percent) further explained this to be a matter for their parents to decide on.

Table 7 Pupils' motivations and desired levels for schooling in Luong Dien, 1995 (in percentage)

<i>motivations of schooling</i>	<i>total</i>	<i>among which</i>			
		<i>boys</i>	<i>girls</i>	<i>11-13</i>	<i>14-16</i>
1 to avoid doing odd jobs	8.6	5.4	14.0	0.8	3.0
2 parents force to go to school	22.4	20.5	25.5	30.1	3.0
3 to enjoy being with friends	27.5	27.3	27.9	37.3	3.0
4 to escape from rural life	51.7	52.0	51.1	44.5	69.0
5 to enrich knowledge	81.8	82.1	81.4	78.3	90.9
6 to have a good future	87.9	90.4	83.7	84.3	97.0
<i>levels of schooling wanted</i>					
secondary	15.6	15.1	16.3	20.5	3.0
higher secondary	54.4	46.6	67.4	50.5	63.7
university	17.3	25.0	7.0	12.0	33.3
don't know	12.1	13.3	9.0	17.0	0.0

Source Sample survey conducted in Luong Dien, 1995.

Note Number of pupils who gave answers: 116 (73 boys and 43 girls), broken down as follows: pupils aged 11-13: 83 (48 boys and 35 girls) and pupils aged 14-16: 33 (25 boys and 8 girls).

Secondly, 'motivations for schooling' reflect pupils' general perception that education is a stepping stone to a better future (88 percent). The desire for education was more clearly expressed among pupils attending higher grades (97 percent).

Thirdly, there was a considerable number of the pupils (51 percent) who said that going to school is a means to escape from rural life. This rate was higher in the older age group (69 percent). This tends to reflect the dissatisfaction of older children with their present life.

Additionally, the survey points to that the great majority of pupils were already actively engaged in work (at home, on the farm and in non-farm activities elsewhere) after attending classes. However, it is worth noting that only about 26 percent of pupils wanted to spend their after-school time earning money while more than 61 percent wanted to use it to do home work.

From this survey it emerges that most school children realised they could not expect a bright future if they were to leave school early. This perception seems, however, to contradict the fact that only a small percentage of pupils did actually enrol in higher classes. During the 1978-1985 period, the number of children attending the last grade of the secondary school at the commune's school remained rather constant, ranging from 150 to 200. However, this number

dropped sharply during the 1990-1995 period, fluctuating between 15 and 35. What explanations the children did give about their dropping out? To get more insight in this issue, I shall now return to my very own case-study, to the children of the Giao village.

From a total of 155 children aged between 8 and 15 in the sample, 51 percent of them had left school to work. None of them finished low secondary school, except one boy still attending grade 8 at the school of Luong Dien. I noticed that most children who worked as part-time apprentices in local wood carving workshops had no time to do any homework, and they were often too late for school. Some of them stayed away for fear of failing their exams or being scolded by their teachers. During the year I stayed at the village, I interviewed 79 dropouts as to why they left school and how they felt about their decision later. The answers I received can be summarised as follows:

- 1 Parents asked them to stop schooling for good.
- 2 Parents could no longer afford tuition and other costs.
- 3 They had been badly influenced by friends.
- 4 Dislike of teachers.
- 5 Ill-treatment by teachers.
- 6 Lack of pleasure in school.
- 7 School attendance hindered by wood-carving apprenticeship.
- 8 Desire to earn money.
- 9 Wish to be independent from their parents.
- 10 Wish to help their parents in alleviating family's hardship.
- 11 Material problems as an obstacle to continue to study.

The above responses can be grouped into two sets of factors, which I shall call 'external' and 'internal'. The external factors, which have a direct bearing on the pupils' everyday life, include: (1) family, (2) school system and (3) friends. The internal factors basically consist of motivations and attitudes of the pupils themselves, based on their personal experiences and views on educational merits. These may partly play a role determining the propensity to drop out among individual pupils.

In the following sections of this chapter, I shall attempt to analyse how the external factors impact upon school dropping out. My fieldwork indicates that most dropouts did so reluctantly and felt regret afterwards, and only a few returned to school after a year or two. Most dropouts said they would like to come back to school again but they felt 'too old' vis-à-vis their classmates, adding that they had not been able to retain the little knowledge they had acquired. It is worth mentioning that for these young dropouts alternative forms of education were virtually non-existent. As a prelude to bring the light into next discussions, I would like to quote herewith a short account of one of my interviews with Tien, a dropout.

Question: At which level of schooling did you drop out?

Answer: Half way through grade 5.

Q: Why did you drop out?

A: Because of a Pioneer's scarf.

Q: How? Could you tell me your story?

A: One day I came to school without my Pioneer's scarf.⁹ My teacher did not allow me to enter the classroom. I couldn't remember where I lost the scarf. That day, I had visited my aunt in the neighbouring village before going to school. I must have lost it on my way to school. Next day, I came to school again without my red scarf. Miss Van, the teacher, decided to punish me by asking Hung, the class leader, to whip me in front of my classmates. She said I had done great harm to the reputation of our class in the school's competition for excellence. On those grounds she decided that without my Pioneer's scarf I was no longer allowed in school. I didn't dare to tell my mum about this, I didn't want to worry her. Next day I left home at schooltime but I did not go there. I was so fed up. Since then, I never went back.

Q: How did your mum react to your dropping out?

A: She was upset. She cried and told me that since I am her only son, I should go back to school, and that she would, with the help of my sisters, bear the costs for me to go on studying. But I refused and took up wood carving with my uncle instead.

Q: Is it your intention to make a living with wood carving?

A: I know that with a low level of education, there is not much of a future for me. My mum keeps repeating this, over and over again. Some friends of mine were forced by their parents to return to school. I still regret having dropped out. But I am so fed up with school. Besides my family is so poor. If I should go on to a higher school level, I would become such a heavy burden for my mum and sisters. You see, a lot of people with university degrees have returned to the village by now and are presently working as wood carvers. They don't even have enough money to *buy* themselves a job (?).¹⁰

At the cross-roads of choice

By mentioning 'choice', I do not intend to emphasise individual motivations of pupils and their parents concerning the question of 'work or education', which are common topics of daily conversations among Giao villagers. It am, however, interested in gaining some insight into what could be on these parents' minds, when they ponder about their children's education and their future; especially against the background of their own experiences when they themselves were still young boys and village-girls. Answering some of these questions may

enable us to understand the prevalent popular attitudes towards education in the context of today.

A sense of the past

There has been little doubt about the pivotal role of education in traditional Vietnamese society. For many centuries, together with the consolidation of Confucianism as a State doctrine, the Vietnamese educational system expanded from the central level down to the grass roots. That examinations were held at regular intervals to select meritorious candidates among the masses to serve the country's administration at various levels was a testimony to the importance the State in feudal times attached to education. The aim of this educational system was to propagate Confucian ethics and, most importantly, to recruit qualified civil servants, generally called 'mandarins' in former times, for the State's administration (Dao Duy Anh 1937: 23-35; Vu Ngoc Khanh 1985: 88-89; Nguyen Dang Tien 1993: 14-16). Those with a high level of knowledge who nevertheless did not succeed in passing the examinations would eventually end up as village teachers who had the task to teach children 'the way of a real man' (*cach lam nguoi*). The old values of education were still widespread within rural communities, as shown by the following popular saying:

You had better give your child some books.
Rather than bequeath him a bag of gold.

Although these village schools were 'not open for everyone and all pupils could certainly not aspire to a mandarin career, enabling their children to 'scrape up a little knowledge' has been a dear wish for many Vietnamese parents throughout the ages.

Under the colonial regime, the state of education did not change much. During the nineteen thirties, the district of Cam Giang which included Giao village, had just one district school, 10 canton schools and 14 village schools with an enrolment of about 1000 pupils. Giao village had one school – called 'village teacher's school', *truong huong su* – with 17 pupils (Ngo Vi Lien 1931: 16-17).¹¹

Another popular form of basic education at village level was holding classes at home, *lop hoc tai gia* (tutorials at home). Well-to-do families used to invite a teacher to stay at their houses in order to let them teach their children basic classical Chinese. The anti-illiteracy campaign launched by the revolutionary government shortly after 1945 opened new opportunities for educational developments and despite two wars (1946-1954 and 1965-1972), the number of children attending school in Cam Binh increased rapidly, up to 90 percent of the age group between 8 and 14 in 1979 (t c t k 1981: 176-177). As many older villager still remember now, they felt a great joy going to school, even though classes were conducted underground, in shelters or at the village pagoda. This craving for

learning seems to have left a strong imprint on the minds of the Vietnamese, since to this day the most popular views regarding education and society heard in public are:

- 1 Educated people enjoy high esteem in society.
- 2 A good education and a high diploma are the windows to important jobs in the State administration.
- 3 Intellectual work is the most important occupation in comparison with other types of work.

These attitudes have been condemned by modern educationalists as obsolete reflections of 'feudal' ways of thinking:

Our pupils, as well as many others in our society, have been obsessed with the idea that once they start school, they should go on and on to the highest levels of the school system. Their only goal is to get a position in the State administration: to become a mandarin in the feudal period, a high civil servant under the colonial regime and in our times, a cadre. Failing this, they would be regarded worthless persons, to be looked down by fellow villagers and society (Former Vice Minister of Education Nguyen Khanh Toan 1995: 92).

The fact remains that going to school in order to create the opportunity to enter the 'state affairs' – meaning getting a civil service job – has been on the minds of most Vietnamese for centuries. In Giao village, I often heard the comparison between schooling under the 'subsidy system' and today's education. Villagers remembered young people in their village who had higher education were highly respected and often ended up with good jobs as State cadres. Their lives and their children's future were thus secured. 'Nowadays you'll have to bear all the costs to send a kid to school, and there isn't even a guarantee of a job after school'. A highly respected villager explained to me:

If you know that your children have a chance to become a cadre, to escape from hard, rural life, you will do all you can to send them to school. Otherwise, why should you go through all the troubles? (interview with Vu Xuan Huan, 74 year old).

The risk of education

Juggling between the pros and cons of schooling was not a real problem under the subsidised economic system. Determined to train 'new people' for socialism, the State took full charge in providing education facilities for the masses. In rural areas, the agricultural cooperatives were responsible for the local school system: kindergarten, crèche, primary and secondary schools.¹² Education during this period was regarded as a part of social welfare and a showpiece of

socialism. Schooling was free of charge and no one had to worry about the costs of education. Graduates were taken in by the state-run sectors where not only jobs were given to them but also the respect that went with these jobs.

The change from a subsidised education system to a (costly) non-subsidised education system forced the peasants to rethink their children's schooling. And as it often occurs, the pressure of a hard existence generally made them opt for a 'short-run benefit' course instead of the 'long-term investment' in higher education for their children. As a villager confidentially told me:

I have two sons, both attending school. That costs me at least 50 thousand *Dong* each month for tuition, books and so on. Apart from these, I have to feed them, buy them medicine when they're sick, give them pocket money. If I am to continue to invest in their higher education till the age of 17 or 18 year, the costs will run into millions of *Dong*. If only I knew my investment would bear fruits, I wouldn't complain. But this is not evident at all. If they manage to get into university, I'll have to feed them for another 4 or 5 year, something my wife and myself cannot afford. And then there's no guarantee of a job. That'll be a disaster. Now, suppose my two sons stop school at the age of 11 or 12 and take up wood carving at a workshop in the village. During one or two years of training, they won't cost me a cent. Instead they can earn enough for themselves. And if they're good at their jobs, they may bring an extra income to the family, say half a million *Dong* per month. When they get to the age, say, of 17 or 18, they can have their own career as carvers. I cannot take further risks in keeping them longer at school (interviews with Vu D.T., age 45, in May 1995).

Alternative options

Under the collective regime, peasants had little choice but to work on the cooperative farm. Except for a few non-farming activities (handicrafts and services) organised by the cooperative, labour was mainly utilised in the agricultural sector. Only a small proportion of the work force was employed in the state-run sectors. For children, going to school was the natural thing to do. The transformation after the economic reforms has obviously brought about many changes. While farming still remains the major activity, other non-farm activities such as small scale industries and family handicrafts, created new sources of income for rural families.¹³ Labour force has been channelled more and more into non-farm activities, facilitated by the fact that costs for training are anything but crucial because existing cottage industries are merely being revived. The new trainees can thus be directly involved in the production process. High wages offered in this branch of activities function as a magnet attracting more and more labour. The earnings of a professional carver are considerably higher

than the fixed wages of a university teacher, a scientific researcher, or a medical doctor employed by the State. For instance, the monthly wage of a wood carver ranges from 400 thousand to one million *Dong* compared to merely 200 thousand *Dong*, and sometimes even less, for new university graduates in the state-run sector.

Together with changes in the local labour market, public attitude towards materialistic values has dramatically changed. Before the so-called 'market economy' was introduced, children were kept away from earning money because money was considered as something demeaning in the context of Vietnamese beliefs and values. This attitude has now been completely switched around according to the following popular phrase: 'to avoid being demeaned, one needs money!' (Hanh Nhu 1992: 6). Making money, something of a taboo under the old collective regime, had now become totally respectable. This was one of the key factors in parents' decision to cut short their children's education and to send them to work.

Two other important factors influenced the parents' attitude regarding the schooling of their children: the limited access to middle and higher education and the high rate of unemployment among university graduates. In the school year of 1994-1995, there were 230,000 pupils applying for higher secondary school in Hai Hung province but the school system could admit only 140,000 (about 60 percent). Meanwhile, access to university entrance was even more stringent. On a national level, some 100 universities and colleges could only admit between 5 to 10 percent of the applicants every year (Tran Hong Quan 1995, see also Marr 1988). Moreover, taking entrance examination for universities and colleges has become a costly experience for most students. Since the subsidy system was abandoned, all examinations – which used to take place in the provincial towns – were to be held at the universities in the big cities. Students were expected to pay about one million *Dong* for these examinations, which generally lasted three days.

Despite rather low wages, unemployment among university graduates has been rising at an alarming rate, from 10.7 percent in 1988, 20.3 percent in 1990 and climbing up to 41.7 percent in 1992 (Pham Tat Dong 1995: 99). This reality is realised by many young people in rural areas, as one youngster in Giao village told me:

After dropping out, I often missed my former school, friends and teachers. It took me several months to get them out of my mind. I deeply regret to have quit. But I know that if I continued to study, I would be unemployed, like my brother who after his graduation from the university, returned to village to work as a carver. There is no difference between a well-educated man and a boy with little education. This is a consolation for me with what I'm doing now (interviews with Quyen, 16 years of age).

It is this harshness of life that has given rise to a saying often cited by the village children in defending their materialistic pursuits: *Van hay chu tot khong bang thang dot lam tien* (a well educated man is worth less than an illiterate with a lot of money).

Sharing a community life

While researching the state of education in Giao village, I observed that dropping out occurred like a kind of chain reaction. From discussions I held with a number of parents and children, it became clear that popular opinion in and around the village played an important role when it came to decide whether or not continuing to go to school. Popular opinion – or group thinking – seems to be particularly important in Giao village where everybody seems to be interconnected through a bulk of complex relationships. I was able to come to such an insight only after I had participated in a number of meetings, visits, meals and feasts held in private and public places, among the close villagers with whom confidence could be shared. As a rule, before any event, the villagers always had their comments and judgements ready. Opinions based on their own thinking they eagerly needed to share with their fellow villagers. I noticed that, among many other topics of village life, children's education and their earning activities often appeared as a typical subject of idle conversations. Although these types of opinions were never addressed officially to anyone, they functioned like a 'network of understanding and practice' within the village (Scott 1985: 300). This aspect of village life regarding education of the children, will be further looked into in the following two cases.

Case 1

The Vu is a respectable family in Giao village. Mr Vu is a veteran who served in the army for more than 15 years. He now has returned to the village and works as a farmer. Vu's wife is a village teacher. They have 4 children, all attending school. He told me that he did not want his children to leave school so early as others did, so he sent his eldest daughter to a secondary school in the town of Hai Duong, some 20 kms away from Giao. The reason he gave for this was 'to get her away from the bad influence of the village dropouts so that she would be able to concentrate fully on her study'. His retirement pension could barely cover her study costs. In May 1995, he sold one ton of paddy – a year's earnings from hard work on the farm – to enable his daughter to go to Hanoi to take the university entrance examinations. After two months, he received the bad news: his daughter had failed the exams!

A girl failing at an university entrance examination, is considered quite normal in the city. But in a village like Giao, such a failure gives rise to much discussion and is definitely a topic for gossip. Some people commented that Mr Vu

did not know what he was doing. Why didn't he marry her off to some village boy, like most of the other village girls were married off? Might he be feeling superior to his fellow villagers in sending his daughter to Hanoi? Others speculated his daughter might no longer have been suitable for the village boys (meaning she was no longer a virgin), so sending her to the big city was his only alternative! But 'with such a small amount of money (just one ton of paddy), how could he be expected to buy a place for his daughter in Hanoi?' Some villagers even came to me (I was known as a teacher from Hanoi university) and asked whether one could buy a place at the university and how much would this be costing!

Such gossips were quite rampant among the villagers. Mr Vu was a bit depressed about these stories, needless to say. He told me he had no ambition to turn his daughter into a 'lady', just that he wanted his daughter to get on in life in a decent manner. Now he didn't want to attend meetings and feasts and would even avoid friends and relatives, because he was afraid that people would harass him about what happened about his daughter again. There was nowhere for him to hide. But he still insisted that he would do everything he could for his children's education.

Case 2

Mr Van and his wife had been poor farmers in Giao village. From his parents they inherited a small cottage on a barren piece of land in the middle of the village. With 8 children to feed, their life was really hard. Because he could not afford to pay for their education, he decided to send his three sons to a wood workshop in the village when they were quite young. After a few years of training, the three sons followed some of the villagers to Ho Chi Minh city to look for job. With a bit of luck, two of them landed in a workshop financed with foreign money. Every month each son could send home about 600 thousand *Dong*. After 2 years, Mr Van was able to build a big house on his own land. He was able to purchase expensive consumer goods such as an electric fan, a cassette recorder etc. and was even able to throw big house-warming party. His sons told friends that within a year they were going to buy a new Honda motorbike.

That a poor man like Mr Van was suddenly able to build a new big house went like a shock wave around the village. Mothers took up Mr Van's example to tell their children: 'Just look at your neighbour's kids. They're about your age and they already earn enough money to build a house for their parents. What have you done for us then, in return for all the sacrifices we made in bringing you up?'

Adults in the village now started telling that Mr Van's sons had golden hands, they were the 'darlings of their Japanese employers', and that Mr Van owed his luck to the blessings of his ancestors. Meanwhile village kids began to wonder: 'If they could make a lot of money, why not us?' So many children

began to leave school and tried their luck in Ho Chi Minh city, though none of them achieved their dream: helping their parents to build a new house.

An education of obedience

In this section, I shall attempt to point out the vagaries of the current state of education in rural Vietnam. While rapid socio-economic change have forced the peasants to re-arrange their life strategies, the educational system has proved to be 'dry and rigid' in its contents as well as in teaching methods, which in turn has had a deleterious effect on both the parents and the pupils. To support this line of argument, I will focus on the school of Luong Dien. I have given special attention given to: (1) the material conditions of the school, (2) the way the curriculum is integrated in the school program and (3) the current teaching methods.

The school

From a historical perspective, we can state that in a general way in Luong Dien commune the achievements in the domain of education have been quite impressive. In 1959, a first primary school with 15 teachers was officially established in the commune. In the first school year, there were 209 pupils, attending grades 1 up to 4 (records of the Vietnamese Communist Party of Luong Dien, dbI d 1993: 83). Classes were mainly conducted on the premises of the village pagoda and commune house. Until 1963, there were only 9 modest classrooms built with contributions from the local population.¹⁴ In the school year of 1965-1966, a low secondary school was set up with a teaching staff of 5. However, shortly after this, classes had to be held at the pagoda and the communal house again in order to avoid American bombs. It was only in the school year of 1973-74 that the staff and the pupils were to return to their original premises. By then the old school had become a semi-ruin and was in dire need of reconstruction. Despite all this Luong Dien school continued to grow and was even awarded with the honorific title of 'merit of socialist labour' for its notorious success (Dang Bo Luong Dien 1993: 116).

At present, the school of Luong Dien has been rebuilt and greatly enlarged. Apart from a few classrooms within villages, it now boasts 2 two-storied buildings with 12 classrooms and 3 brick houses with 6 classrooms.¹⁵ It takes the children about 20 minutes to walk from Giao village to the school located in the middle of the commune.¹⁶ In the village itself there are some classes for young children at the first grade (6 or 7 years old). For those attending higher secondary school, which now falls under the provincial administration, they have to travel to the district township, 12 km away from Giao village.

The Luong Dien school becomes particularly isolated from the villages during the rainy season, because it stands in the middle of nowhere surrounded by vast rice fields, and often gives an impression of being some odd island. Some teachers compared their school with 'Siberia' because it does take some courage to venture out to the school on rainy days.

