

Social Capital in Vietnam

- On the Basis of Survey Reports on Urban and Rural Areas -

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Introduction

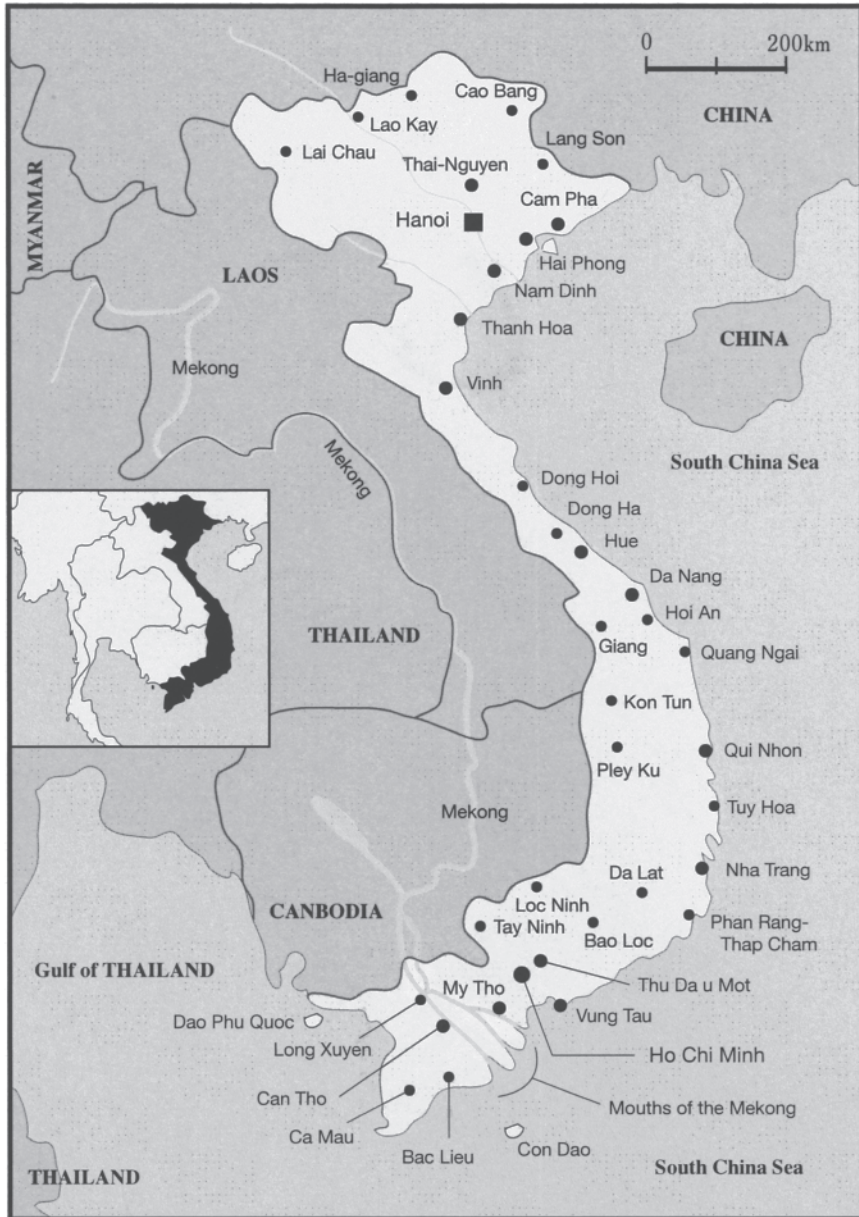
The Senshu University Center for Social Capital Studies has been studying social capital in the East Asia region, where economic development and social changes are occurring at a striking pace, under the heading of *Diverse Construction of Social Capital for Sustainable Development*. For the Southeast Asia region, which is experiencing rapid economic development, the center conducted overseas questionnaires in several selected countries to find out how those countries' social capital is changing or being maintained amid the drastic changes in society.

This paper summarizes the principal findings of the social surveys conducted under contract by the Institute of Sociology at the Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences. The comparative analysis of overseas surveys undertaken by the center should be discussed in another paper, while this paper outlines the survey reports and some of the knowledge drawn from them.