According to school headmaster, Luong Dien has, during the many years of the existence of the school, never had enough space for all its pupils. In the school year of 1994-1995, there were 36 classes of the primary level (from grade 1 to grade 5) but only 30 classrooms were available. There were 13 classes at the secondary level but for the pupils attending them the school had only 12 classrooms. Because of this, 6 classes at the primary level had to be held on three shifts while one class at the secondary level was conducted in the cramped space under the staircase. Though the school was newly built, many of its windows had already been broken or had disappeared altogether, so that pupils often had to suffer from a cold draught during the winter. Most classrooms lack proper desks and benches. Sometimes pupils had to sit on the floor during their classes.

Most often the necessary number of teachers for both levels (primary and secondary) was not adequately met, according to standard regulation that is. In fact, the primary level lacked five teachers while the secondary level is in need of 8 more teachers.¹⁷ Because of this shortage, teachers of Luong Dien school often had to teach 39 hours per week instead of 20 hours as regulated by the Ministry of Education. Some teachers of natural sciences had to take over social science subjects which obviously are not their speciality.

Just 9 years ago, this school had a good library where teachers and pupils could come and read books and newspapers. Poor pupils could even borrow textbooks from this library. It no longer exists today. As the school headmaster explained to me, budget for the library had been cut off while members of its staff were asked to look out for other jobs. And since the contents of text books changed so often together with educational reforms, pupils were advised to buy new books instead of borrowing old ones. Teaching equipments were rarely used. Teachers of physics, chemistry, geography and technology called their teaching method '*day chay*', which means it is based on pure theory.¹⁸ Apart from the shortage of teaching equipment, the general standard of Luong Dien school is considered to be better than average compared to other similar schools in the region.¹⁹

Curriculum

According to a directive issued by the Ministry of Education, the number of compulsory subjects and extra-curricular activities at the primary level are 12 and 19 at the secondary level (Pham Minh Hac 1992: 62-66). In reality, the teaching program at Luong Dien school was solely concentrated on the core

subjects while neglecting other activities due to shortage of teachers. Besides this standard curriculum, much flexibility is allowed to suit the local situation. Subjects such as agricultural techniques, physical education/hygiene and foreign languages were taught in a rudimentary manner while others were mostly overlooked.²⁰ Among the compulsory subjects, Vietnamese and mathematics are highly rated because they are major examination topics.

The number of instruction hours at school regulated by the Ministry of Education and Training is 32 hours per week for primary level and 38 hours per week for secondary level. In reality, primary pupils in Luong Dien spent an average of 16 hours per week at school while secondary pupils spent an average of 20 hours per week.²¹ Despite the Ministry of Education and Training regulation that Thursday is free, the pupils of Luong Dien school were required to attend extra classes on Thursdays (*hoc them*) and they had to pay 8000 *Dong* extra per month for this.

Table 8 Compulsory subjects and their implementation in Luong Dien school (instruction hours per week)

vietnamese	10	2
literature	-	2
natural and social sciences	2	-
history	-	2
geography	1	2
moral education	1	2
mathematics	5	4
physics	-	2
chemistry	-	1
biology	-	3
foreign language(s)*	-	3
labour practice	2	2
physical exercise/military training	2	2
technology	-	2
arts (drawing, music, handicrafts)*	2	-
socialisation*	1	1
salute the national flag	1	1
entertainment*	3	3
topic activities*	1	2
productive labour*	2	3
total hours of instruction/week:	32	38

Note Those subjects with asterisk (*) were not really taught at Luong Dien School.

Generally speaking, apart from doing practical chores such as gardening and cleaning their own classrooms, etc. children spend the great part of their school

hours studying theory. With an average of just 3 hours of lessons per school day, they have to spend much more time, should they really want to learn each subject properly. A large part of study program is geared towards home-work but my observation indicated that most pupils had not enough time to do this.

The average school day for a pupil, apart from attending normal hours listening to the teacher's instruction, includes the following activities: (1) Lining up for checking personal hygiene, proper clothing and absentees, (2) Cross-check among pupils on homework (before teachers begin with new lessons), (3) Collective singing before and between classes, (4) Physical exercise in-between classes.²²

At both levels, primary and secondary that is, the school organised the so-called '*lop chon*' (chosen classes) in which gifted pupils were selected to follow special classes taught by good teachers. The purpose of these chosen classes is to train excellent pupils for competitive examinations at district, provincial and national levels. A few gifted pupils on special subjects were asked to attend specialised schools (*truong chuyen*) organised by the district where intensive programs on literature, mathematics or sciences were designed for them.

Besides their normal teaching duty, some teachers also organised additional tutorials (*lop day them*) to earn extra money. Previously, such extra teaching often took place during the summer holidays to help those pupils who fell behind in their regular school period. Recently, additional tutorials (mainly in Vietnamese and mathematics) were privately given by the teachers themselves and these prove to be quite popular. These extra classes were geared towards helping pupils to pass qualifying exams at different levels. Pupils who attended these tutorials are expected to pay extra fees directly to the teachers. Only a limited number of pupils followed such tutorials which were arranged voluntarily by teachers and parents who could afford these. The pupils who did not attend these additional tutorials told me they felt this non-attendance as a handicap vis à vis classmates who were more fortunate in that respect.²³

Some aspects of school life

Pupils and teachers themselves often mentioned their school life as something 'dry and rigid'. To understand aspects of school life, a preliminary study of the teaching and studying were based on observations from Luong Dien school with respect to (1) organisation of the class, (2) method of teaching and (3) relationships between teachers and pupils.

At this school, the average size of a class was 35 pupils. Each class was run by a teacher called *giao vien chu nhiem* (teacher in charge). The teacher was responsible for all educational activities of his/her class, ranging from monitoring the academic progress to moral behaviour of individual pupils. The teacher also had to maintain close contact with the parents, and was responsible for coordinating a wide range of activities of a collective nature.

The teacher in charge would appoint a class leader (some time elected by the pupils themselves) who was to assist him/her in running the daily activities of the class. The class was further divided into several groups, placed under the supervision of group leaders whose tasks were to make sure members would do their homework and carry out assigned duties in a proper manner. Competition among the groups was encouraged to achieve satisfactory results. The Communist Youth League and the Pioneer Association were the important organisations within the school system whose membership was open only to 'good' pupils. Pupils were required to pay full attention to their teacher during class hours. Instruction came directly from textbooks, prepared in the form of a teaching plan (*giao an*). Pupils copied down carefully what the teacher noted on the blackboard. Because many pupils did not have every textbook required, they were advised to learn by rote what they noted down during the classes. At the end of a class, the teacher assigned homework to be prepared for the next class. During the classes there was hardly any open discussion between teachers and pupils. Teachers rarely attempted to stimulate curiosity or search for creative ideas among pupils who for the most part remained passive.

During a normal school year, pupils had to take a series of tests and sit at two qualifying examinations during Autumn and Spring terms in order to move up to a higher class. Academic performance alone was not the sole criteria because the final saying rested with the teacher in judging the pupils' 'moral character'. Although physical punishment has been officially banned but in practice, many forms of punishment still existed, ranging from corvee labour, beating, enforced isolation or exposure to the sun for long duration. At the school as well as at home, the pupils were taught to show respect to their teachers. Teachers often display an aloofness towards their pupils who in turn behaved in a passive and dependent manner. At a societal level, teachers have always been the subject of veneration as emphasised by the motto *Tien Hoc Le, Hau Hoc Van*, which means that 'learn the rites first, then acquire knowledge'.²⁴

Earlier, I have pointed out a discrepancy between the general desire of pupils and their parents to reach a high level of education and the increasing rate of dropouts. This reflects a contradiction between the individual wishes and the public demands for education. I will further argue that this contradiction is a consequence of changing socio-economic environment in the context of rigid type of public education that seems inadequate to meet the demands of individuals and society at large.

Looking back at the educational reforms during the past several decades, we may see that the most sweeping change had to do with the contents of the curriculum. The first reform in 1950 paved the way to the establishment of a socialist oriented education. The 1956 reforms particularly emphasised the instruction of socialist ideology and morality. It was regarded as the cornerstone of the whole educational system (Nguyen Khanh Toan 1995: 158), accompanied by the issue

of new textbooks to meet this demand. Shortly after reunification, in 1978 the third educational reforms were launched on a larger scale in which new curricula and new textbooks were introduced. The number of years of general education was raised from 10 to 12 years (moet 1993: 11; Pham Minh Hac 1992: 24-32).

Although no official assessments were made on the third renovated curricula, the programmes are really too heavy, according to many observers, for the pupils of the primary and secondary classes. This is particularly true for rural pupils who normally have to work after school hours and have very little time for doing homework. The new textbooks, however, have introduced more complex subjects which often are beyond most pupils' comprehension. For instance, in mathematics the operation of decimal fraction and equation (of the first degree), subjects previously taught at the secondary level, now have been introduced to primary pupils (grade 5). Solid geometric, a rather abstract concept, is a compulsory subject for lower secondary pupils. Furthermore, a number of complex and abstract socio-political topics such as history of communist party, marxist-leninist ideology are taught at primary and lower secondary levels. These highly complex teaching programs are not only unsuited to young pupils but also cause great difficulties to the teachers themselves. Since many of them lack adequate knowledge of these subjects and have to be retrained to meet demands of the new programs. It is estimated that in the whole country, 60 percent of teachers did not meet the required level (Nguyen Tri 1994: 11).

Why did the education reforms emphasise on the contents rather than on teaching and learning methods? To understand this, a further analysis on the linkages between traditional education and today political system would yield more insight. I believe the contents of education have been emphasised because of the ideal pursuit towards socialism. This is a deliberate attempt of the State to propagate socialist ideals, norms, values, attitudes and skills through public education in order to create a generation of 'new people' who are expected to serve the socialist revolutionary cause. Because of this, Vietnamese children have for many years felt that they were in fact merely going to school to please and serve the State, not for themselves, as expressed in the following statement:

For whom do you study? You study to serve the fatherland, to serve your people, to make your country powerful and your people wealthy. This means that you have to study in order to fulfil your obligation to your country (Ho Chi Minh 1990: 122).

Such a guiding light is repeatedly affirmed in all official documents with regard to education. Recently, this platform of education is particularly re-emphasised by the Resolution no. 2 of the cpv:

Education has to hold on the socialist oriented targets in its *contents and methods of training (emphasised by this author)*. ... The principal tasks and goals of

education are to be aimed at training the people who deeply attach to the ideal of national independence and socialism (cpv 1997: 28-29).

Actually, the idea that going to school to serve the fatherland had a strong impact on the education movement in early years after independence and during the war against the Americans. The situation has been changing. If 'in the past, going to school was something done with a heroic sense, now it is rather a pursuit of individual interests' (Minister of Education Tran Hong Quan 1995: 47). This constitutes perhaps the most striking change in the minds of the people. It is the Minister of Education himself who found 'problem' in putting collective interests ahead the individual demands in the field of education, as he said: 'The biggest error of our education during the past years was that the individual roles were not seriously considered' (Tran Hong Quan 1995: 95).

In a study on education in the Third World, Gould suggests a linkage between private and public demands for schooling: 'Did the "chicken" of private demand come before the "egg" of public demand, or was it created by public demand?' (Gould 1993: 13). However, we may notice that these two demands might not always come together. This is particularly true of countries undergoing a transition from the centrally planned economy to a market oriented system (Carnoy & Samof 1990).

Another problem of public education that deserves scrutiny is the teaching method. As pointed out earlier, there was no effort from the teachers' part to stimulate creative thinking among pupils. Teaching was mainly a solo performance by teachers, leaving little space for two way communication or feedback. This is not something unique that occurred at Luong Dien school alone, but rather a common feature of the entire education system, as educationalist Pham Minh Hac aptly puts it:

Teaching methodology is the most conservative aspect of our educational system. It does not change in a positive way but still remains the same: the teacher reads and pupils take notes, heavy on learning by rote and light on thinking. Pupils learn in a very passive way (Pham Minh Hac 1992: 31).

This is again confirmed by the Minister of Education Tran Hong Quan:

We are still using the methods of the past decades, even of a half century ago (1995: 50).

There was no room for allowing initiatives and creativity among pupils and students which are vital for their future development and personal growth (1995: 94).

Despite its obvious shortcomings, this solo teaching approach is still commonplace at all levels of the educational system. It is deeply rooted in the conservative

pedagogical methods and is difficult to change, all the more so in the light of the recent emphasis on 'learn rites first' (*tiên học lễ*) within the school system. It is, in my opinion, a reflection of the traditional education that preaches obedience, and inherited from a patriarchal culture still prevailing within the society.

Shifting the burden

Commenting on the current education crisis, Tran Bach Dang, a well-known social activist, writes:

One cannot attribute the deterioration of the education system solely to economic difficulties. Although this might be one of the reasons, it surely is not the crucial factor. The underlying cause is the attitude that looks down at education as something 'parasitic', in such a way that its existence depends largely on the government's 'largesse' (Tran Bach Dang 1992: 13-14).

In line with this view, I will consider the shifting of educational expenditures since economic reforms to understand how this change has had an impact on education in rural areas. More particularly researched: (1) The teachers' salary; (2) The financial budget of the school; and (3) Expenditures on the education of the children of the peasant households.

*'The teacher is a peasant whose teaching is a second job'*²⁵

This statement sounds like a humorous story, but it is quite true for the teachers of Luong Dien school. Among its 52 teachers, about 30 percent hold a university or college degree and more than half have experienced 15 years or more in teaching. Most of them were trained and grew up during the years of the subsidy system. They had at one time cherished the ideal of bringing knowledge to the peasants' children. However, today they all faced the practical problem of how to survive while going on with teaching. Their monthly salaries vary from 120 thousand to 360 thousand *Dong*, depending on training level and teaching experience. Those teachers who were assigned to teach additional classes had a supplementary income of about one hundred thousand *Dong* per month. With an average salary of 250 thousand *Dong* monthly, they had to cover all expenses for their daily needs, 70 percent of them were married and had one or more children to feed. Incomes of this kind could only cover just one third of their daily necessities, although there was a recent rise in teachers' salaries.²⁶ Worse yet, during the nineteen eighties teachers' pay was often late.²⁷ Since the end of the subsidy system, housing facilities for those coming from outside Luong Dien were no longer available. Thus a part of their meagre salary had to be set aside for transportation costs.²⁸

In order to make ends meet, some of the teachers of Luong Dien had to look for extra jobs. For instance, among the 16 teachers at the local secondary school, 2 worked as wood carvers, 3 engaged in petty trading while 3 organised private tutorials at home. Almost all teachers were involved in farming and raising live-stock to supplement their incomes.²⁹ A few teachers had to quit their teaching career for other jobs. Those still engaged in teaching often mused about the popular notion about their 'noble profession', as the deputy headmaster of Luong Dien school told me:

None of us teachers have ever entertained the idea that one could become wealthy by teaching. But teachers often expect to be held in high esteem by society for their knowledge, dedication and character. But this is no longer true in the present condition. I have worked in this school for 16 years but I may quit next year. The low salary is not a problem for me. I can survive as long as my family can support me and thus go on teaching. I love the children and my job but I can't accept this insult to our teaching profession (interview with Vu Son in December 1995).³⁰

Teachers' salaries have become a controversial topic for debate in recent years. Yet, it seems the problem cannot be easily resolved by the government. With some 800 thousand teachers at all levels, their payroll takes up more than 60 percent of total government budget for the administrative and non-productive sectors (Vice Prime Minister Nguyen Khanh 1994: 4). There has been talk of slimming down the teaching staff to reduce the budget burden.³¹ While public statements call for an enhancement of education as 'the primary national goal', what actually takes place at the grass roots shows the huge gap between reality and lofty rhetoric.

The school – 'an adoptee of local government'

The head master of Luong Dien school often used this metaphor to talk about the lamentable financial state of his school. It is true that for many years the central government could afford to pay teachers' salary. But the huge education network had become such a burden for the State and was now passed on to local government.³²

According to the present administration authority, the commune is now responsible for covering the basic facilities of the school system (crèche, kindergarten, primary and secondary school), such things as building and repairing classrooms, supplying desks, benches, blackboards and tables, etc. During the period of the collective regime, material facilities were supported by the cooperative. Decollectivisation took away from the school an important material source. Instead, the central government today allows the local authority to set up an educational budget in which the main source is from the people's

contribution. The government is only responsible for paying the teacher's salary.

The educational budget of Luong Dien commune has been set up on the basis of three main sources:

1 Contribution by local people: The contribution level is, however, not certain. It depends on the situation of the commune each year. In 1995, the rate of contribution to education budget was equivalent to 4 kg of paddy per person. With a total population of 8.962 persons who obligated to pay, the total amount to be collected was 35.848 kg of paddy.³³

2 Financial support by the district or province. This source is supplied in drops in order to encourage school material improvement. For instance, communes will be supported an amount equivalent to 15 percent of total expenditures for each new school/classroom to be built.³⁴

3 30 percent of total collected tuition are to be transferred to the commune educational budget. This source of tuition fees provides an amount of 4 or 5 million *Dong* every year.

Although the contribution to education budget was a great effort of the local people, the use of this budget was not under the control of the school but depends on the 'kindness' of the local leadership. As reported by the school headmaster, between 1992 and 1996, the commune of Luong Dien had spent a total amount of 50 million *Dong* for building a teacher's meeting room and providing some wooden furniture. Despite of this, all expenditures for office equipment (blackboard chalks, note books, pens and so on), which were previously supplied by the district educational services now fell on the teachers themselves.

The only financial source the school could have was 30 percent of total collected tuition, which was allowed to keep for its own activities. This amount, about 4 million *Dong* every year, as reported by the school headmaster, was just enough to cover the teachers' refreshment. In such a financial condition, other activities of school have no way but expect from more additional contribution of the pupils.

Education no longer as a form of 'social welfare'

Officially, education in Vietnam was free of charge until 1988 although since the early nineteen eighties extra contributions were already required. In December 1988, the National Assembly decided that pupils were to pay a part of tuition. This decision was made official by the Directive no. 44/hdbt (4.1989) of the Council of Ministers, according to which pupils of grades 1, 2 and 3 at primary level were still allowed free schooling but those of higher grades had to pay a fee. The minimum fee is equivalent to 1 kilogram of rice per month for pupils of grades 4 and 5 (primary level), 2 kilograms for lower secondary level and 3 kilo-

grams for higher secondary level. According to the Minister of Education, 'the average tuition of one us dollar per month is considered the cheapest in the world' (Tran Hong Quan 1995: 62). Cheap as it might seem, many parents still had difficulty to pay. Besides, there were other contributions to worry about. My investigation among the pupils of Luong Dien reveals that tuition took only about 20 percent of total educational costs, as shown below:

Table 9 Financial contribution by pupils (in VN Dong)

	<i>items</i>	<i>amount per year</i>
1	a set of text-books	45.000
2	notebooks, pens, ink, etc.	25.000
3	reference books	10.000
4	tuition fees*	45.000
5	construction fees*	10.000
6	examination costs	6.000
7	school insurance costs	10,000
8	fund for 'little plan'	4.000
9	fund for young gifted pupils	4.000
10	fund for supporting calamity victims	2.000
11	Red-Cross fund	4.000
12	Pioneer's/Youth League fees	4.000
13	extra classes*	30.000
14	pupils card	4.000
15	miscellaneous (lotto, gifts to teachers, feasts)	10,000
	total amount:	213,000

Notes:

1. These items and figures were compiled from information received directly from the pupils themselves, and cross-checked with their parents (and in some cases, with their teachers). In reality, while primary pupils did not have to pay tuition, their share of contributions were the same as those of higher levels.

2. Those items with asterisk (*):

– Fees did not apply to primary pupils.

– Construction fees mentioned here were spread among all pupils, not to be confused with contributions to commune education budget borne by all commune members.

– The payment for extra lessons mentioned here was for additional classes on Thursdays, not to be confused with payment for private tutorials.

Although the level of these contributions might not seem unreasonably high, for many households they did take up a considerable share of their meagre incomes. If the average annual income of a peasant household in the Red River delta, as reported by *Vietnam Living Standard Survey 1992-1993*, is 4.588.900 Dong (spc-gso 1994, table 7.3.2: 220), the education expenditures for each pupil (as listed above) took up about 5 percent of total household incomes, 60 percent of which was to be spent for food.³⁵ Because of this, most parents often

regarded schooling expenses for their children rather low on their priority list (food, fuel, health care, transportation, life-cycle obligations, e.g., weddings, funerals, house warming, etc.).

While the costs for private tutorials in Luong Dien were not as heavy as those in urban areas, these were often subjects of bitter criticism among the pupils and their parents on public education.³⁶

Conclusion

It is my purpose in this essay to analyse the causes of depressed state of education of Vietnam in transition from a centrally planned economy to a market-oriented system. My own empirical observations on a village school supported by available statistics point to a rather high dropout rate during the nineteen eighties and nineteen nineties. Most of these dropouts were between 12 and 16 years of age – an age where children were able to take part in the work force. This might explain a decrease in the number of pupils attending school at the secondary level.