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam has an approximate area of 330,000 square kilometers. Its territory extends in the north-south direction in the eastern part of the Indochinese peninsula. It is divided into three regions: the North, is centered on Hanoi; the Central region, centered on the city of Da Nang; and the South, centered on Ho Chi Minh City. These regions differ considerably in terms of climate and culture. The total population as of 2011 was around 88 million, 30% of whom live in urban areas and the remaining 70% in rural areas. It is such a young country that its population is projected to exceed 100 million in 2020. Its society is composed of multiple ethnicities. Apart from the Kinh people, who make up a large proportion of the population, specifically 86%, there are 53 ethnic minorities. Most of them live in mountainous areas.

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Figure 1: Socialist Republic of Vietnam



Source: ARC Report - Vietnam

Historically, Vietnam has been significantly influenced by Chinese civilization. Moving into the modern and contemporary eras, the country had a strong desire to achieve independence from China's political rule. Throughout its history, Vietnam has always struggled against big powerful nations, such as China, France, and the USA. Vietnam underwent colonization by France, a war between the north and the south and also against the USA following its independence, reunification by the incumbent government, and the Doi Moi economic reforms. The trail of a Vietnamese society on the high speed economic growth is very impressive.

Following its progress in terms of economic reforms, direct investment in Vietnam from overseas has been on the increase since 2000. The average economic growth rate up until 2010 reached a very high level of 7.26%. The country is attracting the attention of Japanese investors as an investment destination under the "China Plus One Strategy" for averting the deteriorating political relations and economic risks between Japan and China.

This study has defined social capital as common goods for social integration and the maintenance of personal life in line with the remarks made by the World Bank. According to the World Bank, "The social capital is related to the institutions, relationships, standards for forming the quantity and quality of social interaction in a society. More and more evidence shows that the social cohesion is very important for the sustainable social economic growth and development. It is not only a simple summary of institutions for forming a society but also the gluing substance for binding them together"(World Bank, 1999) In an attempt to elucidate the true state of social capital in Vietnam, the study carried out surveys from three perspectives. The first is social capital and livelihood, the second is social capital and the social safety net, and the third is social capital, rituals and conventions. We supposed that the shortage of income and the lack of a formal social security system creates a need for social exchange and mutual help by people. That is exactly social capitals, and we shall know the strength and expanse of social capital can be inferred from the people's rituals and conventional behavior.

However, this study is merely preliminary research for extended studies in the future. It must be emphasized that a problem exists arising from data constraints. Due to very tight financial conditions, the surveys were conducted with limited numbers of samples in limited locations. This means that it is difficult to say that the findings of the surveys represent the urban and rural areas where they were conducted. Even so, the survey data include extremely interesting information. Some of the survey findings are therefore made public in the hope that they will provide some material for future studies.

Survey Implementation Proceedings

The survey commenced with the formulation of survey items on the assumption that it would take place in three countries on the Indochinese peninsula, specifically Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. However, those who made the questionnaire were not specialists in Vietnamese society and were not necessarily familiar with the actual conditions within it. The questionnaire may therefore have included some questions that are out of touch with reality. On the basis of the questionnaire in the Japanese language, an English version was created and used as a base

for the surveys in question.

The surveys in Vietnam commenced with an effort to develop a cooperative relationship with a Vietnamese research institution. Headed by Dr. Bui Quang Dung, the Institute of Sociology in the Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences was chosen as the partner for the surveys in Vietnam. Next, efforts to conclude a contract for the surveys and consideration of the implementation method began. We made a request for the translation of the questionnaire into the Vietnamese language, the determination of the locations where the surveys were to be conducted in urban and rural areas, the implementation of the surveys on 100 samples in each area and the compilation of the survey results. In response, the Institute of Sociology suggested undertaking the survey of the urban area in the city of Nam Dinh in Nam Dinh Province, and the survey of the rural area in a coastal village in the same province. It carried out the surveys in these two locations and compiled the results.

The survey proceedings were as described below. In September 2010, a Japanese member visited Vietnam and performed a preliminary investigation of the Nam Dinh provincial government as well as the Vi Xuyen district in the city of Nam Dinh and the village of Hai Van. With the use of the questionnaire in English, the underlying problems of the questionnaire were identified. In November, the Institute of Sociology carried out the survey in the city of Nam Dinh. The results were compiled into a report entitled *Social Capital and Sustainable Development in Vietnam* (hereinafter in this paper referred to as “the Urban Report”) in February the following year. In April 2011, the Japanese team and the Institute of Sociology conducted a preliminary investigation including an interview with the representative of the commune in the village of Giao Tan in Nam Dinh Province. In August, some members of the Center revisited the village to carry out the survey. The report, entitled *Social Capital and Sustainable Development in Vietnam; The case of Giao Tan Commune* (hereinafter referred to as “the Rural Report”), was created the same month.

Outline of the Survey Locations

The province of Nam Dinh is located in the Hong river delta zone in the north of Vietnam, and on the Gulf of Bac Bo. The provincial capital city of Nam Dinh is located approximately 100 kilometers to the southeast of the country’s capital Hanoi. Major industries in the province include agriculture, textiles, processing and machinery. Traditional industries are still predominant. The province has a population of more than two million, with the Kinh people constituting 90% of the population. The province achieved a real GDP growth rate of 11.5% on a yearly average. The working population in the industry and construction sectors is on the increase, while the agricultural population is on the decline. The province is well known for its active education. It has produced excellent human resources in the past.

The city of Nam Dinh has a population of more than 240,000, a comparable size to the city of Matsumoto in Japan. It has a long-standing urban area in its center, and there are several industrial zones scattered across the city.

In the city of Nam Dinh, the Vi Xuyen district was selected as the location of the survey.

This district is a historical and cultural zone with more than 1,000 years of history. It was formerly known as an economic, political and cultural center of the Nam Dinh region. The district has an area of 0.52 square kilometers and currently accommodates 10,500 inhabitants in 2,500 households. This figure includes a working population of 3,526, and 1,600 people who have retired. At present, the local economy is composed mainly of small-sized manufacturing businesses, service businesses and commercial businesses. Small family management plays a central role. There are around 500 retailers dealing in daily commodities.

With these regional attributes, it is understood that the Vi Xuyen district is a type of old town, with limited social movement of the population. While around large cities like Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh, there are some districts that are transforming into suburbs as a result of massive population inflows, the Vi Xuyen district is thought to differ significantly from these areas in this respect.

The questionnaire picked four inhabitation groups out of 19, and selected 25 households in each group by random sampling based on the list of households.

The rural survey was conducted in the village of Giao Tan. It is located near the coastline approximately 50 kilometers from the provincial capital. The village has a total area of 504.5 hectares, consisting of 304 hectares of rice farmland, 25 hectares of fruit farmland and ponds and the remainder for residential use. In administrative terms, Giao Tan is composed of four village communities and is divided into 12 districts. It accommodates 8,200 inhabitants in 2,600 households. It is to be noted that around 2,000 workers aged 24 to 50, which constitutes 24% of the total working population, have emigrated for work to urban areas and other provinces. This has severely distorted the demographic composition of the village. Many of those who are currently living in the village are children, women and elderly people.

Giao Tan is a typical agricultural community, as a high proportion of people, 95%, live on agriculture. Its main product is rice. Apart from that, domestic fowl are raised, although they are exclusively for private consumption.

From among the 12 districts in the village, four districts were selected and 30 households were randomly sampled from each of the four districts with the use of the list of households. In case some of the subjects would not be able to be interviewed for the demographic reasons mentioned earlier, reserve samples were secured. To make up for the scarcity of samples, the survey included more detailed interviews with 10 selected households.

Accordingly, the data on the rural area reflect the data collected in the village of Giao Tan in the province of Nam Dinh, and the data on the urban area refer to those collected in the Vi Xuyen district in the city of Nam Dinh. It must be stressed again that these data are based on the questionnaires conducted under the conditions with the regional characteristics mentioned above and the limited numbers of samples, and that they do not represent the general communities in the rural and urban areas of Vietnam. It can be assumed that the reports are mere compilations of findings from surveys conducted in one selected rural village and in one selected urban area in the country.

Both in the urban area and in the rural area, sampling and counting were conducted to

ensure that the final number of samples counted in each area would be 100. Consequently, the surveys are likely to produce a large margin of statistical error. The figures shown below basically refer to frequency. Following a response item, the figure in italics indicates the score in the rural area, and the figure in bold indicates the score in the urban area.

Basic Attributes of Survey Subjects

The following looks at the basic attributes of the survey subjects.

The distribution of respondents by gender was as follows: males (30)(46) and females (70)(54)(Table 1). The gender imbalance seen in the rural area is considered to be due to the aforementioned situation where a large number of male workers have left Giao Tan village for cities in pursuit of job opportunities, while women make up a large proportion of the inhabitants remaining in the village.