My findings seem to indicate that intrinsically it is not the people who turned their backs on education. The current sad state of education is mainly due to the contradiction between individual pursuits and the public demands for education. Under the centrally planned economy, such appeals as 'schooling for socialism' and attractions of 'becoming state cadre' often played an important role in pursuing education. The shifting to a market oriented economy has opened new avenues for life strategies, while the old demands of education system remain stagnant, lagging behind individual ambitions and labour market demands. This suggests that the problem of education must be seen in the context of a dialectical relationship with socio-economic factors and political system. In this relationship, 'education is both agent of change and in turn is changed by society' (Fagerlind & Saha 1989: 225). As the educational system (goals, contents and methods) does not adapt to socio-economic changes, there is always the risk of crisis.

Like many other theoretical and empirical studies on education in the Third World (Brown 1991; Weiner 1991; Gould 1993; etc.), my observations on education in Vietnam tend to strengthen the notion that one can only understand the uncertainty of education in relation to the role of the State. Additionally, the empirical data presented in this chapter suggests that child labour studies which neglect the larger context of society and education might not yield valuable insights for practical actions (Standing 1982: 611-613).

'Children's weakness and their ignorance might undermine the nation's stamina' (De Swaan 1992: 6). More than anywhere else, the prevalent rhetoric in Vietnam is in full agreement with this logic, that 'regardless the difficulties,

education must be open (to all)', (Party General Secretary Do Muoi)*, and that 'in a short time, in the field of education (we) are determined to catch up with other countries in the region' (Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet)*. The truth remains, however, that lofty ambitions from the leadership are far removed from present-day realities, pointing to the highly depressed state of education at all levels, as expressed by none other than the highest official in charge of national education: 'How can we expect to enter the modern age when just 50 percent of our total students are at the level of grade 5 (primary) and lower, and about 6 to 7 percent of our students just finish secondary school?' (Minister of Education Tran Hong Quan 1995: 82).³⁷

A proverb which was popular in previous century Vietnam expresses not only the criticism but also the dream of a peasant to strive to become a member of the intelligentsia, the highest of the four social classes in traditional Vietnamese society (intellectual, peasant, craftsman and trader) but the realities of life often brings him back to where he starts from:

<i>Nhat sy</i>	First rank the scholars
<i>Nhi nong</i>	Next the peasants
<i>Het gao</i>	When rice runs out
<i>Chay rong</i>	You turn around
<i>Nhat nong</i>	First rank the peasants
<i>Nhi sy</i>	Next the scholars

This proverb dates from a bygone age, but it still seems to be valid today.

Notes

- 1 Quoted from *Thu gui cho hoc sinh* (Letter to the pupils), 9.1945, textually: '*Non song Vietnam co tro nen tuoi dep duoc hay khong, dan toc Vietnam co buoc toi dai vinh quang de sanh vai voi cac cuong quoc nam chau duoc hay khong, chinh la nho phan lon o cong hoc tap cua cac em*' (Ho Chi Minh 1984: 10).
- 2 By mentioning 'education', I mainly refer to children's schooling.
- 3 Such kinds of argument can be found in a number of leadership speeches and documents regarding education. For details, see Ho Chi Minh 1990; cpv 1979, 1993, 1997.
- 4 In the context of Vietnam, it should be considered education as a part of superstructure, i.e. a manifestation of State care. More discussions will be followed up in this chapter.
- 5 'Dropout', as used in this study, refers to the pupils, for various reasons, left school before finishing a required level. Statistics on school dropouts at national level used in this study are based on reports by the Ministry of Education and Training (moet) in *Nghien Cuu Giao Duc* [Educational Studies Review], no. 7 (1992) and no. 3 (1994).

- 6 In January 1991, cpv permitted cooperatives to assign rice fields to individual households for farming (only major processes). Household was allowed to keep products which produced beyond the level that they contractually obligated to turn over to the cooperative. For more details, see chapters 3 & 4.
- 7 In the school year of 1981-1982, there were 3.170,000 pupils attending the secondary school and 710.000 attending higher secondary school. In the school year of 1990-1991, these numbers were 2.700.000 and 530.000 (Tran Kiem, in mo et 1994: 11-12).
- 8 Only the pupils attending grades 5 upwards were sampled because at their ages (between 11 and 16), they might be able to communicate more independently.
- 9 As regulated by the Pioneers Association, in the school system, all members have to wear the Pioneer's scarf on going to school.
- 10 A cross-check with Tien's old classmates and his mother was made and I was affirmed that the story was true. At present (1995), Tien was a boy of 15 years of age. His father died a few years ago by an accident. He lived with his mum and two sisters in the village. He worked as a wood carver and his average earnings were about 600,000 *Dong* per month. The villagers said he was one of the youngest carvers who got such high wages.
- 11 According to Ngo Vi Lien, who was the chief of this district in this year, the total population of Cam Giang in 1931 was 45.175 persons. If we estimate the school age group (between 5 and 19 year old) was about 30 percent of the total population, the number of school attendants in Cam Giang district would be 8 percent of that age group (Ngo Vi Lien 1931: 13-17).
- 12 For instance, according to the Directive no. 26/ct/ubnd (Hai Hung province), financial sources for education at commune level were from the following sources:
 - 1 10 percent from the socio-cultural fund of the commune.
 - 2 30 percent in cash and 40 percent in paddy from the agricultural cooperative.
 - 3 15 to 20 percent from public welfare fund of credit cooperative.
 - 4 The agricultural cooperative is responsible in mobilizing welfare public labour (*lao Dong cong ich*) for building the school facilities. See Ban Quan li Hop tac xa nong nghiep Hai Hung 1986.
- 13 The district of Cam Binh was considered one of areas where small scale industries and family handicrafts have developed most rapidly since the economic reforms. In 1994, total output of this branch valued at 24.546 million *Dong*, made up 20 percent of gross district product. Cottage industries absorbed 35.000 regular and irregular labourers. Major branches were wood manufacture, pottery, metal crafts, mechanical engineerings and comb making (Report by Department of Industries, Cam Binh district, 1995).
- 14 Expenditures for building school in 1963 were 11.582 *Dong* in which people contributed 7.350 *Dong*, 600 bamboo trees and wood, and 850 labour days, the rest costs supported by the State (Records of the Vietnamese Communist Party of Luong Dien, dbI d 1993: 96).
- 15 The first two-storied building was built in 1989 with a total of expenses of 180.000,000 *Dong*, a major part came from oxfam. Another two-storied building was built in 1992 with a total cost of 220.000,000 *Dong*. The fund came from the provincial government and contribution of local people.

- 16 A survey on time to get from home to school for rural children reports an average time of 18 minutes for primary pupils, 22 minutes for secondary pupils and 73 minutes for upper secondary pupils to get in school. See General Statistical Office 1994: table 12.1: 24).
- 17 The shortage of teachers was not the specific case of Luong Dien. In the whole country, primary schools lacked about 60.000 teachers (Tran Hong Quan 1995: 93).
- 18 The term '*chay*' comes from '*an chay*' (vegetarian diet). By using this term, teachers compared the way of teaching without equipment with giving the children food with only rice, no meat or fish.
- 19 The state of material facilities of Luong Dien school was similar to the situation of a Hanoi outskirts school as described by S. Rubin (1989: 45-60).
- 20 At the school of Luong Dien, foreign languages were taught from the school year of 1993-1994 at the secondary level. In 1995, there was only one teacher of English who had to teach 13 classes with more than 300 pupils.
- 21 A survey conducted by General Statistical Office reports that pupils of rural schools in the region of Red River delta spent average 16 to 22 hours per week at school, (tctk), *Bao cao chung ve giao duc va chi tieu cho giao duc o CHXHCN Viet Nam* [Report on general education and education expenditure in sr Vietnam], Hanoi, 6/1994: 23.
- 22 To give an example on how the daily schooling was managed in Luong Dien, I quote below a daily record made by the teacher in charge of class 7b in 16.11.1995:
- Late in school time: 1
 - Schooling without Pioneer scarf: 1
 - Less concentrated in study: 6
 - Bad behaviour to the teachers: 2
 - Did not do any home work: 9
 - Making noise in classroom: 3
 - Saying dirty words: 3.
- 23 According to the Minister of Education Pham Minh Hac (interview with *Phu Nu Viet Nam* [Vietnam Women Weekly Newspaper], 8.1.1990: 1) in 1981, the Council of Ministers issued the decree no. 15 qd/cp allowing teachers to organize the additional tutorials beside compulsory classes. This was to enable teachers improving their living standard. In Luong Dien, the form of additional tutorials appeared recently. In the school year of 1994-1995, under the pressure of Parents Association, the leadership of Luong Dien school raised a subject for discussion as to should pupils be allowed to choose the teachers they want. This issue was still on discussion. Additional tutorials within the school system have raised many negative reactions from parents and society at large for its de-pedagogic. In May 1993, Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet decided to prohibit all forms of additional tutorial within public schools and forbid teachers using different manners to push pupils taking part in their tutorials (*Cong Bao* 15.8.1993: 37).
- 24 These are Confucian ethics which date from feudal times. At the beginning of the revolution of culture and sciences (nineteen sixties), such kind of ethics was the target of socialist criticism. Today it is again regarded a good cultural tradition (*thuan phong my tu*) and worth being deserved.
- 25 This statement is quoted from the Minister of Education Tran Hong Quan (1995: 75).

- 26 The daily necessities consist of costs for health, education, clothing and footwear, fuel, light, water, transportation, communication, housing and food. Teachers however claimed that about 60 to 70 percent of their incomes were spent for food. The teacher's salary is considered the lowest among 18 occupations having the lowest salary in society (Hoang Tuy 1996: 3).
- 27 The average teacher's salary in the school years of 1985-1990 was 30 thousand *Dong* per month. During these years, it was common for the State to owe the teacher's salaries from several months to years (Ban nntw 1991 (2): 224-25).
- 28 During the period between 1960 and 1985, the school of Luong Dien had a teachers' living quarter built by the cooperative, for free of charge. In 1995, the local government was no longer to cover the teacher's housing.
- 29 To enable the teachers to raise extra incomes, local authority allotted one *sao* (360 m²) of rice land per teacher for their own use.
- 30 Between 1981 and 1990, in the whole country, 20.000 teachers had left teaching occupation for other jobs. In 1995 the school system lacked 56.000 teachers (moet & unicef 1995: 30). This estimation of shortage by moet was based on a applying ratio of 1.15 teacher per existing classroom.
- 31 During the nineteen eighties, to save the public budget, the National Assembly decided to cut off 20 percent of the staff in the administrative and non-productive sectors. Under this decision, many provinces tended to pressure 'cut' on education and training branch (Minister of Education Tran Hong Quan 1995: 81).
- 32 The State budget for education was regarded extremely low in Vietnam compared to the regional countries. For many years, the education expenditure as a percentage of total public expenditure was between 3.7 percent and 4.3 percent. This budget was raised up to 6.7 percent during the nineteen eighties and 8 percent in 1992, see Ban nntw 199: 230; moet & unicef 1995: 39-40. The cpv Resolution no. 2 (1997) decided to raise education budget up to 15 percent in the year 2000 (cpv 1997: 35). In reality, the fund supplied by the central government for education met only 50 percent of needs. The rest expenses were passed on the local government (Nguyen Canh Tuan 1995: 3-8).
- 33 One can pay in paddy or in cash. The local price of paddy in 1995 was 1.800 *Dong* per kilogram. Total amount to be collected for commune's educational budget in 1995 was equivalent to 64.526,400 *Dong*.
- 34 The Director of Educational Department of Cam Binh district told me that a fixed amount to support localities in building new school was 5 million *Dong* for one classroom while a total expenditures to build a standard classroom was between 40 and 50 million *Dong*. In a plan proposed by Luong Dien commune, from now to the year 2000, there will be two new classrooms for secondary school and 4 classrooms for primary school. According to the school headmaster, this plan would meet only one third of the school's need.
- 35 *Vietnam Living Standard Survey 1992-1993* conducted by State Planning Committee and General Statistical Office reports that among total household expenditures, education takes up 2.66 percent, health care 6.13 percent, and food 56.16 percent (spc-gso 1994 table 6.7.1: 199).
- 36 Only a few families of Luong Dien were able to send their children to good schools or private tutorials in the district town. About 15 percent of pupils followed additional tutorials organized by village teachers, which cost them about 2.000 *Dong* per

session. Additional tutorials in the school system were regarded 'a national disaster' (*quoc nan*). This issue has been discussed openly in public media. Since then, these tutorials had been banned by a Prime Minister's decree in 1996. See further: Khanh Huu 1992: 4; Nguyen Thac Han 1995: 8; Kim Thuy 1995: 1-6; Nguyen Lan 1996: 3; etc.

37 Citations with asterisk (*) are from Tran Hong Quan 1995: 85.

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Accès aux ressources naturelles et distribution des terres dans un district de montagne du Nord-Vietnam

Exemple du district de Cho Don – province de Bac Kan

ghislaine meliac

La distribution des terres forestières, entamée depuis près de cinq ans aujourd'hui, constitue une véritable révolution pour les populations de montagne. Modifié en totalité ou en partie par la collectivisation, transformé par la fin de la période collectiviste, leur mode d'accès aux ressources naturelles doit à nouveau s'adapter à un changement radical qui touche au statut foncier d'une grande partie des terres mais aussi à l'usage qui doit en être fait.

Afin d'essayer de comprendre quels pourraient être les impacts de cette distribution nous avons, à partir de la décollectivisation, cherché à savoir, comment et par qui furent exploitées les ressources naturelles, et à identifier les critères qui donnent accès à ces ressources. Les terres rizicoles – on appelle rizicoles et rizières les terres de riziculture *inondée*, les cas de riziculture pluviale seront précisés plus loin – dont le statut a changé depuis peu sont concernées en premier lieu. Bien qu'elles n'aient pas été touchées par la distribution des terres forestières, elles sont le principal moyen de production et le riz irrigué est de loin devant les autres la plus importante vivrière du district. De l'accès à ces terres dépend la nécessité d'utilisation d'autres ressources comme les terres de versant et les produits forestiers.

L'étude des modes d'accès à ces ressources avant la distribution nous apprendra cependant que l'utilisation qui en est faite ne dépend pas uniquement des besoins ressentis. D'autres facteurs, ethniques et géographiques en particulier ont une influence importante sur l'accessibilité des ressources et donc sur leur exploitation. Pour finir nous verrons quels ont été les principaux bouleversements introduits par la distribution et quelles peuvent en être les conséquences.

A qui appartiennent les terres rizicoles?

Le retour aux terres ancestrales

Le district d'étude, Cho Don se situe à 200 km au Nord de Hanoi et appartient aujourd'hui à la province de Bac Kan. La population est composée à 76 pour-

cent de *Tày* (du groupe Thai) qui est l'ethnie la plus représentée dans les montagnes du nord Vietnam avec 1.2 millions de personnes localisées essentiellement à l'est, dans les anciennes provinces du Viêt Bac. Les *Dao* (du groupe Yao) et les *Kinh* (ou Viêt) qui sont les deux autres groupes importants numériquement dans le district occupant chacun une part proche de 10 pourcent de la population. Les surfaces cultivées en riziculture inondée occupent moins de 10 pourcent de la superficie totale et la couverture forestière est une des plus étendue de la région ce qui explique la rapidité de la distribution. Dans ce district, trois communes, Tân Lập au nord, Bàng Lang au centre et Phong Huyên au sud, ont été étudiées plus particulièrement.

Sur le plan législatif, ce sont les lois foncières de 1988 et 1993 (*les khoán* 100 et 10) qui se rapportent à la décollectivisation. Leurs applications dans le delta ont été largement évaluées. Quoique nous ayons que peu de données sur les applications dans les zones de montagne, il semblerait que la décollectivisation y aurait pris une forme originale par rapport au delta au niveau de ses modalités, de sa rapidité, de son ampleur. Ce serait surtout vrai au niveau de la redistribution des terres agricoles aux ménages. Nous constatons un pas concret et réussi vers le retour à l'économie familiale.

Comme dans la majorité des zones occupées par les *Tày*, la distribution des terres agricoles dans le district de Chio Don n'a concerné que les terres rizicoles et s'est apparentée à ce qu'on appelle aujourd'hui *le retour aux terres ancestrales*. Les rizières ont été en effet récupérées par ceux qui en étaient propriétaires avant la période collectiviste ou par leurs descendants directs. Pour cette raison cette distribution n'a tenu compte ni du nombre d'actifs ni de celui de bouches à nourrir, comme cela fut le cas dans le delta du Fleuve Rouge successivement en 1988 et 1993.

Cette étape de récupération ne s'est pas effectuée sans coup férir. En effet les itinéraires suivis auraient varié par commune et par coopérative. En fait chaque communauté agricole a une histoire qui lui est propre quand il s'agit de la décollectivisation. De nombreux conflits ont éclaté à plusieurs niveaux:

- entre les différents groupes qui possédaient des terres avant la collectivisation;
- au sein des lignées d'anciens propriétaires de terres;
- entre les communautés qui ne possédaient pas de terres avant la collectivisation et celles qui étaient propriétaires terriens avant ladite période.

Mais en définitive, ces conflits n'ont pu empêcher à ce que le 'retour aux terres ancestrales' s'effectue – sans exception aucune – sur la totalité du territoire national. Il a été entériné par un levé cadastral réalisé en 1994. Suite à cette campagne du 'retour aux terres ancestrales' le district de montagne se trouve actuellement dans une situation totalement différente de celle dans laquelle se trouve le Delta. La situation dans le Delta étant caractérisée par une (relative) homogénéité de la propriété foncière dans les communes.

Le monopole des Tày

Les Tày qui détenaient jadis la quasi totalité des terres de bas-fond ont été les seuls à avoir pu récupérer des terres qui étaient cultivées avant la collectivisation. Or, non seulement les Tày sont proportionnellement avantagés en terme de propriété terrienne par rapport aux autres ethnics – presque les totalités des ménages ont accès à la terre – mais ils le sont également dans la mesure où le nombre absolu de Tày qui peuvent se considérer propriétaires de ses terres semble démesuré par rapport à l'ensemble de la communauté Tày dans le district de montagne. Leur surreprésentation s'explique par les règles de succession en vigueur au sein de leur communauté: en principe *aucun* des descendants masculins désirant recevoir des terres quelque soit le patrimoine initial, sa position financière ou sa résidence, *n'est écarté*. Il en suit qu'on pourrait dire qu'à quelque exception près les Tày dans ce district de montagne sont propriétaires terriens. Les ménages ou individus Tày 'sans terres' sont considérés comme des *cas sociaux*. Nous en avons trouvé les exemples suivants sur notre terrain: une femme divorcée, un enfant issu de deuxième mariage de sa mère ou des ménages ruinés par le jeu (table 1).

Table 1 La distribution des rizières selon l'appartenance ethnique et les ménages sans terre

pourcent	Tân Lấp		Phong Huân		Bàng Lang	
	nbre	terres	nbre	terres	nbre	terres
	HH	rizi	HH	rizi	HH	rizi
Tày	65	95.7	93	98	89	99
Kinh	2	0	7	2	11	2
Dao	33	4.3	0	0	0	0

Les deux autres groupes importants numériquement dans le district, les *Dao* et les *Kinh* qui – au mieux – bénéficiaient que de terres défrichées pendant la période collectiviste se retrouvent à présent (pour la plupart) sans terre. Parmi les neuf ménages *Dao* de Tân Lấp propriétaires terriens, cinq ont défriché des terres, trois en ont achetées et six ont bénéficié de terres défrichées pendant la coopérative. Individuellement défrichées, ces terres n'étaient pas cultivées collectivement. Les soixante cinq foyers restants n'ont pas de terres cultivables en riz irrigué. Qu'ils soient installés dans les villages en altitude ou qu'ils soient restés dans la vallée principale après la décollectivisation, les *Dao* ne bénéficient à Cho Don que de terres aménagées en terrasses sur les versants où le riz irrigué ne peut être récolté qu'une saison par an. En revanche la plupart des rizières que possèdent les *Kinh* ont été défrichées ou achetées depuis le début des années mille neuf cent quatre vingt dix. Ce sont parfois des terres de très bonne qualité et certains *Kinh* ont des propriétés assez importantes. Les rizières défrichées

pendant la période collectiviste n'ont pas été données mais vendues par la coopérative. Il s'ensuit que ces terres pourtant relativement importantes en nombre à Bàng Lang et Phong Huân ont presque exclusivement été acquises par les *Tày* et que la plupart des ménages *Dao* et *Kinh* n'y ont pas eu accès. Une répartition inégale des terres a donc été la conséquence principale du retour aux terres ancestrales.

Une répartition des terres inégale et des ménages déficitaires en riz

Cette inégale répartition a, à son tour, eu d'importantes conséquences sur la quantité de riz disponible par foyer. Nous avons choisi la disponibilité de riz par foyer comme indicateur parce que cette disponibilité en dit long sur la répartition (inégale) des moyens de subsistance. Les surfaces possédées ne sont plus directement représentatives aujourd'hui de la disponibilité en riz en raison des doubles cultures de riz. Afin d'en tenir compte nous avons calculé les *surfaces rizicoles utiles* en multipliant par deux les surfaces cultivées deux fois dans l'année. La disponibilité en riz tient alors aux rendements de chaque type de surface et au nombre de personnes, actifs et non actifs appartenant au foyer.

La table 2 présente des calculs effectués selon cette base dans les trois communes pour lesquelles nous possédons des données suffisamment précises. Deux points principaux en ressortent.

Table 2 Proportion de ménages n'ayant aucune terre pour la riziculture irriguée

	<i>Tân Lấp</i>	<i>Phong Huân</i>	<i>Bàng Lang</i>
pourcent des ménages	33	3	12
pourcent des <i>Tày</i>	3.5	0	1.8
pourcent des <i>Kinh</i>	100	42	84
pourcent des <i>Dao</i>	86		

L'existence d'une proportion relativement importante de ménages déficitaires en riz apparaît de prime abord. Selon le cadastre, 50 pourcent des ménages manquent de riz au cours de toute l'année. Dao The Anh (Dao & Jesus 1993) et Duong Duc Vinh (1994) situaient pour leur part cette proportion à plus de 60 pourcent des ménages dans les communes respectivement de Dong Vien et Dai Xao. Ces deux estimations ne tenaient pas compte des doubles récoltes de riz, celle réalisée à partir du cadastre souffre d'une sous-déclaration des rizières de deux saisons que nous avons pu constater par enquête. Malgré la sous-représentation notoire de ces enquêtes (auquelles pas plus de 15 pourcent des ménages n'ont participé) et en nous basant sur les communes de Phong Huân et de Bàng Lang nous avons pu en arriver aux estimations suivantes: moins de 15 pourcent des foyers manquerait de riz pendant plus de six mois et 40 pourcent en manquerait occasionnellement pendant l'année. A Tân Lấp la propor-

tion qui manquerait de riz pendant plus de six mois est plus importante en raison du grand nombre de ménages *Dao* à cet endroit, un nombre qui se représente sur le total. Pour ce qui concerne la population *Tây* à cet endroit, nous constatons que 43 pourcent des ménages *Tây* de Tân Lấp seulement ne connaissent un déficit dans l'année. Cela souligne à nouveau les inégalités importantes entre *Dao* et *Tây*.

Il apparaît en second lieu que près de 10 pourcent des ménages possèdent des surfaces leur permettant de produire une quantité de riz deux fois supérieure à leurs besoins annuels. Ces surplus étant commercialisés pour la plupart, une importante différenciation économique entre les ménages, s'est introduite dans ces régions.

En revanche les quantités de riz produites permettraient à l'ensemble de la population de Phong Huân et de Bang Lang de s'approvisionner sur place. Comme la table 2 présente les résultats pour l'ensemble des ménages dans les trois communes, ni l'inégale répartition des terres rizicoles, ni la sur-représentation des propriétés *Tây* n'y apparaissent. La taille des exploitations actuelles dépend de deux facteurs importants qui sont la taille de l'exploitation initiale des ascendants et l'importance numérique des descendants masculins. En regardant les données du cadastre, il semblerait que ces deux facteurs jouent dans le même sens: près de 10 pourcent des exploitations dans les trois communes enquêtées dépassent aujourd'hui 1 ha alors que 16 pourcent d'entre elles n'atteignent pas 2000 m².

C'est un phénomène qui varie aussi en fonction de la localisation géographique. Tân Lấp et Phong Huân sont deux communes où les disponibilités en riz moyennes sont équivalentes pour les *Tây*. En revanche la proportion de ménages *Tây* déficitaires à Tân Lấp est supérieure à celle de Phong Huân (43 pourcent contre 37 pourcent) ce qui témoigne d'une moins bonne répartition des terres. Cela apparaît aussi au sein de chaque commune dans la table 5 qui présente la répartition des rizières entre les différents villages. Cela peut s'expliquer en partie par l'histoire du peuplement à Tân Lấp. Le hameau 3 plus proche de la route connaît une plus grande concentration de ménages jeunes et de ménages installés récemment. À Phong Huân cela s'explique par la proportion de terres pouvant ou non être cultivée en deux saisons. Pac Kóp et Na Cho ont, au contraire de Ban Cua et Khuoi Xóm, connu une importante extension de ces rizières pendant la période collectiviste.

La réappropriation des terres pose un problème pour l'avenir des populations qui ne possédaient pas de rizières avant la collectivisation et pour les *Tây* aussi. Parmi les *Tây* une inégalité qui a bien l'air d'être croissante est entraînée de se développer. Ensuite cette réappropriation a mené à la reconversion d'une partie des activités agricoles en dehors de la riziculture. Une telle situation pourrait paraître préoccupante. Mais ce serait raisonner avec une logique propre à celle que l'on peut tenir dans le delta. Un fait capital pour les ménages de mon-

tagne les distingue définitivement de ceux du delta: l'espace disponible en dehors des bas-fonds rizicoles. Jusqu'à 1994 le contrôle exercé par l'Etat sur ces ressources demeurait quasiment inexistant. Le service des gardes forestiers chargé au niveau local de la protection de la forêt et de l'environnement ne contrôlait que les entrées et sorties de produits forestiers des districts. Les contraintes qui s'appliquaient sur ces terres dépendaient principalement des conditions micro-locales de gestion et d'accessibilité. De ces conditions dépendait à son tour l'exploitation des ressources par les ménages. Cette situation est amenée à disparaître progressivement au fur et à mesure de la distribution des terres forestières. Il est important de la connaître afin de mesurer l'ampleur des changements qu'elle a pu introduire.

Accès aux terres de versant et aux produits forestiers avant la distribution forestière

Contrairement à l'idée couramment admise, l'accès à ces ressources ne se faisait pas sans règle. Leur utilisation dépendait des stratégies mises en place par chacun des ménages, de leur disponibilité mais aussi, comme nous avons pu le constater à Cho Don, de facteurs sociaux et ethniques. La distribution étant encore très récente et n'étant pas achevée, la situation qui a été observée est celle qui prévalait avant sa mise en place et qui prévaut encore dans plus d'un tiers des communes.

Le contrôle des Tày sur les terres de versant

Un rapide retour en arrière est nécessaire pour pouvoir comprendre la situation actuelle. Avant la période collectiviste les systèmes de production *Tày* et *Dao* n'entraient pas directement en concurrence. Les *Tày* cultivaient principalement les terres de bas-fond et pratiquaient des cultures de versant dans les zones proches des vallées avec un système de jachères courtes. Rarement mais surtout en plus faibles quantités, des cultures de riz pluvial étaient pratiquées dans des zones éloignées et avec de plus longues jachères. Les *Dao* habitaient des zones plus hautes, éloignées des vallées rizicoles principales. Ils pratiquaient essentiellement une agriculture de défriche-brûlis sur de vastes espaces et avec des jachères longues qui les poussaient à déménager une fois le cycle de culture terminé. Un grand nombre d'entre eux ont été sédentarisés dans les vallées principales au début de la collectivisation. La majorité des *Kinh* installés aujourd'hui à Cho Don ne sont arrivés qu'au début des années mil neuf cent soixante. Depuis lors, *Kinh* et *Dao* habitent pour la plupart auprès des *Tày*, dans les vallées principales. Ils ont profité, tant que les coopératives existaient, des terres dans les bas-fond et des versants qui en sont proches.

Mais depuis la décollectivisation alors que la distribution ne s'était pas encore effectuée, les *Tây* ont commencé à revendiquer des terres dont ils avaient été les premiers défricheurs: celles qui entourent les principales vallées. Ils affirment vouloir contrôler ces terres selon des modes de gestion traditionnels. Ce contrôle se produit à plusieurs niveaux. Un contrôle collectif est effectué sur l'ensemble des terres qui constituent le bassin versant de la vallée mise en culture. Un contrôle familial est fait par tous les foyers issus d'une famille fondatrice sur la portion de terre du bassin versant qui avant la période collectiviste était utilisées pour les cultures et la collecte des produits forestiers (bois, bambous...) par tous les habitants de la région. Ces terres forment une surface variable: cette surface dépend en effet de la configuration du bassin versant et de la pression extérieure dans la zone. A l'extérieur du bassin versant le contrôle ne peut être qu'individuel et ne dépasse guère le temps de la mise en culture. Ce contrôle, qui peut difficilement être remis en question en raison du poids numérique des *Tây*, est un atout important pour eux tant que les terres forestières ne sont pas distribuées.

Table 3 Proportion de ménages autosuffisants, déficitaires ou excédentaires en riz irrigué

%	total		Tân Lấp		Phong Huân		Bàng Lang	
	cad.*	enq.**	cad.	enq.	cad.	enq.	cad.	enq.
autosuffisants	48	52	37	40	58	60	52	58
6 mois de manque double du nécessaire	25	15	40,5	25	12	10	22	13
nécessaire	8	8	5	3	14	16	6	6

* cad. = cadastre. À partir des données cadastrales de chaque commune, de la taille moyenne des ménages dans ces communes et des rendements moyens des rizières de 1 et 2 saisons.

** enq. = enquête. Les données: surface en riz, rendements, taille du ménage ont été fournies par c pour 35 ménages à Tân Lấp, 30 à Phong Huân et 30 à Bàng Lang.

Les besoins sont estimés à 360kg de paddy par adulte et par an, 250kg de paddy par enfant ou personne âgée par an.

La table 3 présente les principaux indicateurs qui rendent compte de l'utilisation des terres et des ressources forestières avant la distribution à Tân Lấp, Phong Huân et Bàng Lang. Celle-ci a été effectuée entre 1994 et 1996 dans ces trois communes. Le contrôle des terres par les *Tây* est particulièrement manifeste dans le domaine du gros élevage (une moyenne très élevée). Ce contrôle leur permet d'avoir une possibilité d'accumulation par le biais de l'élevage qui n'est pas remis en cause par les autres groupes malgré une situation de concurrence entre élevage et culture. D'autre part lorsque les troupeaux ont été décollectivisés et redistribués les lignages anciens ont reçu un plus grand nombre de buffles et bovins en faisant valoir ce qu'ils appellent leur 'capacité à les élever'.

Cela se réfère aussi bien à leur habitude des gros troupeaux qu'au contrôle des zones parcourues.

Les avantages des *Tây* sont aussi visibles si l'on considère la moyenne des terres de versant qu'ils cultivent: elle demeure relativement élevée malgré une forte proportion de ménages autosuffisants en riz parmi eux. Il n'existe pas de rapport évident chez les *Tây* entre la disponibilité en riz irrigué et l'ampleur des cultures pratiquées sur les versants. Comme pour l'élevage l'ancienneté du lignage joue en effet un rôle primordial sur le contrôle des terres de versant. Les plus gros consommateurs d'espace sont, aux deux extrêmes, ceux qui possèdent le moins de rizières et ceux qui en possèdent le plus.

Pour finir, le principale avantage dont disposent les foyers *Tây* n'apparaît pas ici. Il réside dans la proximité des terres qu'ils peuvent exploiter par rapport à leur zone d'habitation. Avant la distribution les *Đạo* de Tân Lấp, étaient obligés d'exploiter des terres très éloignées en marge ou à l'extérieur de la vallée principale, à plusieurs heures de marche. Lors de la collecte des produits forestiers qui est une des principales occupations des *Đạo*, la main d'oeuvre était mobilisée pendant de très longues journées, parfois des semaines entières afin d'atteindre des zones éloignées à la fois riches en produits et non-revendicables par les *Tây*. De leur côté les *Kinh* connaissent un problème similaire à celui des *Đạo* mais atténué par leur plus grande dispersion dans les communes.

Le cas des plantations

Les *Kinh* semblent avoir mis en place d'importantes plantations. Celles-ci dépendent essentiellement à l'origine des investissements réalisés par l'Etat ou les organismes de développement internationaux comme le pam (Programme Alimentaire Mondial) Avec les *Đạo*, ils en ont été d'importants bénéficiaires mais les résultats sont différents pour les deux groupes: les *Kinh* ont réalisés d'importants investissements en temps et en moyens et continuent à en réaliser. Les *Đạo* qui n'ont pu disposer que de terres très en pente à Tân Lấp ont enregistré de fortes pertes parmi les plants qui leur étaient attribués et n'ont pas réalisé de nouvelles plantations. Les exemples de Phong Huân et de Bang Lang ont montré de leur côté que l'aide a souvent été accaparée par les foyers descendants de familles anciennes et les cadres administratifs. Cela a néanmoins créé une dynamique de plantations qui est nettement visible aujourd'hui.

Le facteur géographique

La localisation géographique est un autre facteur qui nous a semblé important. L'examen de la table 3 ne révèle pas directement l'importance de ce facteur et montrerait plutôt une relative homogénéité de l'utilisation des ressources naturelles entre les 3 communes. Une différence significative apparaît cependant en

ce qui concerne la collecte des produits forestiers des ménages *Tây*. Elle est essentielle en raison de l'importance des revenus que ces produits procurent. A Phong Huân et Bàng Lang, les ménages disposant d'une main d'oeuvre suffisante collectent des bambous et des pousses de bambou en quantité importante. Pour les uns la vente de bambous assure une véritable sécurité alimentaire. Pour les autres c'est une possibilité d'enrichissement facile et une source de revenus qui ne demande aucun investissement autre que celui du travail.

Ces différences ne peuvent pas être mises en relation avec les densités de population globales des communes. Alors que la densité de population est sensiblement plus élevée à Phong Huân (47 hab./km² en 1994) qu'à Tân Lấp (43 hab./km²) les revenus tirés de la collecte y sont plus de deux fois supérieurs. Cela est lié à la répartition de la population dans les communes. Disséminés le long de petites vallées, les habitants de Phong Huân et de Bàng Lang exercent une pression sur le milieu beaucoup moins localisée qu'à Tân Lấp. Les zones de forêt, fortement secondarisées mais néanmoins riches en bambou, sont proches de l'habitat et leurs ressources sont facilement mobilisables. A Tân Lấp, la forêt est beaucoup plus éloignée, à plusieurs heures de marche. Elle est également moins riche en bambou car moins souvent sollicitée et la collecte se concentre principalement sur le bois. Cela demande un travail dur et les produits sont difficiles à écouler car leur vente est plus strictement contrôlée. Pour les *Tây* la collecte ne concerne finalement que les jeunes. Elle est souvent réalisée avec l'aide des *Đạo* qui se sont spécialisés dans ces travaux.

Ce n'est pas simplement l'accès ou le non-accès aux ressources qui dépend des deux facteurs que nous venons de présenter amplement, les facteurs ethnique et géographique. C'est la *facilité d'accès* plutôt qui dépend de ces deux facteurs. Ces facteurs ont avantagé les ménages *Tây* mais ont aussi été bénéfiques aux habitants des communes du sud, sans pour autant créer de vrais blocages pour les autres ménages. Les tables 1 et 2 montrent que les *Kinh* et les *Đạo* ont pu exploiter des terres et des produits sur les versants en quantité importante afin de compenser leur manque en riz irrigué. Les enquêtes que nous avons effectuées révèlent par ailleurs que l'ensemble des ménages ne rencontreraient pas de problème alimentaire majeur au cours de l'année et que les cas les plus difficiles pouvaient toujours avoir recours à la consommation de maïs ou de manioc. Des contraintes existaient certes, mais elles ne mettaient pas (encore) en danger la reproduction des exploitations. Avec la distribution des terres forestières aux ménages cet équilibre instable semble être remis en cause.

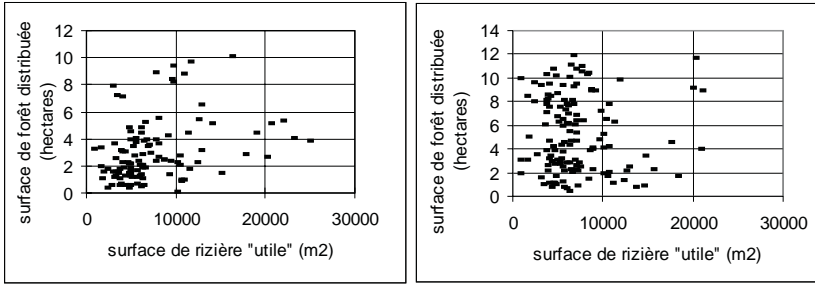


Figure 1 et 2 Distribution des surfaces de forêt allouées en fonction de la 'surface utile' en rizière

La distribution des terres de versant: une répartition des terres inégales et de premiers signes de blocage

Des objectifs clairs mais des catégories de terre mal définies

La distribution des terres forestières (Dat Lâm Nghiêp) dans les zones de montagne a officiellement été décidée en 1993 par la nouvelle loi foncière en même temps que l'allocation des terres agricoles. Elle a pour but, en stabilisant la tenure foncière à long terme (50 années renouvelables), de protéger et d'améliorer l'environnement. La division des terres, en terres forestières d'un côté et en terres agricoles de l'autre, pose un problème fondamental dans les zones de montagne: celui des cultures de défriche-brûlis ou plus spécifiquement celui des jachères. La définition des terres agricoles qui sont les terres cultivées de façon permanente (sans interruption supérieure à douze mois) ne prend pas en compte ces cultures. La définition des terres forestières par contre, inclut les zones de jachère en tant que terres portant un recru forestier mais les exclut aussi puisque leur objectif d'utilisation n'est pas un objectif forestier: 'Les terres forestières sont toutes les terres identifiées comme ayant été destinées essentiellement aux activités de production sylvicole et comprennent la forêt naturelle, les terres en voie de régénération et les terres utilisées avec un objectif forestier: plantations, pépinières, protection et régénération, enrichissement incluant la recherche expérimentale dans le domaine sylvicole' (loi foncière de 1993). Le zonage étant délégué aux Comités Populaires des Districts, une possibilité d'interprétation non négligeable est donc laissée au niveau local. Cela a une grande importance en raison de l'interdiction des cultures de ce type sur les terres classées en tant que terres forestières.

La distribution fixe en effet à la fois la propriété foncière et l'usage des terres forestières. Après avoir été délimitées elles sont divisées en trois principales sous-catégories: terres dénudées, terres portant un couvert forestier et terres de

forêt plantée (*Dat không rung, Dat Rung, Dat rung trong*). Pour finir, lors de la constitution des lots destinés aux ménages, un objectif d'utilisation précis est attribué à chacune de ces sous catégories: protection ou régénération forestière, plantations pérennes, production. Ce dernier objectif est très rarement attribué aux terres destinées aux ménages. C'est une distribution qui se veut par conséquent très directive et qui va plus loin encore que la simple interdiction des cultures. La distribution qui est en train d'être effectuée à Cho Don fournit un exemple des implications qu'elle peut engendrer.

La mise hors-la-loi des cultures vivrières de versant

A Cho Don 14 communes ont été concernées aujourd'hui par l'allocation des terres forestières sur une moyenne de 28 pourcent de leur territoire. Les terres rizicoles une fois soustraites, près de 65 pourcent du territoire, demeure encore non distribué aux particuliers. Officiellement ces terres non distribuées sont interdites à toute forme d'exploitation. Mais en pratique une plus ou moins grande marge de liberté semble être laissée aux foyers pour leur utilisation selon leur localisation. Il existe deux zones distinctes sur lesquelles aucun titre de propriété n'a été distribué.

La première est une étroite frange de terres situées approximativement entre les rizières et les premiers lots forestiers. A Phong Huân et Bàng Lang, une zone approximative de 30 mètres a été respectée entre les deux zones allouées. A Tân Lấp, cette zone est plus vaste en raison des plus fortes densités de population en bordure de vallée. Il s'agit de la zone consacrée traditionnellement à l'habitat, aux jardins et aux cultures les plus intensives. Des jachères de plusieurs années y étaient cependant pratiquées. Son utilisation n'est pas aujourd'hui remise en cause. Cette mesure de réserve vise à compenser la perte des terres forestières comme terres agricoles en intensifiant les cultures sur cette zone et en limitant les jachères longues. A terme, ces terres pourraient être distribuées comme terres d'habitat et comme terres agricoles. Cette mesure crée cependant une compétition importante, d'une part entre les utilisateurs: les *Tây* conservent leur droit de contrôle sur ces terres qui sont en raison de leur localisation celles qu'ils avaient défrichés avant la période collectiviste, d'autre part la compétition concerne d'autres utilisations qu'il est possible d'en faire (habitat, cultures, élevage...). Se pose aussi le problème de l'extension de cette zone en fonction de l'augmentation de la population. L'ensemble des agriculteurs estime que même la part de liberté qui leur est laissée ne suffit pas à satisfaire l'ensemble de leurs besoins.

L'autre partie des terres qui n'a pas été distribuée est située dans les zones plus éloignées des habitations, au delà des terres forestières. Ces terres peuvent avoir plusieurs statuts: zones de production forestière pour les entreprises d'Etat, pâturages régis par les autorités communales au profit des agriculteurs... La

plupart d'entre elles portent cependant un couvert forestier dense. Elles pourront être distribuées ultérieurement comme terres forestières et sont soumises à une interdiction de cultures, coupes, brûlis et divagation des gros ruminants en dehors des pâturages ceci est clairement exprimé au niveau du district autant qu'au niveau des communes.