Table 1: The distribution of respondents by gender

	males	females	Total
the rural area	30	70	100
the urban area	46	54	100

The distribution by age range was as follows: 10-19 (1)(2), 20-29 (6)(3), 30-39 (13)(9), 40-49 (26)(16), 50-59 (23)(23), 60-69 (16)(26), 70-79(11)(15) and 80 and over (4)(6). (Table 2)

Table 2: The distribution of age range

	10-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80 and over	Total
the rural area	1	6	13	26	23	16	11	4	100
the urban area	2	3	9	16	23	26	15	6	100

In both areas, middle-aged and elderly people accounted for a relatively high percentage of the respondents. As far as the age range of 60 and over is concerned, the frequency score was 31 for the rural area and 47 for the urban area. These are high for Vietnamese society, which has a relatively low average age. In the rural area, young people have immigrated to the cities for work. In the Vi Xuyen district, many retired people may have answered the survey. These are possible reasons for the high concentration of elderly respondents.

As for the distribution by occupation, the following results were obtained: farmers, foresters and fishers (63)(0), factory workers (1)(1), self-employed (5)(16), entrepreneurs and business executives (0)(0), specialists (such as medical doctors, teachers, accountants, nurses and other professionals requiring qualifications and licenses) (2)(8), employees at the section manager level and above in governmental offices, organizations and private companies (0)(2), full-time employees of private companies (1)(2), full-time employees of governmental offices and organizations (0)(2), contract, temporary and part-time workers (1)(3), students (0)(2), stay

at home(18)(62), unemployed (0)(1) and others (9)(1). In the rural area, 63 respondents are employed in the primary sector of industry, and 18 stay at home alone. In the urban area, the second-largest occupation group was formed by 17 self-employed workers (Table 3).

Table 3: The distribution by occupation

	farmers, foresters and fisher	factory workers	self-employed	entrepreneurs and business executives	specialists	employees of private companies	full-time employees of private companies	full-time employees of governmental offices and organizations	contract, temporary and part-time workers	students	Stay at home	unemployed	others	Total
the rural area	63	1	5	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	18	0	9	100
the urban area	0	1	16	0	8	2	2	2	3	2	62	1	1	100

This is understandable in view of the local characteristics. However, the largest number of respondents from the urban area, specifically 62, was stay at home. It is hard to elucidate the implication of this. It is thought that the respondents included many retired people, but even so the score is extremely high.

In both areas, 90% of the respondents lived in their own houses. The distribution by length of residence was as follows: less than one year (0)(1), one to three years (2)(6), four to five years (0)(4), six to nine years (1)(11), 10 to 19 years (3)(23), 20 to 29 years (11)(24) and 30 years or more (83)(31)(Table 4).

Table 4: The distribution by length of residence

	less than 1 year	1 to 3 years	4 to 5 years	6 to 9 years	10 to 19 years	20 to 29 years	30 years or more longer	Total
the rural area	0	2	0	1	3	11	83	100
the urban area	1	6	4	11	23	24	31	100

In the rural area, at least 80% answered that they had lived in their houses for 30 years or longer. It can be understood from this that there is a stable community environment in the rural area. In the urban area as well, a majority of respondents said that they had lived in their houses for 20 years or longer. In comparison with mobility in Japanese urban areas, it can be said that the urban area in Vietnam also has a stable community environment.

Social Reliance and Social Relationships

In terms of a question asking whether or not people were reliable in general, the distribution of responses was as follows: “Most people are reliable.” (35)(9), “A large proportion of people are reliable.” (40)(54), “Several people are reliable.” (24)(33), “A limited number of people are reliable” (1)(4) and “Few people are reliable.” (0)(0). Few respondents answered that they found few people or no one reliable. In both areas, the level of general reliance is very high. In the rural area, the frequency scores for “most people” and “a large proportion” were 35 and 40. The total frequency score stood at 75. In the urban area, the figure for “a large proportion” was 54, although that for “most people” was low at 9. The total figure was over 60. These results are

considered to be connected with the fact that they have stable communal relationships based on their many years of inhabitation.