Dans la pratique, ce sont ceux qui contreviennent à la loi ici exprimée qui régissent en fait les parcelles distribuées. La plupart des agriculteurs y collectent des produits forestiers et y exploitent des parcelles. L'ensemble des agriculteurs continuent à laisser leurs animaux divaguer en dehors des pâturages. La plupart des cultures que nous avons pu observer depuis la distribution se situent sur les parcelles distribuées dans la limite des lots impartis à chaque famille. Cela pourrait paraître surprenant dans la mesure où les foyers sont responsables des terres qu'ils ont reçu. En réalité et dans de nombreux cas, les lots distribués contiennent ou sont une partie des terres qui étaient cultivées par le foyer ayant la distribution. Plusieurs autres raisons semblent par ailleurs justifier ce choix: l'éloignement des zones non distribuées, la méconnaissance des nouvelles limites de propriété sont des raisons souvent évoquées à Bàng Lang et Phong Huân. A Tân Lấp, les terres de bonne qualité sont très éloignées et celles qui sont proches mais non distribuées sont des pâturages ou ne portent plus aucun couvert. S'appuyant sur leur nombre les *Dao* de Tân Lấp désirent montrer l'ampleur du désastre causé par cette distribution sur leurs systèmes de culture en brûlant sur un grand nombre de terres proches de la vallée. Ils profitent de la clémence encore réelle des autorités vis-à-vis de ce qui devraient être les dernières mises en culture tolérées.

Le cas des Dao

La distribution n'a pourtant pas été défavorable aux *Dao*, chaque foyer ayant reçu, avec une moyenne proche de 8 ha, plus du double de la surface attribuée aux autres ménages de Tân Lấp (table 4). Avec un système de culture extensif, nécessitant des jachères très longues (de plus de 10 ans) 8 ha ne peuvent pourtant pas suffire et les *Dao* estiment ne pouvoir continuer leurs cultures que quelques années encore sur les parcelles ouvertes avant, ou juste à la suite, de la distribution. Leur situation sera d'autant plus dramatique s'ils ne peuvent plus réaliser ces cultures dans l'avenir. La distribution de 1995 annonce une véritable rupture de leur système de production. Les dernières enquêtes qui ont été effectuées auprès d'eux révèlent un début de dynamique migratoire vers les fronts pionniers de la province de Dac Lac. Certains jeunes sont déjà partis et des requêtes ont été déposées au niveau provincial et national pour obtenir des aides pour le moment du départ. Dans certains districts de la Province l'exode a déjà commencé.

Table 4 Principaux indicateurs d'utilisation de l'espace non rizicole dans les communes de Tân Lấp, Phong Huân et Bàng Lang en 1994-1995 (données enquêtées)

	Tây	Kinh	Dao	TL	PH	BL	Tây TL	Tây PH	Tây BL
- maïs + manioc (m ²)	3100	4200	3800	3340	3000	2850	3100	3200	3000
- riz pluvial (m ²)	800	1300	9500	4200	0	500	950	0	400
- buffles + bovins (têtes)	4,5	1	3	5	4,5	4,2	6	4,8	4,6
- porcs (têtes)	2,6	3,3	3	3,8	2,5	2,7	4,2	2,4	2,6
- plantations (pieds d'arbres)	80	120	60	30	110	70	15	105	65
- produits forestiers (1000d/an)*	650	1000	1500	700	800	850	300	780	830

TL = Tân Lấp, PH = Phong Huân, BL = Bàng Lang.

* En milliers de Dong par an. 2000 Dong valent environ 1 franc français ou 0.18 dollars US.

L'inégalité de la distribution

Pour les autres la distribution a été effectuée selon le lieu de résidence de chaque ménage pour des raisons de proximité entre l'habitat et la surface de forêt qui peuvent sembler logiques. A Phong Huân et à Bàng Lang ces limites correspondent au terroir qui était exploité par les villageois avant même la collectivisation et ont par conséquent une logique sociale importante. A Tân Lấp, en revanche, ces limites datent de la période collectiviste et les *thôn* correspondent à des villages qui avaient été regroupés pour former 4 coopératives. Dans un cas comme dans l'autre, l'homogénéisation de la propriété foncière qu'on aurait pu attendre de la distribution n'a pas eu lieu.

A Nà Cho (Phong Huân), à priori la proportion importante de terres rizicoles justifie une moindre attribution de terres forestières. Mais comme les proportions retenues sont handicapantes (parce que les forêts n'ont pas encore été distribuées et que les autres villages sembleraient bénéficier d'espaces plus importants) cette attribution laisse à désirer. A Tân Lấp, le *thôn*³ concentre à la fois les surfaces rizicoles et les surfaces forestières moyennes les plus faibles. Pour les jeunes ménages rencontrés dans ce *thôn* il y a une véritable ironie à être obligé de cultiver des surfaces à la fois interdites de culture et trop petites. Pour l'avenir, de nombreuses parcelles étant réservées aux plantations à Tân Lấp en raison de l'état dégradé du couvert forestier, les ménages n'auront pas, suivant leur localisation géographique les mêmes atouts face au développement annoncé pour ces plantations.

A l'intérieur même de ces limites la distribution ne s'est pas non plus effectuée en fonction des besoins relatifs de chaque famille comme le montrent les graphiques 1 et 2. A Tân Lấp, par exemple, la majorité des ménages ayant

moins de 5000 m² de rizière en moyenne ont reçu moins de 2 ha alors que la majorité de ceux qui ont entre 5 et 10.000 m² ont reçu entre 2 et 4 ha. Dans les deux cas les ménages possédant d'importantes surfaces de rizières ont reçu des surfaces de forêt relativement importantes. La distribution ne s'est pas non plus réellement effectuée en fonction du nombre d'actifs ou de personnes composant les ménages (table 5) la moyenne reçue variant dans des proportions importantes de 0.02 ha à 8.84 ha à Tân Lấp et de 0.14 à 12.21 ha à Phong Huân pour l'ensemble des ménages et dans des proportions importantes elles aussi au sein de chaque village. Les cas que nous avons observés révèlent en effet que la superficie varie plutôt en fonction de l'ancienneté du lignage dans la zone et du contrôle qu'un lignage aurait exercé sur les terres de versant dans le passé, favorisant ainsi encore une fois les lignages anciens par rapport aux autres.

Table 5 Surfaces rizicoles et forestières moyennes disponibles par ménage selon leur lieu de résidence dans les communes de Tân Lấp et de Phong Huân (1995)

	riz*	forêt reçue (hectares)		
		moy/ménage	min/actif	max/actif
Phong Huân	5791	5,6	0,14	12,21
Ban Cua	4656	7,3	0,81	11,07
Khuôi Xom	4106	6,9	1,11	10,16
Nà Cho	7523	1,6	0,14	2,16
Nà Mang	5893	6,3	0,88	12,21
Nà Tắc	5481	6,3	0,6	8,54
Pác Kôp	7288	4,0	0,26	5,13
Tân Lấp	4172	4,7	0,02	8,84
Thôn 1	7383	3,8	0,37	4,73
Thôn 2	6208	3,0	0,02	8,84
Thôn 3	5119	1,8	0,03	3,64
Thôn 4 (Dao)	1125	8,4	0,41	11,94

* En m². Il s'agit de la surface 'utile' en riz dans le calcul de laquelle les surfaces portant des rizières cultivées en 2 saisons sont multipliées par 2. Surface moyenne par ménage.

Conclusion

Si la reconnaissance officielle de la répartition des rizières est venue entériner une situation qui avait peu de chance de se modifier rapidement, l'allocation des terres de pente est venue figer une situation dont la relative flexibilité aurait pu permettre une adaptation progressive des systèmes de production. Les modifications de ces systèmes ne sont pas encore fortement perceptibles dans les communes que nous avons étudiées car les interdits frappants les terres, distri-

buées ou non, ne sont pas encore respectés. Pour le moment, les cultures sur les premières pentes entourant les versants et les plantations d'arbres industriels et fruitiers sont les seules perspectives possibles de développement des exploitations dans le cadre de la distribution.

Les ménages sont confrontés à une situation pour laquelle ils n'ont pas eu le temps de se préparer et pour laquelle ils n'ont reçu, à l'heure actuelle, aucune aide. Dans ce contexte des adaptations du système de production ne pourront être réalisés rapidement que par les ménages dont l'assise était déjà traditionnellement solide. Il s'ensuit que des nouvelles inégalités sont bien à craindre dans l'avenir et ce sont encore surtout les *Dao* qui sembleraient être désavantagés par la nouvelle repartition. Leur cas est frappant: bienqu' ils ne peuvent pas se plaindre d'un manque d'équité dans les modalités de distribution, ils sont incapables de s'accommoder de cette nouvelle situation.

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Transition et restructuration de l'économie rurale au Nord-Vietnam

Les transformations des activités économiques des exploitations familiales d'une commune du delta du Fleuve Rouge

christophe gironde¹

Cette communication² porte sur l'évolution de l'économie familiale depuis la Décision n° 10 de 1988, qui a mis un terme à l'organisation des activités productives dans le cadre de la coopérative et des brigades de travail. Le retour à l'économie familiale s'est traduit par une amélioration et une transformation des systèmes de production agricole, et par une diversification des activités économiques dans les campagnes. Désormais libres de choisir leurs cultures, les paysans doivent également faire les avances pour ces cultures; de même les terres qui leur sont distribuées peuvent être retirées en cas de non-paiement de l'impôt. Les réformes se présentent donc comme une matrice d'opportunités mais de contraintes aussi.

Le renouveau économique au Vietnam s'accompagne d'écart croissants, entre le Nord et le Sud du pays, entre les deux grands deltas et les régions de montagne, entre les villes et les campagnes. Nous nous intéressons ici, au niveau d'une commune, aux dynamismes respectifs des foyers, des secteurs d'activité. Nous présenterons dans une première partie la commune de Minh Chau, et le changement de son économie dans l'ensemble. Nous proposerons ensuite une typologie de ces changements; celle-ci a pour objectif d'analyser dans quelle mesure les différentes catégories de foyers ont les moyens de saisir les opportunités du processus de libéralisation, et d'en surmonter les contraintes.

La commune de Minh Chau, les dynamismes économiques

La commune de Minh Chau appartient au district de Chau Giang, province de Hai Hung.³ A une cinquantaine de kilomètres au sud-est de Hanoi, Minh Chau est située dans une zone de terres basses; pour 300 ha de superficie totale, et 200 ha de superficie cultivable, 186 ha sont des rizières où l'on effectue deux cycles de paddy par an. La commune est traversée par la route 39, important axe de circulation qui rejoint la Route Nationale 5 (Hanoi-Haiphong). En 1995, Minh Chau comptait 950 foyers, pour une population de 3400 habitants.

La transformation des activités économiques concerne en premier lieu la production de base, le paddy. Les rendements ont augmenté après 1990 grâce à un travail plus soigné de la part des paysans, la diffusion de nouvelles variétés de riz et à l'utilisation de davantage d'intrants.⁴ La capacité d'irrigation/drainage a été renforcée: en 1995, les canaux ont été élargis et approfondis, la station de pompage de la commune a été équipée de machines nouvelles, d'une puissance supérieure. Ces investissements constituent un élément de sécurisation de la production rizicole, crucial dans cette zone basse où les risques d'inondation sont élevés. Certaines tâches sont désormais mécanisées: le motoculteur ou le tracteur ont remplacé le buffle pour le premier labour, des familles utilisent des pompes à moteur pour l'ajustement des niveaux d'eau dans les parcelles, les batteuses et décortiqueuses fonctionnent avec des moteurs. Dans le Delta du Fleuve Rouge, les rizières ont connu un fort développement des cultures sèches; mais à Minh Chau, seulement 5,6 pourcent de la superficie de rizières est cultivé durant l'hiver, du fait de terres trop basses et d'opportunités d'activités plus rentables. Les transformations concernent deuxièmement les parcelles d'habitation, espace comprenant la maison, la cour, le jardin et l'étang pour ceux des foyers qui en possèdent. Le développement de ces parcelles est visible d'abord dans les aménagements effectués: jardins surélevés pour y planter des arbres fruitiers, construction de murs pour protéger les productions, étangs surcreusés. Les jardins sont plantés d'espèces nouvelles, notamment les agrumes et les longaniers. Les étangs, divisés en plusieurs bassins pour la pisciculture, ne sont plus seulement une réserve de poisson pour la consommation, mais source de revenu. En élevage, les faits majeurs sont la diminution du gros bétail, d'un moindre intérêt avec la quasi-généralisation des labours au motoculteur et le nombre croissant de moyens de transport motorisés, et l'amélioration de l'élevage porcin. Dans les années 1970, les porcs étaient revendus à 30-40 kilos; aujourd'hui, pour la même durée d'engraissement, les bêtes sont vendues à 70-80 kilos. Ces progrès tiennent essentiellement à la qualité de l'alimentation.

A Minh Chau, les activités commerciales se sont développées plus fortement encore que les activités agricoles. Il s'agit d'abord du commerce entre Hanoi et les villes proches de la frontière chinoise, activité que des familles de la commune pratiquent depuis les années 1960; ce commerce a connu un 'boom' au milieu des années 1980, avec la levée des interdictions sur le commerce privé, le développement des productions chinoises, et une demande accrue des consommateurs vietnamiens. Deuxièmement, de nombreux commerces et ateliers se sont ouverts sur la route 39, qui est devenue un nouveau quartier de Minh Chau, et où s'installent les foyers dont les activités sont les plus dynamiques aujourd'hui. Enfin, comme dans toutes les communes rurales, l'augmentation des revenus et la transformation des conditions de vie des familles, visibles dans l'habitat, son ameublement, son équipement intérieur, ou dans l'augmentation des moyens

de transport, créent autant d'activités, commerciales, dans la construction et la fabrication des matériaux, les services.

La commune de Minh Chau est ainsi engagée dans un processus de développement caractérisé par un système de production de base (riz-porc) plus productif, enrichi de cultures et élevages nouveaux, une diversification des activités économiques, et une intensification de la circulation des richesses.

Typologie des transformations des activités économiques des foyers

La typologie a pour objectif d'expliquer comment les exploitations familiales ont pu s'adapter, ou non, aux réformes et à la recomposition de l'économie de leur commune. Nous avons distingué six catégories de foyers selon qu'ils :

- 1 ont ouvert dans la commune un commerce, un atelier de fabrication artisanale ou de services; ils délaissent depuis les activités agricoles;
- 2 ont développé leurs cultures et élevages à la faveur d'une accumulation foncière; ils peuvent y intégrer une activité de transformation des produits agricoles;
- 3 compensent la faiblesse de leurs activités agricoles par le développement d'activités de commerce et de service dans la commune;
- 4 n'ont pas connu de transformation sensible de leurs cultures et élevages; un membre de la famille, au moins, doit aller chercher un complément de revenu en dehors de la commune;
- 5 ne peuvent développer des activités agricoles extra-ordinaires que irrégulièrement; ils cherchent des activités complémentaires plutôt dans la commune;
- 6 sont engagés dans un processus de décapitalisation, trop endettés pour pouvoir même emprunter.

Pour chaque groupe nous présentons l'évolution d'ensemble des activités économiques et les différences par rapport aux autres groupes, les étapes et les conditions de l'accumulation depuis 1988, et la dynamique actuelle de ces exploitations familiales.

Groupe 1: Ouverture d'un commerce ou/et atelier et délaissement des activités agricoles – 13 pourcent des foyers

La transformation des activités— La transformation des activités de ces foyers se distingue par l'ouverture d'un commerce ou/et atelier, au sein duquel peuvent se combiner, vente, transformation, fabrication, services. Quelques familles y ont associé un élevage portant intensif. Les commerces d'intrants agricoles et de biens de consommation courante sont les plus représentés; mais on trouve également à Minh Chau des vendeurs de télévisions, chaînes hi-fi, machines à

laver, réfrigérateurs... Les activités de transformation concernent essentiellement le décortilage/blanchissage du paddy, le débitage du bois. Les activités de fabrication sont destinées à l'habitat (tuiles et briques, portes et grilles, mobilier), aux activités agricoles (barques, arrosoirs, caisses à grains...) et au transport (la commune compte deux 'constructeurs' de camions). Les activités de service sont principalement la réparation des véhicules et la restauration; mais on peut également louer à Minh Chau des cassettes vidéo, les services de photographes, et tout le nécessaire aux cérémonies de mariage. Hormis quelques familles installées de longue date et qui tenaient de petites boutiques aux carrefours de la route, il s'agit de foyers venus s'installer dans les années 1990.

Les étapes et les conditions de l'accumulation — Ces activités non-agricoles se sont développées à la faveur d'expériences professionnelles, soit avec les parents, soit en dehors de la commune. Dans la majorité des cas, le mari a travaillé en dehors de Minh Chau pendant plusieurs années, tandis que la femme est demeurée dans la commune, se consacrant aux travaux agricoles. Ces hommes ont servi dans l'armée, travaillé comme ouvrier dans la construction (dans les Nouvelles Zones Economiques notamment) ou l'industrie, comme cadre ou à l'étranger. Premièrement, ces métiers ont procuré un différentiel de revenu par rapport à ceux obtenus à l'époque par les paysans membres des brigades agricoles de la commune; ce qui aura pu permettre la constitution d'un premier fond d'épargne. Deuxièmement, ces expériences sont autant de savoir-faire, compétences techniques et surtout une capacité d'organisation qui ont aidé au lancement d'activités dans la commune. Enfin, ces compétences sont un faire-valoir pour emprunter les montants nécessaires au démarrage puis à l'expansion de leur activité, notamment auprès de la Banque Agricole.

Une autre source importante d'accumulation a été le commerce entre Hanoi et les villes proches de la frontière chinoise. C'est le plus souvent l'activité des épouses; elles achètent à Hanoi des marchandises qu'elles vont vendre à Lang Son, Cao Bang ou Mong Cai, et reviennent avec des produits chinois qu'elles revendent en capitale. Les propriétaires de boutique aujourd'hui installés sur la route 39 ont pratiqué ce commerce parfois de longue date; l'activité procurait un complément de revenu. Puis, avec l'autorisation du commerce privé, l'arrivée massive de produits chinois aux frontières du Vietnam et la demande urbaine en hausse, l'intensité et les revenus de ce commerce augmentent dans la seconde moitié de la décennie 1980. Il a permis aux foyers de ce groupe d'accumuler; c'est à l'issue de trois à quatre années de 'voyages' à Lang Son qu'ils ont ouvert leur commerce à Minh Chau. Certaines familles ont légué ou vendu leur parcelle située dans les quartiers d'habitation pour s'installer au bord de la route. Il n'y a aujourd'hui quasiment plus de parcelles non-occupées le long des 1500 mètres de route qui traversent la commune; et chacune de ces parcelles comprend, outre l'habitation, une boutique ou un atelier. Depuis qu'ils se sont

établis, ces foyers délaissent progressivement les activités agricoles; à l'exception d'ateliers d'élevage. On conserve les rizières distribuées, mais elles sont cultivées par d'autres foyers, le plus souvent dans le cadre d'arrangements internes à la famille, ou louées.

L'expérience professionnelle antérieure et les relations, décisives pour le démarrage, joue également un rôle très important pour la pérennité de l'entreprise. Il en est ainsi de l'approvisionnement: tel ancien cadre peut compter sur ses ex-collègues ou connaissances du Service Forestier pour la livraison du bois, des fermes d'Etat pour l'achat de poussins. De même, pour des élevages de volaille qui peuvent compter plusieurs centaines de têtes, il est crucial de pouvoir recourir à l'assistance de quelqu'un de compétent, dont on sait qu'il se déplacera par exemple. Ainsi, l'explication commune 'l'autre, il a la connaissance' a-t-elle un sens si l'on considère la connaissance comme un tissu de relations personnelles auquel on peut recourir en complément de ses propres savoir-faire. Ces appuis, qui garantissent des approvisionnements réguliers, de qualité, une assistance si nécessaire, sont moins faciles à obtenir pour les paysans n'ayant pas d'expérience autres que agricoles, ni donc de relations en dehors de la commune. Telles sont les conditions de l'innovation à Minh Chau aujourd'hui: elles exigent, outre un capital croissant, le concours de partenaires en amont et en aval de son activité propre. Depuis l'ouverture, la gamme des produits vendus ou fabriqués s'est accrue; certains commerçants, de détaillants sont devenus grossistes, et approvisionnent de plus petites boutiques, à l'intérieur des quartiers d'habitation de Minh Chau, ou dans les communes voisines. Le travail a changé: on utilise des machines électriques ou des moteurs à essence pour un travail plus rapide et plus précis, des matériaux de meilleure qualité pour des productions plus sophistiquées. Le développement des activités s'est traduit par l'augmentation du nombre de personnes qu'ils occupent; 2 à 3 personnes en moyenne y travaillent. S'il s'agit pour la majorité de membres de la famille (les parents, un ou plusieurs fils et leur épouse), les ateliers les plus importants comptent jusqu'à 6 employés à plein temps et ce durant toute l'année.

Dynamique des activités: des entreprises familiales en développement — Aujourd'hui ces familles bénéficient donc au mieux du développement d'en semble de Minh Chau; elles fournissent aux autres familles intrants, outils et services pour les activités productives, assurent la commercialisation de leurs productions, et leur vendent biens de consommation et services. Le champs d'activité dépasse le cadre de la commune, pour l'approvisionnement, les partenaires, et la vente. Les clients non-résidents représentent en effet un débouché plus important que les habitants de Minh Chau. Des habitants des communes voisines viennent s'approvisionner en articles non vendus ou en quantité insuffisante dans leur commune. Sur la route, on bénéficie des achats des gens de passage. Et pour certaines productions telles que les briques et les tuiles, des ache-

teurs viennent d'autres provinces. La gamme des activités d'un même foyer s'est élargie; il en est ainsi d'ateliers de débitage du bois qui embauchent ponctuellement des menuisiers, de vendeurs d'aliments pour le bétail ou de décortiqueurs qui y ont associé un élevage, d'ateliers qui ont commencé par la réparation des motos et qui aujourd'hui fabriquent des pièces et assemblent des petits camions. Le cumul d'activités, en un même lieu, est caractéristique du dynamisme de ces entreprises familiales.

Groupe 2: Développement des cultures et des élevages dans et autour de la parcelle d'habitation – 13 pourcent des foyers

La transformation des activités — La transformation principale des activités des foyers réside dans le développement des productions provenant de la parcelle d'habitation, réalisé à la faveur d'une accumulation foncière dont l'essentiel date des cinq dernières années. Les revenus des cultures du jardin et des élevages ont permis d'investir dans une activité non-agricole, sur place. Les boutiques et ateliers artisanaux que l'on trouve à l'intérieur des quartiers d'habitation sont cependant sans commune mesure avec ceux du groupe précédent. Cette différence se retrouve dans la localisation à l'intérieur de la commune; ainsi dans le village de Quang Uyen, les familles de ce groupe sont installées au cœur du village, de part et d'autre du chemin qui le traverse, sur les parcelles les plus hautes où les jardins et les étangs encourent le moins de risques d'inondations. Ils se distinguent du groupe 1, qui comme nous l'avons vu se consacre à ses activités *nouvelles* installés en dehors des villages (sur les routes).

Les étapes et les conditions de l'accumulation — Au milieu des années 1980, les foyers de ce groupe sont les mieux nantis de la commune. Cette aisance tient d'abord à l'héritage familial, la localisation et la taille des parcelles d'habitation en attestent, et aux positions de responsables qu'ils occupent, ou qui sont tenues par des membres de la famille. Ces foyers ont alors un accès privilégié aux ressources gérées par la coopérative (terres, engrais, équipements et machines); cette position est extrêmement importante dans le contexte de démantèlement de la coopérative, et dans la désorganisation (pour la fourniture des engrais par exemple) qui l'accompagne. Ces foyers vont être les premiers bénéficiaires des mesures d'assouplissement du système coopératif: ils voient que la garde du gros bétail va leur être confiée, ce qui leur procurera un supplément de point-travail et du fumier; ils passent des contrats rizières-porcs avec la coopérative, contrats qui sont profitables à condition d'avoir les moyens de 'se procurer' des engrais. Les foyers de ce groupe, qui comptent parmi les responsables du système ont ainsi été les premiers à en sortir: dès le début de la décennie 1980, ils développent des activités agricoles sur le mode de l'exploitation familiale qui sera réhabilité en 1988.

Comme dans le groupe précédent, on a fait du commerce entre Hanoi et les villes du nord du pays. Le commerce a permis de constituer une épargne pour acquérir des terres, les aménager et effectuer les investissements nécessaires à leur mise en valeur. La superficie cultivée a été agrandie, par la prise en adjudication ou l'achat de jardins et d'étangs. Le mouvement d'accumulation foncière est sensible à partir de 1993; il s'agit essentiellement d'étangs communaux et de parcelles utilisées auparavant par la coopérative, mais également de parcelles de jardin achetées à des familles endettées. La production de cet espace, aménagé selon le système dénommé *vac*, s'est accrue.⁵ L'amélioration est autant quantitative que qualitative. Des espèces fruitières plus rentables, agrumes et longanes, ont été plantées dans des jardins surélevés (contre les inondations) et emmurés (contre les vols). Dans leurs étangs, ces foyers avaient auparavant des poissons destinés à la consommation familiale; ils y ont développé la pisciculture en vue de la vente. L'élevage porcin est plus performant: le poids des porcs engraisés a augmenté, et c'est dans ce groupe que l'on trouve les propriétaires de truies qui ne faisaient auparavant que de l'engraissement; depuis, ils combinent reproduction, engraissement d'une partie de leurs porcelets, et engraissement de porcelets achetés. Certains foyers sont devenus fournisseurs pour d'autres familles, d'alevins, de porcelets.

Les complémentarités jardin-étang-élevage se doublent de celles obtenues par les activités de transformation des productions agricoles; les exemples les plus courants sont la fabrication d'alcool de riz et le décortiquage du paddy, activités dont les résidus servent à l'alimentation des porcs. D'autres familles ont ouvert une petite boutique où l'on trouve des biens de consommation courante. Avec le développement de ces productions et activités sur place, les familles ont arrêté de faire du commerce à distance.

Dynamique des activités: des exploitations agricoles en développement — Les exploitations familiales de ce groupe ont transformé leur système de production, même si le système *vac* n'est encore qu'en voie de développement, à l'image de la plantation récente des agrumes. Tous les intrants requis (fumier, engrais et aliments d'origine industrielle) sont utilisés, pour les cultures (fruits) et les élevages (reproduction et engraissement des porcs, pisciculture) dont les revenus sont les plus élevés. Deuxièmement, les foyers de ce groupe sont en train de sécuriser leur foncier, en l'achetant. S'il est difficile de se prononcer sur le processus d'accumulation foncière, la hausse du prix des terres après 1993 atteste de l'enjeu des adjudications et des achats des parcelles de jardin et étangs. Enfin, avec l'ouverture d'ateliers de décortiquage ou de petites boutiques, ces familles, comme celles du groupe 1, cumulent les activités en un même lieu.

Groupe 3: Développement d'activités non-agricoles dans la commune pour pallier à l'insuffisance des productions agricoles – 10 pourcent des foyers

La transformation des activités — Les cultures et les élevages n'ont pas connu les transformations que nous avons décrites pour le groupe précédent; les activités agricoles demeurent très ordinaires. Ces foyers se distinguent par le développement d'activités non-agricoles, dans la commune. Eu égard au capital engagé et aux revenus procurés, elles sont sans commune mesure avec celles du groupe 1; la clientèle est du village, les services à l'agriculture sont de proximité. Mais ces activités permettent de ne plus devoir aller travailler en dehors de Minh Chau.

Les étapes et les conditions de l'accumulation — La faiblesse des productions agricoles renvoie d'abord au cycle de vie de l'exploitation. Il s'agit pour l'essentiel de foyers jeunes; la superficie distribuée de rizières est alors limitée par le nombre de personnes.⁶ Un deuxième facteur explicatif est la localisation dans la commune: ces familles sont installées davantage à la périphérie des villages, dans des zones plus basses où les aménagements nécessaires pour sécuriser les productions des jardins et des étangs sont considérés trop coûteux. Les parcelles d'habitation, gagnées sur d'anciennes rizières, sont de petite taille, et les productions en sont d'autant réduites. Si on conserve quelques kilos de poissons destinés à la consommation familiale, les petits étangs servent davantage à la culture de liserons d'eau pour l'alimentation des porcs. A l'exception des fabricants d'alcool de riz, on engraisse qu'un porc deux fois par an. Ces foyers 'en voie d'installation' ont eu jusqu'alors d'autres priorités que l'acquisition de terres supplémentaires.

A la différence des jeunes foyers du groupe 2, les parents n'ont pas légué de terre à leurs fils. Ceux-ci ont néanmoins bénéficié d'une importante aide familiale: c'est grâce notamment à des emprunts internes à la famille qu'ils ont pu acheter une parcelle d'habitation. Le fait qu'on puisse s'établir sur une parcelle qu'on peut considérer comme la sienne par le biais du mariage semble remarquable, vu les conditions auxquelles sont actuellement tenus les jeunes foyers qui veulent s'installer dans la commune. D'autant plus qu'il s'agit ici de parcelles coûteuses, puisque situées au bord des voies secondaires où les conditions sont idéales pour l'ouverture d'une petite boutique ou pour se livrer à quelque activité de service.

Le concours de la famille a été déterminant également pour le développement d'activités. Avant son mariage, le mari ou/et la femme a/ont bénéficié du capital et des activités de ses/leurs parents: tel enfant aura pu exploiter à son compte une partie du jardin de ses parents et participer aux activités non-agricoles d'un membre de sa famille. Ces foyers ont pu épargner avant de s'installer. Certains ont poursuivi à leur compte des activités menées auparavant avec leurs parents: des filles qui ont commencé par accompagner leur mère à

Lang Son avant de commencer à faire du commerce pour leur propre compte, des proches qui ont acheté un premier équipement agricole en commun et qui depuis possèdent chacun le leur. On trouve dans cette catégorie des propriétaires de pompe à eau qui louent leurs services, des réparateurs de vélos; d'autres familles vendent sur le marché quotidien de la commune, ont de petites productions d'alcool de riz, ou des fabrications artisanales telles que des corbeilles, des balais, etc.

Dynamique des activités: des exploitations familiales parvenues à diversifier leurs activités dans la commune— Alors que les productions agricoles pour le groupe 3 ont été loin d'être spectaculaires, le groupe a pu accumuler un certain capital ces dernières années. Il a pu accumuler ce capital grâce à des activités commerciales développées en dehors de la commune dans un premier temps et à présent à Minh Chau même. Si les revenus de la réparation de vélos ou des productions artisanales et manuelles demeurent faibles, ils se distinguent par leur régularité tout au long de l'année (ces activités non-agricoles n'étant par définition pas liées aux époques de moussons). Un autre avantage de ce genre d'activités est qu'elles peuvent être cumulées. Ainsi les foyers de ce groupe ont réussi à surmonter le problème des creux d'activité entre repiquages et récoltes du paddy, et à établir la totalité de leurs activités dans la commune. Il est vrai que les dépenses d'em-ménagement (habitation, rehaussement du jardin, construction d'un puits, transformation de la première maison en cuisine et construction d'une autre maison...) absorbent une importante part du revenu de ces jeunes foyers. Ces foyers sont en outre obligés de réserver une partie de leur capacité de financement et d'emprunt pour l'achat/le renouvellement des équipements et de l'outillage nécessaires aux activités non-agricoles. Parmi les foyers les plus âgés parmi ceux de ce groupe, certains ont agrandi leur parcelle d'habitation et construit des porcheries; l'élevage des porcs, de la volaille apparaît comme la phase suivante du mode d'accumulation.

Groupe 4: Stagnation des activités agricoles, migration quasi-permanente d'un des parents à la recherche d'un complément de revenu – 30 pourcent des foyers

La transformation des activités— Hormis les productions de base (paddy, porc) qui ont augmenté, les activités n'ont pas connu de transformations significatives. Ni cultures, ni élevages ont pu être signalés dans les parcelles d'habitation. Quant aux activités non-agricoles, le groupe ne les a pas développées au sein de la commune. L'évolution est inverse de celle du groupe précédent: un ou plusieurs membres par foyer travaillent et vivent, pour des durées de plus en plus longues, en dehors de Minh Chau.

Les étapes et les conditions de l'accumulation — Dans la seconde moitié de la décennie 80, ces foyers ont bénéficié du retour au mode d'exploitation familiale, et des opportunités de faire du commerce. Les rendements dans les rizières ont progressé et l'augmentation des disponibilités alimentaires des familles a permis d'améliorer l'alimentation du bétail, complétée progressivement par des produits d'origine industrielle. L'amélioration des conditions techniques de culture s'est trouvée renforcée par la hausse des termes de l'échange entre le paddy et les intrants agricoles (en 1981, 1 kg d'engrais chimiques équivalait à 3 kg de paddy, contre 1,8 kg de paddy en novembre 1996) et par la diminution des prélèvements.⁷ Le produit et la part qui revient au producteur ont augmenté.

Table 1 Production et répartition de 1 *sao* de paddy dans la commune de Minh Chau

	<i>production</i>	<i>consommations Intermédiaires*</i>	<i>prélèvements**</i>	<i>produit paysan</i>
1981	110 kg	17,5 kg	40 kg	52,5 kg
	100%	16%	36,4%	47,6%
1996	184 kg	63 kg	25 kg	96 kg
	100%	34,2%	13,5%	52,5%

Source 80 enquêtes parmi les foyers de la commune.

* en équivalent paddy

** il s'agit des impôts sur la production, prélevés après chacune des deux récoltes annuelles de paddy.

Mais l'augmentation des productions de base a atteint aujourd'hui un pallier; pour la riziculture, ce pallier est tant technique (relatif à la poursuite de la hausse des rendements avec les mêmes variétés), qu' économique (l'utilisation de variétés à plus haut rendement n'étant pas profitable). Aujourd'hui à Minh Chau, les paysans qui utilisent les variétés hybrides relèvent de l'exception. Cette situation peut s'expliquer d'abord par l'offre, probablement loin de pouvoir satisfaire les besoins. Mais surtout, ces variétés présentent bon nombre d'inconvénients: les semences coûtent plus cher (24000 *Dong*/kilo de semences, contre 7000 *Dong* pour les variétés locales) et puis il faut en racheter à chaque cycle; ces variétés exigent davantage de fumier et de produits phyto-sanitaires car elles sont plus fragiles que les variétés locales. Et le différentiel de rendement ne serait sensible que pour le 1er cycle, tandis que pour le 2ème cycle, les risques de pourrissement lors des pluies de juin-juillet sont plus élevés qu'avec les variétés actuelles. Enfin, il s'agit de riz qui ne sont pas appréciés des consommateurs vietnamiens, et qui par conséquent se vendent moins cher, 1900 *Dong*/kg contre 2450 *Dong*/kg pour la variété cr 203 qui est la plus utilisée. Pour les foyers qui pourraient supporter les dépenses supplémentaires, il y a des investissements plus profitables que la riziculture; et pour beaucoup de familles se pose

le problème du manque de fonds au moment des avances et de l'insuffisance de la production de fumier.

Les autres productions agricoles n'ont pas connu de progrès notoires; les parcelles d'habitation sont de petite taille, souvent elles ne comportent pas de jardin ni d'étang, mais seulement une cour et quelques 'morceaux' cultivés. L'élevage porcin est demeuré limité: on engraisse un porc plus souvent que deux; les cycles ne sont pas réguliers, l'engraissement n'est pas optimal, à cause de la qualité de l'alimentation, et parce qu'il faut parfois revendre prématurément par besoin d'argent. Cette faiblesse de l'élevage concerne également la volaille, avec les quelques têtes seulement qui composent la basse-cour. Les exploitations familiales de ce groupe ne sont donc pas parvenues pas à dépasser un système de production *paddy-volaille*, en opposition au système *paddy-verger-porc* du groupe 2.

L'économie familiale dans ce groupe dépend alors des activités en dehors de la commune. Jusqu'au milieu des années 1990, pour l'ensemble des habitants de Minh Chau, le commerce Hanoi – Lang Son a constitué la meilleure opportunité de revenu complémentaire. Mais les conditions de ce commerce ont changé depuis son essor de la seconde moitié des années 1980. Aujourd'hui, les transports de marchandises achetées à la frontière chinoise et revendues à Hanoi sont beaucoup plus risqués avec le renforcement des contrôles sur les routes et la hausse des taxes. Les marges sont moins importantes par dessus le marché; les foyers qui continuent à pratiquer le système d'achat – revente doivent par conséquent y investir davantage de fonds; à moins de 10 millions de *Dong* de marchandises achetées, l'activité est considérée comme non-rentable; les fonds engagés sont de 20 à 30 millions aujourd'hui. Les familles de ce groupe n'ont pas les moyens de s'adapter à cette nouvelle donne. Aussi doivent-elles opter pour une autre formule: les femmes s'installent à Lang Son, Cao Bang ou Mong Cai pendant plusieurs semaines, voire plusieurs mois. Elles vendent à la palanche dans les rues; ce système ne requiert qu'un petit capital de départ, de l'ordre de 200 000 *Dong*, pour l'achat quotidien de fruits ou légumes que l'on revend durant la journée; mais les revenus sont moindres.⁸

Dynamique des activités: des exploitations familiales menacées — Après avoir été réhabilitée, l'exploitation familiale de ce type n'en apparaît pas moins menacée: ses activités agricoles sont devenues trop ordinaires et les membres de la famille sont séparés pendant des périodes de plus en plus longues. La trajectoire est paradoxale: le produit agricole, en dépit d'une augmentation sans précédent, est insuffisant pour satisfaire les besoins. Des voyages aller-retour sur 2 à 3 jours, aux séjours de plusieurs mois, c'est bien à un phénomène de migration quasi-permanente qu'on assiste. Le fait concerne au moins un des deux parents; hormis le Têt, l'un des deux ne rentre que pour les récoltes et repiquages ou pour prendre un peu de repos. Mais parfois ce sont les enfants aussi qui, dès

l'adolescence quittent le foyer; les filles partent comme leur mère faire du commerce, les garçons sont colporteur à Hanoi. L'évolution est à l'inverse des groupes précédents, qui ont pu développer des activités complémentaires dans la commune. Les absences des membres du groupe 4 qui se livrent à des activités commerciales en dehors de la commune se sont prolongées de plus en plus: aujourd'hui il ne s'agit plus d'un type de migration de longue durée mais bien d'une migration quasi-permanente qui touche près d'un tiers des familles de Minh Chau.

Groupe 5: Stagnation des activités agricoles, activités complémentaires dans la commune irrégulières – 30 pourcent des foyers

La transformation des activités— Les exploitations familiales de ce groupe ne sont pas non plus parvenues à transformer leur système de production. Ces foyers ont des activités complémentaires plutôt dans la commune: ils investissent dans des élevages exigeants en travail et peu en capital, travaillent pour d'autres familles. La différence entre ce groupe et le précédent traduit davantage la saisie d'opportunités qu'une stratégie.

Les étapes et les conditions de l'accumulation— Ces foyers sont installés sur la parcelle des parents du mari, parcelle qui est partagée, comme parfois la maison. Ils n'ont donc pas de production au sein de la parcelle d'habitation, le jardin étant exploité par les parents. A défaut de capital foncier et d'épargne, l'évolution des activités repose sur des activités intensives en travail. Il en est ainsi de la mise en valeur des rizières: durant l'hiver on cultivera les parties les plus hautes des parcelles, essentiellement en patate douce et pomme de terre, avec des rendements très faibles et des risques élevés. En novembre 1996, les terres de la commune ont été submergées durant 4 semaines, et les cultures d'hiver ont été perdues. Cependant, une fois les eaux retirées, certains foyers ont planté du maïs, non pour obtenir des épis car le retard dans le calendrier et la priorité accordée au cycle suivant de paddy ne permettait pas de le laisser se développer jusqu'à maturité, mais pour les pieds qui procureraient un peu de fourrage... La rentabilité ne tient alors qu'à un coût d'opportunité nul, ces foyers n'ayant d'autres activités à cette époque.

Hormis les productions agricoles ordinaires (des rizières distribuées, de la basse-cour), on investit dans de petits élevages de volaille: poulets et canards engraisés pour la revente, vente des oeufs. Les montants nécessaires à l'achat sont compris entre 50000 et 100000 *Dong*, et l'alimentation est assurée à faible coût: les poulets sont nourris avec les restes de cuisine, on emmène les canards glaner dans les rizières. Il en va différemment pour l'élevage porcin: ces foyers n'ont ni jardin ni étang pour la culture de plantes destinées à leur alimentation; et ils manquent d'argent pour l'achat d'aliments industriels. Ces activités agricoles extra-ordinaires sont irrégulières, fonction de la disponibilité en paddy ou

de la capacité d'emprunt.⁹ Il en est de même des opportunités de travailler pour d'autres familles.

Quelques familles ont investi dans l'achat d'une vache, pour la reproduction et la vente des veaux. L'investissement de départ est relativement important, mais il y a très peu de dépenses par la suite; la vache est conduite quotidiennement le long des chemins et des canaux pour son alimentation. Ce type d'investissement est caractéristique de l'accumulation des exploitations de ce groupe: des activités intensives en travail et peu en capital, des revenus plus faibles (comparé à l'élevage porcin par exemple), ou plus encore si l'on considère le revenu par jour de travail. Avec une cinquantaine de bovins dans toute la commune, ces foyers ne sont cependant pas nombreux.