Table 5: People were reliable

	Most people are reliable	A large proportion of people are reliable	Several people are reliable	A limited number of people are reliable	Few people are reliable	Total
the rural area	35	40	24	1	0	100
the urban area	9	54	33	4	0	100

Next, the survey asked a question about the frequency of interaction with relatives, obtaining the following results: “several times a week” (79)(24), “once a week to several times a month” (16)(26), “once a month to several times a year” (4)(37), “once a year to once every several years” (1)(12), and “absence of interaction or relatives” (0)(1). In the rural area, most respondents answered “several times a week” to “several times a month”. In the village, there are numerous groups of relatives who share the same ancestors, and they often have exchanges in everyday life. These facts are considered to be reflected in the survey results. In the urban area, the frequency score is 12 for the range from “once a year” to “once every several years”, while all the other respondents have contact with relatives at a higher frequency. This shows the closeness of ties with relatives in Vietnamese society.

Table 6: The frequency of interaction with relatives

	several times a week	once a week to several times a month	once a month to several times a year	once a year to once every several years	absence of interaction or relatives	Total
the rural area	79	16	4	1	0	100
the urban area	24	26	37	12	1	100

The next question pertained to specific activities conducted with neighbors. Most informants responded with “activities identical to those undertaken with family members” (47)(42) and “consultation and lending and borrowing of daily necessities” (49)(55), whereas a small proportion of them answered “chatting” (4)(3). No respondent gave the answer of “greetings” or “nothing.”

Table 7: Activities conducted with neighbors

	activities identical to those undertaken with family members	consultation and lending and borrowing of daily necessities	a small proportion of them answered chatting	"greetings" or "nothing"	Total
the rural area	47	49	4	0	100
the urban area	42	55	3	0	100

These results coincide with the description of an old urban district in Hanoi in Tetsuji Ito (2001): *Hanoi no Roji no Esunogurafi* (Ethnology on a Small Street in Hanoi), Nakanishiya Shuppan. Not only in the rural area but in the urban area as well, people have relationships with their neighbors that are similar to those they have with family members. The results suggest that they cooperate with one another through “consultations and through lending and borrowing goods used in everyday life”.

Table 8: The scope of the people with whom the respondents interact

	with most of their neighbors	with a considerable proportion of their neighbors	with half of their neighbors	with close neighbors only	Total
the rural area	78	21	1	0	100
the urban area	50	40	6	4	100

The following question asked about the scope of the people with whom the respondents interact. Most respondents answered that they had social contact or interactions with most of their neighbors (78)(50) or with a considerable proportion of their neighbors (21)(40). In the urban area, some said that they had social contact or interactions with roughly half of their neighbors (6) or with close neighbors only (4), whereas these answers were not received at all in the rural area. There were no respondents who did not know the names of their neighbors in either of the areas.

The next question focused on community activities: “Do you consider that the community activities of the community association, the fire brigade and other groups are carried out dynamically in the area where you live?” The answers provided by the respondents were as follows: carried out dynamically (48)(43), carried out to some extent (33)(29), barely carried out (7)(9) and absence of any such community-based group (12)(17). The tendency of the replies was similar between the two areas. I am not sure whether this question itself was appropriate for Vietnamese society.

Maintenance of Livelihood and Difficulties

With respect to a multiple answer question on past difficulties in life, the following results were obtained: “insufficient harvest” (67)(5), “shortage of money to live on” (67)(67), “unemployment” (23)(25), “death of earner” (25)(9), “disease and injury of family members” (59)(67) and “other” (10)(7).(Table 9)

Table 9: Difficulties in life

	insufficient harvest	shortage of money to live on	unemployment	death of earner	Disease and injury	others	Total
the rural area	67	67	23	25	59	10	251
the urban area	5	67	25	9	67	7	180

Difficulties arising from the shortage of living funds and disease or injury were experienced by nearly 70% of the respondents. A huge gap between the urban and rural areas was observed with regard to insufficient harvests. The proportion of those who had suffered this particular difficulty was large in the rural area alone.

So, how did they overcome the hardships in life? Another multiple answer question on this issue led to the following results: “bank loans” (36)(21), “food borrowed from others” (23)(3), “personal loans” (55)(40), “food provided by others” (41)(6), “money provided by others” (49)(32) and “goods provided by others” (7)(9).