Les foyers doivent emprunter pour financer les dépenses du premier cycle du paddy: paiement des labours, achat de semences et d'intrants. Ces emprunts, de l'ordre de 2 millions de *Dong* au mois de janvier, sont effectués en général auprès d'autres familles, rarement auprès de la Banque Agricole qui accorde les prêts en fonction du patrimoine familial (habitat, capital productif, biens durables). Ces emprunts 'de fonctionnement' (ils servent à l'activité la plus ordinaire qu'est la mise en valeur des rizières) sont devenus une constante de la reproduction des exploitations familiales de ce groupe. Mais elles ne peuvent pas toujours résoudre leur besoin de financement par les emprunts: en atteste l'incapacité de certains foyers à s'acquitter de l'impôt. En cas de non-paiement, après un délai en général jusqu'à la récolte suivante, les foyers peuvent se voir retirer une partie des terres qui leur ont été distribuées. Cette réglementation date de 1992; les terres distribuées et retirées passent dans la catégorie des terres en adjudication; le système conduit à une redistribution des terres entre les foyers: certains se voient retirer des terres distribuées car ils ne sont pas capables de payer l'impôt, terres que d'autres foyers, 'capables', peuvent ajouter à leur superficie distribuée en les prenant en adjudication.¹⁰ S'il est difficile de se prononcer sur l'ampleur du phénomène, car le système n'existe que depuis quatre ans, son instauration n'en est pas moins symptomatique de la différenciation à l'oeuvre entre les exploitations familiales.

Dynamique des activités: des exploitations familiales en voie d'endettement —

Comme pour le groupe précédent, le produit agricole des exploitations du groupe demeure insuffisant pour satisfaire ses besoins, et ceci malgré le développement de petits élevages. De telles activités agricoles, tout comme l'embauche dans d'autres familles, se distinguent par leur irrégularité. À l'inverse, les contraintes deviennent, elles, structurelles, à l'image des emprunts qui chaque année servent à financer le premier cycle de culture, ou des retraits de terre qui sanctionnent des situations d'endettement. Les productions de ces exploitations familiales stagnent; et leur reproduction est précarisée par les mécanismes de l'endettement.

Groupe 6: Diminution des productions agricoles, décapitalisation – 4 pourcent des foyers

La transformation des activités — L'évolution des activités des foyers de ce groupe se distingue par la diminution des productions agricoles, y compris du paddy. Nous avons pu noter la stagnation des productions, la nécessité de financer les activités ordinaires par l'emprunt et les menaces qui pèsent sur la production de base avec les retraits de rizières pour le groupe précédent. Ces mécanismes sont à un stade avancé pour le groupe 6: les foyers de ce groupe, endettés, sont engagés dans un processus de décapitalisation. La parcelle d'habitation est parfois réduite à la maison, après qu'il ait fallu vendre la surface de jardin pour rembourser des emprunts.

Les étapes et les conditions de l'accumulation — Ces foyers sont souvent handicapés par l'inactivité (maladie) ou l'absence (veuvage) d'un parent. Les ressources sont donc limitées, ce qui est vrai aussi pour le seul facteur de production qu'ils possèdent, la main d'oeuvre, sous forme de leur propre travail. La superficie cultivée a diminué: des parcelles de rizières ont été retirées; la superficie peut être réduite jusqu'à 0,5 *sao* (175 m²) de rizière par personne, minimum laissé par la commune. Dans ce groupe, c'est l'endettement qui a évolué de façon significative; les foyers sont passés d'emprunts de fonctionnement (achats de semences et intrants) à des emprunts pour la consommation (achat de riz). Et ces foyers, endettés de longue date, dont la situation est connue, ne trouvent même plus de prêteurs, marque de la pire condition économique et surtout sociale. Ils n'ont comme autres activités que les opportunités de travailler pour des familles. Mais à Minh Chau, l'embauche pour les travaux agricoles est limitée: on ne trouve guère que quelques journées de travail au moment des récoltes.

Dynamique des activités: des exploitations familiales menacées — A l'image des quelques dizaines de milliers de *Dongreçus* du Comité Populaire au moment de la préparation du Têt, il convient davantage de parler de maintien de ces exploitations que de dynamique.

Conclusion

Les trajectoires des exploitations familiales depuis 1988 montrent d'abord l'intérêt d'intégrer la période coopérative à l'analyse. C'est grâce à une épargne, des savoir-faire et des relations en dehors de la commune acquis bien avant le Renouveau, que des foyers ont pu développer les commerces, ateliers et élevages qui sont les plus dynamiques aujourd'hui. Il en est de même pour les familles qui ont accumulé du foncier grâce à leur position dans les institutions de l'ancien

système. Et grâce à ces terres, en tant que propriétaires fonciers ils ont pu encore consolider davantage leur position (économique et sociale) en sein des ces institutions. Le Renouveau, souvent assimilé au démantèlement du système coopératif, ne doit donc pas faire oublier que les transformations économiques, devenues très visibles depuis le début de la présente décennie, sont aussi le résultat de processus d'accumulation et d'initiatives qui datent d'avant les réformes.

Les années qui ont suivi le rétablissement de l'exploitation familiale après 1988 ont vu une augmentation du produit agricole; l'ensemble des familles a profité des progrès des productions de base. Le développement économique de la commune est depuis entré dans une nouvelle phase, où les productions de base n'augmentent plus de façon significative. Utiliser des variétés de riz à plus haut rendement ou engraisser davantage de porcs se heurte à un problème de rentabilité pour les producteurs.¹¹ Cette stagnation agricole contraste avec le dynamisme des activités non-agricoles. Mais le commerce, l'artisanat ou les services exigent des montants croissants de capital, des relations en amont et en aval des filières; la grande majorité des foyers ne parvient donc pas à investir dans le commerce.

Les changements révèlent des trajectoires bien distinctes selon les foyers. L'opposition entre ceux qui accumulent ou augmentent leur superficie cultivée, et ceux dont les surfaces distribuées sont menacées de retrait et dont les emprunts conduisent à décapitaliser, traduit un processus de redistribution foncière en terme de droit à exploiter les terres. Dans une commune où la culture du paddy demeure prédominante, l'évolution des exploitations familiales se distingue de par la capacité à s'occuper durant les mois de faible activité, entre repiquage et récolte. Les trois premiers groupes ont levé cette contrainte par le développement d'activités non-agricoles. A l'inverse, les activités des autres groupes se caractérisent par leur irrégularité, qu'il s'agisse de petits élevages, de commerces de produits agricoles de saison, ou des opportunités de travailler pour d'autres familles. Le développement des activités non-agricoles à Minh Chau conduit à une autre opposition majeure, selon que les activités sont pratiquées sur place, ou en dehors de la commune. Des foyers peuvent cumuler en un même lieu plusieurs activités, et développent des activités complémentaires les unes des autres; d'autres doivent multiplier les déplacements, jusqu'à migrer, à la recherche de compléments de revenu. Ces différences traduisent une recomposition de l'économie de la commune; elles sont renforcées par des facteurs d'ordre institutionnel. Avec la flambée du prix des terres vendues par le Comité Populaire, un système fiscal qui repose essentiellement sur la production rizicole, des prêts bancaires accordés en fonction de la caution que chaque famille peut présenter, les foyers les mieux nantis, engagés dans les activités non-agricoles, concentrent une proportion croissante des ressources. Après une période de croissance agricole relativement bien partagée entre les foyers, la commune de Minh Chau apparaît ainsi engagée dans un développement sans progrès agricole, dont le dynamisme n'est plus le fait des foyers-paysans.

Notes

- 1 Institut Universitaire d'Etudes du Développement de Genève; Programma Fleuve Rouge, Hanoi.
- 2 La communication se base sur les enquêtes effectuées entre août 1996 et avril 1997 dans le cadre d'une recherche de doctorat intitulée 'Libéralisation et développement agricole au Nord-Vietnam: l'impact des réformes sur l'agriculture et les paysans du delta du Fleuve Rouge (1988-1998)'.
- 3 En 1997 a eu lieu un redécoupage administratif des provinces et des districts. Minh Chau appartient désormais au district de Khoai Chau, Province de Hung Yên.
- 4 Les chiffres fournis par le Service des Statistiques du District sont de 3,4 t/ha en 1990 et de 5,14 t/ha en 1996. Pour l'année 1995, le rendement de la récolte hiver-printemps est de 5,04 t/ha et celui de la récolte été-automne de 4,4 t/ha.
- 5 vac sont les initiales en vietnamien des trois activités pratiquées dans la parcelle d'habitation, cultures du jardin (*Vuon*), pisciculture dans l'étang (*Ao*) et élevage (*Chan nuoi*).
- 6 Les enfants nés après le 1er avril 1994 n'ont pas droit à la terre distribuée.
- 7 En juin 1996, 1 kg de paddy = 1800; 1 \$ = 11000 *Dong*.
- 8 Les commerçants qui font les voyages Hanoi-Lang Son nous ont dit réaliser un bénéfice compris entre 250000 et 40'000 *Dong* par voyage, pour une durée de 3 à 5 jours; ils peuvent effectuer 6 à 8 voyages les mois où ils se consacrent pleinement à cette activité, soit un revenu compris entre 2 et 3 millions de *Dong*. Le montant est bien supérieur aux 300000 *Dong* par mois que l'on peut rapporter après paiement du logement et de la nourriture quand on reste à Lang Son pour vendre sur place.
- 9 Nous distinguons les activités agricoles 'ordinaires', la mise en valeur des rizières distribuées, l'engraissement de 2/3 porcs par an et la volaille de basse-cour, des activités 'extra-ordinaires', qui comprennent les cultures et élevages en supplément des premières.
- 10 L'adjudication consiste en la location à la commune d'une parcelle pour une durée d'une à trois années. Il s'agit des terres qui restent après distribution (terres de 5 pourcent), ou comme dans ce cas de parcelles qui ont été retirées.
- 11 Pour l'élevage porcin, on peut se référer à Katell Le Goulven (1996). L'auteur montre que l'accroissement de la demande de viande porcine, si elle s'est traduit par une hausse du prix au consommateur, n'a pas profité aux producteurs, mais aux intermédiaires.

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On becoming a more diversified countryside

Some observations on socio-economic changes in two Northern Vietnamese villages

Ie van sinh¹

Nation wide statistical data and macro-level research have cast light on various aspects of the socio-economic change underway in rural Vietnam since *Doi Moi* (renovation). However there have been few empirical studies on the impact of the reforms on developments at the grass-roots level. Current research on this subject seems to imply that the impact of socio-economic change has been homogeneous without taking into account factors such as geography, trends and social groups. This may give rise to misleading interpretations of the transitional process in rural Vietnam at the present time.

After more than a decade of renovation during which collectivisation has been replaced by individual household production, the landscape of the Vietnamese countryside has undergone a radical transformation. One of the far-reaching effects of the reforms – the main feature being the transfer of cooperative farmland to individual peasant families under the household contract scheme – was the profound changes in the countryside together with the disappearance of the cooperative itself (Kerkvliet & Nguyen 1993).² However, there remain some questions that need to be cleared up. How was farmland actually allocated to the peasants following Resolution 10 of August 1988? Did the communes and villages carry out land distribution simultaneously and was this campaign implemented in accordance with strict guidelines as was the case with the land reforms in North Vietnam in the mid-nineteen fifties? Data gathered from 1991 to early 1997 in Thinh Liet and Da Ton, two communes just outside Hanoi, indicate that local factors such as traditions, geo-social environment and the role of individual cooperatives did play a major role in influencing the way in which land allocation took place. This diversity exists not only between the two communes but also among different hamlets, particularly those of the Thinh Liet commune. Despite the fact that land allocation in these two communes was far from being perfect, it has revitalised and diversified economic activities.³ It also helped open up new directions in social relations, bring more welfare to the local people, and revive age-old ceremonies and rituals which had been suppressed in previous decades.

In this contribution I shall focus on the effects of the reforms by analysing and comparing the impact of renovation policies on developments in two sub-urban communes of Hanoi.

Historical background

According to the reference book *Names of Vietnamese villages and communes at the end of the 19th century*, the Thinh Liet commune, located just five km to the south of Hanoi, had 6 hamlets (villages) called Giap Nhat, Giap Nhi, Giap Tu, Giap Luc, Giap That and Giap Bat, forming a part of Hoang Mai canton, Thanh Tri district, Thuong Tin prefecture, Son Nam Thuong region.⁴ There were no data available about the ratio of farmers to the total population of Thinh Liet during the pre-colonial period. But due to the commune's proximity to Hanoi, one can assume that, for various reasons, the number of non-farming inhabitants in Thinh Liet did increase during more than a half century when the French authorities were engaged in building and expanding the city. Therefore, when the first Indochina war ended and land reforms were carried out in North Vietnam in 1955 and 1956, farmers only accounted for about 40 percent of the households in Thinh Liet.⁵ The land reforms team confiscated farmland owned by landlords and other categories of land belonging to families of notables, pagodas etc. and distributed them, on the basis of equality, to all inhabitants, regardless of whether they were previously engaged in agricultural production or not. As a result, 60 percent of the non-farming families became peasants and, soon afterwards, also members of the cooperatives. As time went on, cooperatives were set up at the sub-hamlet level (1959), at the level of a group of sub-hamlets (1960-61), at the hamlet level (1962), at the multi-hamlet level (1967), and finally at the commune level (1978). In 1988, there was a return to the pre-1978 period, and the commune-level cooperative was split into two cooperatives: Dong Thap Cooperative covering Giap Tu hamlet; and Thinh Liet cooperative covering Giap Nhat and Giap Nhi hamlets.

Since 1956, the Hanoi Transports Lorries Enterprise was the first organ authorised to establish its quarters in (the) Thinh Liet commune. Others followed, and after four decades there are now 36 entities of various kinds operating in the commune: enterprises, factories, a railway station, a bus station etc., not to mention housing facilities for the personnel involved. Throughout this period, neither the cooperatives nor the peasants were really keen on keeping land to themselves. In fact, they had a vested interest in keeping these agencies and enterprises within their territory, because, as the peasants and commune officials themselves told me, the presence of these outside entities was beneficial to them. In return to 'playing host' to these outsiders – all public enterprises – the cooperatives enjoyed special privileges such as reduction of the tax rate and lowering of

the amount of paddy and other provisions due annually to the State. Furthermore a number of local people took up jobs offered by these enterprises, jobs that gave them income security without having to toil in the paddy fields.⁶ During the cooperative period, most young people in rural areas cherished the hope that, through higher education, one day they might escape the poverty and boredom of rural life and become a cadre in the State bureaucracy, a skilled worker or join the army for an officer's career etc. The youths in Thinh Liet were no exception, and thanks to the commune's proximity to Hanoi, the chances for them to achieve these goals were considerably greater than their counterparts living in remote areas. Members of the landless and non-farming families who were given land during land reforms were among the first who tried to join the contingent of government cadres, followed later by other farming households. By the end of the nineteen eighties, farming households accounted for only 30 percent of the total households in the Thinh Liet commune.

In July 1973, three northern hamlets (Giap Luc, Giap That, Giap Bat) became part of metropolitan Hanoi, renamed as Giap Bat and Tan Mai precincts of Hai Ba Trung district. Henceforth the Thinh Liet commune had only three hamlets: Giap Nhat, Giap Nhi on the western bank, and Giap Tu on the eastern bank of Set river which served as an outlet for the waste water of the capital city.

The commune-level cooperative was set up at the end of 1978, combining all existing production teams while the management boards of the two cooperatives merged. The aim was to achieve production on a 'big scale' with more efficiency. Instead, this new set-up gave rise to conflicts of interest between the inhabitants of two hamlets Giap Tu and Giap Nhi (by then, Giap Nhat had so few peasants that these had to join one of the five sub-hamlets of Giap Nhi in forming a production team). The situation was further exacerbated by a personal feud between their former cooperative leaders.⁷ After a decade of existence marked by numerous petitions sent by Giap Tu peasants to the authorities in Thanh Tri district and even in Hanoi, the commune-level cooperative was finally abolished in 1988.

The Da Ton commune is located in the southernmost part of Gia Lam district, 12 km to the east of Hanoi. It lies on the left bank of the Red River. Through the years, different dynasties and regimes have more than once drawn and redrawn the boundaries of the commune through royal edicts and administrative measures.⁸ Today, the Da Ton commune comprises five hamlets (Dao Xuyen, Thuan Ton, Le Xa, Ngoc Dong and Khoan Te). It has an area of 484.5 hectares of arable land, and a population of 8,623 inhabitants.⁹

When collectivisation began in North Vietnam in the late 1950s, small-size cooperatives were set up in all five hamlets of Da Ton, the smallest covering just 11 households (Dao Xuyen hamlet) and the biggest covering 48 households. Cultivated lands of 17 individual households were pooled into one single plot when Da Ton cooperative re-mapped its paddy fields by the end of the nineteen seventies (see Tran Quoc Vuong *et al* 1990).¹⁰

While cooperatives were supposed to be set up on a voluntary basis, the first decade of their existence was marked by major efforts of the authorities to entice and even coerce peasants to follow the path of cooperativization and to rapidly expand the hamlet-level cooperatives. Yet, the peasants opposed the working pattern which they described as 'no one sheds tears over the common father' by demanding land for their own use and threatened to withdraw from the cooperatives. This happened not only in the Da Ton commune, but also in the Thinh Liet commune and further afield, for example, in the Vu Thang commune (Kien Xuong district, Thai Binh province) which later gained fame for having one of the most advanced farming cooperatives in the country. I myself undertook a survey of this commune in 1980. In the face of overt opposition, the cooperatives would allow their members to withdraw on the condition that they agreed to accept those pieces of land usually least suitable for cultivation, either arid lots or land far removed from irrigation sources. That was often enough to pull recalcitrant peasants back to the fold before long.

In 1969, seven cooperatives were merged into the commune-level Da Ton cooperative which lasted just the duration of 3 harvest seasons. After that, it had to be downgraded to hamlet-level cooperatives because the large cooperative did not live up to expectations of management efficiency and higher production. Part of the problem was blamed on petty parochialism which was deeply rooted in the hamlets. In 1976, all hamlet-level cooperatives were again merged, and the 2,248 farm hands were divided into 28 production teams, 18 of which were involved in paddy production teams accounting for 52 percent of the labour force, while the remaining teams were engaged in livestock breeding, irrigation, seeds cultivation, plant protection, machine repairs, handicrafts, security etc.

By the end of 1970, Da Ton became one of the five best known cooperatives near the capital of Hanoi. Its Chairman was awarded the title of Labour Hero and was elected to the National Assembly (8th Legislature). The cooperative was the object of frequent visits by top officials of the Communist Party and government leaders along with their foreign guests. As a showcase of success, in the nineteen eighties it received assistance from Hanoi City and the central authorities to start a program for the 'comprehensive development of the rural economy and improving people's living conditions' in which participated the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Forestry, the Vietnamese Institute of Sciences, the National Institute of Nutrition, the Central Institute for Marine Research and Hanoi's Agricultural College no. 1. However living conditions after the war's end did not improve. A leading figure of Da Ton cooperative told me that each member of the cooperative normally received only 11 kilograms of rice per month, and food shortage was quite commonplace, lasting from 1 to 3 months each year. Meanwhile the cooperative had to pay all taxes, carry out a variety of obligations and make other 'voluntary' contributions to the State. Each year the

cooperative had to remit to the State 272 tons of paddy as taxes, and 120 tons of pork as obligation. As for the remaining paddy, 50 percent was distributed to the cooperative members in keeping with the work-points system, 20 percent allocated to various funds, 10 percent reserved for preparing seedlings, and 20 percent to be sold to the State as 'voluntary' contributions. Peasants in both Da Ton and The Think Liet communes resisted quietly this oppressive cooperative economy, which was theoretically based on egalitarian principles but was in fact a refined tributary system serving the State. They devoted their energy instead to their '5 percent land' – pieces of land that were allocated to all members of the cooperative for their own use, so called because it accounted for 5 percent of the total area of farmland of the cooperative. It was this land that accounted for 40 to 60 percent of their family incomes. In various interviews, peasants of the Think Liet and the Da Ton communes stated that they wouldn't be such fools to give the cooperative their best manure, and they wouldn't work as hard on the communal fields as they would on their own '5 percent land'.¹¹ While in theory the cooperatives had more than enough manpower for various agricultural tasks, the management often had difficulty in finding sufficient labour force during the crucial periods of transplanting rice seedlings and harvesting. Sometimes guards had to be posted at the hamlet gates to keep women on the fields, preventing them from sneaking out to the market.¹²

In Think Liet, slow harvesting often left paddy over-ripening in the fields, and soldiers and secondary school students were mobilised to help the cooperative in harvesting paddy. It was a big paradox to see hungry peasants adopting an indifferent attitude toward paddy harvesting in the cooperatives.

Thus, in Dan Ton and Think Liet the cooperatives could not by themselves solve inherent contradictions in interest: (1) Interest of the State (taxes, obligations, contributions); (2) Collective interest (production funds, social funds...); (3) Interest of the labourers (paddy equivalent of work points).

With the benefits of hindsight, in relative terms cooperativization was particularly identifiable with low living standards, if not downright poverty, in both Think Liet and Da Ton communes during the pre-*Doi Moi* period. But different trends in development were already noticeable. While the economy of Think Liet – because of its proximity to Hanoi – began to incorporate urban elements, Da Ton remained an exclusively agricultural economy. This rural/urban connection to great extent accounts for the vastly different courses of development of these two communes since *Doi Moi*.

De-collectivisation of the land

In studying the impact of renovation policies on rural Vietnam, one tends to overlook the fact that the role of the cooperatives has gradually decreased since

the implementation of the socialist construction of the Vietnamese countryside in the late nineteen fifties. Some peasants ironically remarked that the cooperatives have no functions left once collective land was transferred to peasant households. It is worth noticing that the mass media and specialist publications have avoided using the iconoclastic term 'de-collectivisation' to describe this process. Instead, for ideological reasons they stress that 'the basic aims of economic renovation in agriculture is the elimination of the subsidy-bureaucratic mechanism and the shift to the market system under State management and in keeping with socialist orientations' (Truong Thi Tien 1996; Nguyen Xuan Nguyen 1995).

Studying the impact of rural realities on policy makers, Kerkvliet pointed out that the process of de-collectivisation in Vietnam should not be looked upon simply as a reaction to the momentous changes taking place in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, but rather as an emulation of the Chinese experience, which came about in order to resolve the tension between a large segment of the peasantry who were generally sceptical about, if not opposed to cooperativization, and the central authorities who tried to remove this opposition (see Kerkvliet 1993). Indeed, Kerkvliet regards this as the main factor that underlines the change in policy and the subsequent implementation of *Doi Moi* with respect to Vietnam's agricultural economy.

In dealing with changes in rural Vietnam following renovation, a number of macro-level research papers have given the readers some general knowledge about the process of de-collectivisation. Yet, in fact, the process of allocating farmland has evolved quite differently in various communes and villages. Data collected from the Thinh Liet and Da Ton communes show that renovation has different effects on the people of these two communes over the past decade.

Allocating the farmland of the cooperative

Instruction no. 100 (Contract 100), issued on January 13, 1981, gave official approval to the 'illegal contract system' which had been going on in the countryside. In retrospect, this measure was the first crack in the orthodox policy on collectivisation when the cooperative was allowed to divide farmland into small plots and allocate them to contract recipients. Moreover 3 of 8 components in the production cycle were scrapped. However, Instruction no. 100 did not change the socio-economic structure of the cooperatives, since it was meant as a stop-gap measure to solve the short-term problem of severe food shortage. It is worth remembering the headlines carried by the party's official paper *Nhan Dan* (People's Daily) on its front page in the late nineteen seventies, such as: 'How to solve the food problem facing society today?'

Instruction no. 100 was carried out in Thinh Liet, and a year later in Da Ton. There are some broad similarities in the implementation of this instruction in both communes:

1 The contract recipients are cooperative members (main labourers) who have the responsibility to cultivate the land and harvest the crops, then deliver all the products to the cooperative. Afterwards they can keep for themselves what remained in excess of the delivery quota as provided for in the contract. They are subject to sanctions if the delivery quota was not met nor fulfilled.

2 The production teams must review each year land allocation. By computing the number of main labourers and the total farmland, the team then decides on how much land to be allocated to each main labourer. Farmland is classified into various categories ranging from the best to the poorest. It is shared out equally to contract recipients who would eventually receive land from all the various categories of land.

3 Working through the production teams, the cooperative lays down the contract delivery quota (100 kg of dry paddy per harvest in Da Ton, 140 kg of dry paddy in Thinh Liet) and assumes the responsibility of preparing and harrowing the land, providing seeds, materials, fertilisers and insecticides.

4 The cooperative takes delivery of all products, pays taxes to the State and fulfills its obligations in contributing food and other provisions to the State, after deductions for various cooperative-run funds and for remuneration to officials indirectly associated with production. It also works out the average income of the cooperative based on different levels of incomes in terms of paddy and other products received from various production teams for computing the average work point in order to remunerate contract recipients according to the area of land they have been allocated (14 work points per harvest/*sao* in Da Ton, and 9.5 work points per harvest/*sao* in Thinh Liet).

During the early stages, this contract system did give incentives to peasants for working harder to earn extra benefits beyond of the contract delivery quota. Yet, while the cooperative kept raising the quota each year, it did not provide its members adequate supplies of fertilisers and insecticides to meet production demands. It did not take long for the peasants to realise that this contract system did not bring them any real advantages. As a result, they returned land to the cooperatives, leaving behind considerable 'arrear' in terms of products still due to the cooperative under the contract system. This occurred quite often in the early nineteen eighties, and long after the demise of 'Contract 100', in 1995 Da Ton cooperative was able to recover 56 tons of paddy in payments of arrears incurred years ago by its members.¹³

With regards to *Doi Moi* policy starting in the late nineteen eighties, data gathered from the Da Ton and Thinh Liet communes show that in implementing Resolution no. 10 (1988) of the cpv's Politburo and Decree no. 64 (1993) of the Vietnamese Government, the cooperatives did spend considerable time to discuss with its members in working out a set of rules aimed at allocating collective farmland to peasant households in an equitable manner.¹⁴

In the Da Ton commune, Resolution no. 10 was implemented by the Co-operative in 1988. Land was allocated for a period of 5 years (Resolution no. 10 allowed up to 15 years). Each main labourer was given a fixed portion of land (5 *sao* or 4 *sao* of land, depending on the number of fixed plots and the total land area at the disposal of each production team) whereas a secondary farm hand would receive a smaller plot of land. The cooperative also disbanded 10 teams not directly engaged in rice cultivation. Their members were sent back to their own hamlets where they could join the 18 local production teams and the seeding team and where they could apply for land under contract. Thus with the implementation of Resolution no. 10, the cooperative model which had been omnipresent on the rural scene towards the end of the nineteen seventies no longer had a basis for continued existence.

The production team divided farmland into 4 categories of land to be allocated evenly among all peasants. For example, a main labourer was to be given a fixed portion of land (five *sao*, or 1800 m²) but would in actual fact receive four different plots of land. There were various obligations such as various taxes, irrigation fees, welfare funds, public labour etc., which the contract recipients had to fulfil. Henceforth, the cooperative, formerly functioning as de-facto owner and production manager, had its role reduced to that of a provider of limited services to the peasants. Even in its new capacity, the cooperative has proven to be less efficient than the network of private groups and individuals in supplying insecticides, fertilisers and repairing agricultural machinery and other equipment. But given the heavy dependence of peasant households on public irrigation system dating back from the cooperative period, they still needed the cooperative when it came to water facilities. This was to be the major role still played by the Da Ton Cooperative as a service organisation.

In 1995, the Da Ton commune again allocated arable land to its inhabitants for a period of 20 years. The list made public in November 1994 consists 7,593 recipients, including 543 non-farming individuals and 116 families of martyrs (those killed on duty during the war), out of a total population of 8,843. All in all, out of a total farmland area of 434.57 hectares, 389.65 hectares were distributed. As compared with land allocation in 1988, the 1995 campaign was highlighted by the following:

- 1 Land allocation was carried out by the People's Committee of the Commune.
- 2 A part of non-farming households also received land. Families of martyrs were given each one *sao* of land, and they were exempted from most taxes and various contributions.¹⁵
- 3 Each main labour hand was allocated 1.5 fixed portion of land (that is 1.5 *sao*), while each secondary labour hand was allocated 1 fixed portion of land.
- 4 26 hectares of remaining farmland remained under the management of the Commune People's Committee for bids on production projects. In addition, 56 hectares of orchard land and ponds were retained as collective property.

In the Think Liet commune, the cooperatives carried out land allocation in 1990 (Giap Tu) and in 1991-1992 (Giap Nhat and Giap Nhi hamlets), based on criteria different from those applied in the Da Ton commune. Farmland was divided, in terms of income generating capacity, into three categories: each fixed portion of land in Zone a had 576 m², in Zone b 720 m², in Zone c 1,260 m². Of course, not every household could have access to land in zone a, which was mainly reserved for families of martyrs and wounded war veterans.

Furthermore, the Think Liet commune seemed to discriminate against former recipients of ration-cards for the purchase of food and other basic products, mainly cadres and state-employed workers. After the abandonment of the coupon system, children of state-employed fathers and farming mothers were not eligible for land allocation.¹⁶ The cooperative in Giap Nhi hamlet took a more generous attitude by distributing land to half of the children in this category. No land was allocated to members who had left the cooperative to join factories and enterprises in urban areas and who returned to their homes on early retirement or because of poor health.

Differences in the pace and variations in methods of implementing Resolution no. 10 in the Think Liet commune underline the vagaries of the transition process from collective system to household production in a commune where there are more than one cooperative. In the case of Think Liet it was the cooperatives, and not the People's Committees, who played a leading role in the transformation process as illustrated in table 1.

In both the Think Liet and Da Ton communes, the de-collectivisation process under the impact of *Doi Moi* has practically deprived the cooperatives of their socio-economic roles. Yet this process did not take place at the same pace and in the same manner in the two communes due to differences in geo-social environment, in the role played by individual cooperatives and in the peasants' attitude vis-à-vis land allocation. In the Think Liet commune, the Dong Thap Cooperative (Giap Tu) carried out land allocation without a hitch, while things did not go quite smoothly at the Think Liet cooperative which could only complete the process in 2 rounds. First the cooperative was found violating the principle of equality by allocating one fixed portion of land to two children under 12. There were also legal claims for land allocation by some inhabitants who according to local authorities were no longer members of the cooperative when the program started. Except these few incidents, there was general satisfaction among the peasants regarding the results of the whole campaign.

In the Da Ton commune, land allocation was faced with more problems revolving around the principle of equality. The commune set criteria giving 1.5 fixed portion of land to a main farmland and only 1 fixed portion to a secondary farmland. Moreover the question of the age requirements also caused disputes among cooperative members. The Hanoi People's Committee did not approve

the way the Da Ton commune handled its land allocation and there were talks of a possible new round of land distribution.

Table 1 Diversity in land distribution in the two cooperatives of Think Liet

<i>household member</i>	<i>Think Liet Commune</i>		
	<i>Dong Thap coop</i>	<i>Think Liet coop</i>	
	<i>Giap Tu</i> <i>1990</i>	<i>Giap Nhat</i> <i>2.1991</i>	<i>Giap Nhi</i> <i>2.1991</i>
1 father (non-farming) mother (farming)	no land allocation to father	no land allocation to father	no land allocation to father
2 father (farming) mother (non-farming)	no land allocation to mother and children	no land allocation to mother and half of the children	no land allocation to father and half of the children
3 father (farming) mother (farming)	land allocation to father mother and all children (except those who are government employees)	land allocation to father mother and all children (except those who are government employees)	land allocation to father, mother, all children (except those who are government employees)
4 families of martyrs, wounded war veterans (men and women)	Entitled to choose plots of land	Entitled to choose plots of land	Entitled to choose plots of land
5 three categories of land and their respective areas in terms of a fixed portion of land	A: 1.6 <i>sao</i> (576 m ²) B: 2.0 <i>sao</i> (720m ²) C: 3.5 <i>sao</i> (1.260m ²)	A: 1 <i>sao</i> (360 m ²) B: 1.6 <i>sao</i> (576m ²) C: 2.3 <i>sao</i> (828m ²)	A: 1 <i>sao</i> (360 m ²) B: 1.4 <i>sao</i> (504 m ²) C: 2.2 <i>sao</i> (792 m ²)
6 age category	irrespective of age each person is given one portion of land	two children below 12 years are given one portion of land	irrespective of age except for children who are born after November 1, 1991
7 taxes and other contributions	0 kg of paddy/year. No differences between various categories of land. No new taxes or obligations since 1990		

Source Own survey in 1992-1997.

Economic diversification and rural change

Peasants of both the Think Liet and Da Ton communes have benefitted a great deal from the reforms. After 1986, the State abolished the system of food

procurement which some peasants described as 'plunder disguised as purchase, giving away disguised as selling'. With the abolishment of control posts around the villages during the centrally planned economy period, there were no more restrictions on the movement of people and trade. Nowadays, individual households can freely sell their produce anywhere they can obtain a good price. The peasants in Da Ton and particularly in Thanh Liet are daily witnessing the impact of a newly unshackled economy moving relentlessly in the direction of the market economy with plenty of opportunities but not without risks. This is something they could never dream of during the cooperative era: becoming rich themselves.

In my view, one should look at the dynamic growth of the rural economy in these two suburban communes of Hanoi from the perspectives of peasants themselves who take full responsibility for exploiting their own land and are entitled to enjoy the fruits of their labour in the new socio-economic environment brought about by *Doi Moi*. How land has become a commodity and how this has made peasants more flexible and enterprising as they face new opportunities and more risks in contrast with the stagnant cooperative period are subjects which I will treat in this paper.

Farmland as a commodity

During the cooperative period, farmland was not regarded as the property of individual peasant households. But in the early nineteen nineties, a wave of 'land fever' began to grip major towns and cities, and as a result land became a commodity of special value for peasants in Thinh Liet located just outside Hanoi. People came to buy land in Thinh Liet and as prices soared, many peasants hurriedly filled their ponds in order to have more land for sale. I often heard local peasants remark that 50 years of hard work could never give them such big sums of money, and therefore land sale went on unabated.

Things were quite different in the Da Ton commune where demand for land was minimal. For example a peasant could sell 120 m² of a garden plot to a fellow villager for just 10 million *Dong* and there were few buyers. But in Thinh Liet the same amount of land could give you 360 million *Dong*, and plots of land located near bus stations and along Highway One could fetch as much as five million *Dong* per square meter. Many peasants sold their land and shifted to trade and services. But many others faced a dilemma, when the land fever cooled down by the end of 1995.¹⁷ To obtain more information, I interviewed a number of persons in Da Ton and Thinh Liet in February and March 1997. In Da Ton there was hardly any talk about land sale. But land was a big subject in Thinh Liet where people boldly asked me to bring prospective buyers to them. One peasant lamented that if in 1994 he was not too demanding he could have sold his 200m²-plot of land for 600 million *Dong*.

Thus, immediately after land allocation was carried out by the cooperatives, the land situation became most complicated. From 1985 to 1989, the cooperative allocated nearly one hectare of land to every inhabitant with the approval of the Thanh Tri district authorities, yet by March 1995 the area of farmland decreased by 28.4 hectare, from 194,8 hectares down to 166.4 hectares. And all this took place without the sanction of any competent authority whatsoever.¹⁸

Farmland and agricultural production

In the Da Ton commune there is a very big difference in productivity and paddy yields between the pre-renovation years and the period following it.¹⁹

Table 2 Paddy yields in Da Ton between the two periods before and after decollectivization

<i>year</i>	<i>ton/ha/year</i>	<i>year</i>	<i>spring crop(ton/ha)</i>	<i>summer crop(ton/ha)</i>	<i>ton/ha/year</i>
	n.a.	1990	4,50	3,46	7,96
1981	4,8	1991	2,82	4,50	7,32
1982	6,3	1992	4,25	4,02	8,27
1983	6,1	1993	4,95	4,93	9,88
	n.a.	1994	4,58	1,85	6,43
	n.a.	1995	4,22	4,61	8,82
1986	7,1	1996	4,80	4,20	9,00

Source Documents provided by Da Ton People's Committee, 1997

Comparative data show that the average annual paddy yield of family households in Da Ton was higher than during the cooperative period by 2 tons per hectare. For cultivating 389 hectares of rice fields in Da Ton, it took the households only one-third of the labour time as compared with total time consumed by the cooperative during the collective period, while paddy production increased by 700-750 tons per annum. Even so, peasants soon found out that there were more profitable ways of earning a living than the usual farm work. According to their calculations, each *sao* gave them 300 kg of paddy: 80 kg were used to meet the previous season's production costs, 120 kg for paying taxes and various contributions, thus leaving them only 100 kg at their disposal.

Labour for hire made its appearance soon after land allocation. Peasants who had little land and no capital often worked as hired hands to supplement their meagre family income. In recent years, an estimated 200 to 300 inhabitants of Da Ton went each day to neighbouring Bat Trang village to work in the pottery kilns, while outside labourers also came to work in Da Ton on a daily wage for peasant households engaged in trading, pottery and other services.

In the wake of renovation, the basically agricultural economy gradually turned into an 'agriculture-handicraft-trade' mix. By the end of the nineteen eighties, several families in Da Ton with their own capital started their pottery kilns after learning the trade from nearby the Bat Trang commune. Each month, after deducting raw material and labour costs, each pottery kiln would earn a net profit from 400.000 to 450.000 *Dong*. These relatively profitable early ventures lured other peasant households to join the pottery trade with money borrowed from the local credit bank, from relatives and, in a few cases, from usurers. By the end of 1993, Da Ton had about 300 pottery kilns. This rush for the pottery trade did not turn out to be a success for everyone. Soon those with little capital and inadequate technical know-how began to drop out, and in 1996 there were just 15 families left in the trade, operating at a low profit margin.

During the cooperative period, the Da Ton commune had only one cooperative store, located near Bun Market, where essential necessities such as salt, fish sauce, kerosene etc. were sold. Once or twice each month, the State food store from the district sent down some pork to the commune to be sold to the peasants not with cash but with coupons these peasants had received from selling their pigs to the State. But in actual fact pork was not always available to those holding such coupons which in many cases became worthless.

Yet, one decade after renovation, Bun Market and the area lying along the inter-district road became a busy trade and service centre serving not only the Da Ton commune but also neighbouring communes as well. Since the early nineteen nineties, some enterprising inhabitants of Da Ton rented service facilities previously run by the cooperative, while others bought small plots of land along the road. Then came shops and residential houses, built in urban style in contrast with the other dwellings in the commune. Most of the items sold in Hanoi shops could be found here. There were 3 jewellery shops, 2 shops specialising in pet birds and ornamental plants. These are just a few examples of the economic dynamism facilitated by renovation, although the benefits thereof were not shared by all local residents.

The situation was different in Think Liet with respect to land cultivation. In Da Ton, almost every household was engaged in paddy cultivation (a few let relatives or friends cultivate their land practically free of charge). But in Think Liet, a few years after land allocation, most peasant households stopped farm work and took up other occupations, renting out their land for big profits. For example, in 1992, a peasant in hamlet no. 5 of Giap Nhi rented out 2.484m² of rice land for 1.200.000 *Dong* for a period of one year.²⁰ Of course, not all plots of farmland were suitable for exploitation. For instance in 1997, about ten *mau* of land which could be used for fish farming were lying idle in Giap Tu, simply because they had poor access to irrigation water.

In fact, during the cooperative period, fish farming had already generated substantial incomes for the residents of Think Liet where, after the Spring

paddy harvest (in May each year), water from the Set river was pumped onto the fields for fish farming. After 1975, it became one of the main occupations in the commune, and each kilogram of fish delivered to the State was equivalent in value to 4 kilograms of paddy. This provided an incentive to peasants in the period following land allocation to raise fish, on an individual basis, in plots of land with an area from 10 to 30 hectares. These plots were provided with large embankments, in addition to an elaborate network of a water supply and drainage ditches that had been built during the cooperative period. In fact, from 1991 to 1993, a number of peasants whose plots of land lay next to one another formed separate teams and carried out fish farming on a rotation basis. The fish farmers had to pay agricultural tax for the whole year although they were engaged in this activity only part of the year. In addition he was to deliver to the owner of the plot of land about 50 kg of fish in due time, taking into account current market prices, and must drain water from the fields so that the rightful owner could carry out paddy planting when the time comes. It was realised after two consecutive seasons that this working pattern did not yield satisfactory returns to fish farmers due to their lack of expertise, but also because there were too many people literally fishing in the same pond. As a consequence, the fish teams reduced their membership and by the end of 1995 there remained in Think Liet only 6 major contractors and about ten small teams engaged in fish farming, each exploiting a surface from one half to 2 hectares. A fish contractor told me in March 1997 that there were about 30 fish farmers in Giap Nhi hamlet, and a smaller number in Giap Tu.

In the Think Liet commune 2.800 inhabitants were allocated land in 1990, 1991 and 1992. Yet a few years later, hardly anyone was found engaged in rice cultivation. Those still involved in agricultural work consisted of a few dozens of fish farmers who operated quite differently from the cooperative period. For instance, in 1996 a five-man group of contractors in Ngoi area rented 19 hectares of land from 349 individuals, having to pay each of them 600.000 *Dong* per annum. The production expenditures of the group are listed as follows:²¹

- 213 million *Dong* as payment to the recipients of land usage rights;
- 22.3 million *Dong* in agricultural tax;
- 50 million *Dong* as payment for power consumption;
- 154 million *Dong* for purchasing breeding stocks;
- 20 million *Dong* for hiring extra labour used in catching fish (not engaged in fish raising).

From 1992 to 1994, a group of 26 persons jointly rented 24 hectares from 404 individuals persons in an area called Tau and set up a fish farm there. Since 1995 there was just one fish contractor left in the whole area, employing 6 full-time workers who were paid in cash and food.