Table 10: Overcome the hardships

	bank loans	food borrowed from others	personal loans	food provided by others	money provided by others	goods provided by others	Total
the rural area	36	23	55	41	49	7	211
the urban area	21	3	40	6	32	9	111

Many respondents borrowed money or received money provided by others in personal relationship. A cumulative total of 104 such cases were reported in the rural area, with 72 such cases in the urban area. In only 36 cases in the rural area and 21 cases in the urban area did respondents resort to loans from banks as public institutions. This implies that in Vietnamese society, people depend on social capital to borrow and lend money for overcoming various difficulties. That is a marked characteristic of Vietnamese social capital.

In the rural area only, a question was asked about past recourse to microfinance, micro-credit, revolving loan funds or similar. The frequency score for “yes” was 67, and that for “no” stood at 33. Nearly 60% have used these types of financial schemes. The village of Giao Tan has a mutual benefit assistance system which villagers contribute to a pool of funds or gold from which they receive money when necessary. It must be kept in mind that a personal financing scheme based on mutual help among neighbors does function.

Table 11: The risks in life

			Very high	High	Quite high	Not high	Total
1	Unemployment and insufficient income	the rural area	38	28	11	21	98
		the urban area	30	38	10	22	100
2	Disease and injury	the rural area	44	17	20	17	98
		the urban area	42	31	12	15	100
3	Food shortage	the rural area	19	25	11	40	95
		the urban area	19	21	13	47	100
4	Lack of access to water	the rural area	8	17	20	48	93
		the urban area	21	27	8	43	99
5	Poor transport, poor road conditions and traffic accidents	the rural area	14	11	18	55	98
		the urban area	18	21	23	38	100

6	Natural disasters (storms, flood, earthquake, etc.)	the rural area	29	16	23	31	99
		the urban area	43	10	3	44	100
7	War	the rural area	40	11	9	28	88
		the urban area	65	8	26	1	100

With the exception of some items, the distribution is surprisingly similar in the rural and urban areas. As expected, the results suggest that they regard unemployment and insufficient income as risks in life. The frequency score for a “high risk of war” was 51 in the rural area and 73 in the urban area. These scores appear high to Japanese people, who rarely consider the risk of war in daily life. It is impossible to imagine from these data alone what the specific risk of war is like.

With regard to disease, unemployment and post-retirement years, the surveys asked more detailed questions. In terms of whether or not the subjects had any family members who had died in a war, their replies were as follows: “yes” (41)(21) and “no” (59)(78). 40% of the respondents in the rural area and 20% of those in the urban area said that they had lost family members during the war. The scars of the Vietnam War have not yet healed sufficiently.

As for the question regarding whether their neighbors had given them any help regarding disease, the answers were as follows: “yes” (92)(88) and “no” (8)(12). The reciprocal support among neighbors in the event of disease is unimaginable in today’s Japan. However, the answers to the question as to whether they had purchased health insurance were as follows: “yes” (45)(89) and “no” (55)(11). A higher percentage of health insurance policyholders was found in the urban area. In the rural area, 55% were still uninsured. This is considered to be one of the reasons why disease and injury lead directly to difficulties in life. The social ties that support the mutual help in the neighborhood serve as an important social safety net in a society where health insurance has yet to be sufficiently diffused.

In terms of experience of storm damage such as cyclones and floods, the answers were “yes” (88)(21) and “no” (12)(79). Regarding damage arising from drought, the replies were “yes” (63)(3) and “no” (33)(97). Higher scores were marked in the rural area for both questions. This implies that the rural area is more vulnerable to natural disasters, and that farmers are more susceptible to nature.

Concerning experience of war, the answers were “yes” (22)(57) and “no” (78)(43). The higher score was marked in the urban area. No specific reasons for this result are known, although the age and gender of the respondents may have had an impact.

Next, the surveys asked the extent to which the subjects would rely on different institutions and individuals in the event of a large-scale disaster in their locality.

Table 12: Institutions and Individuals to Rely on

			Very high	High	Quite high	Not high	Total
Governmental organizations	Municipal government	the rural area	60	22	12	5	99
		the urban area	48	30	17	5	100
	Schools, hospitals and other public institutions	the rural area	43	27	15	12	97
		the urban area	23	39	15	23	100
	Police and firefighting organizations	the rural area	43	22	17	15	97
		the urban area	33	32	19	13	97
	Military sector	the rural area	46	26	12	13	97
		the urban area	37	32	10	16	95
	Political parties and politicians	the rural area	53	25	15	6	99
		the urban area	34	36	10	13	93
Organizations in nearby communities	the rural area	45	32	16	5	98	
	the urban area	29	44	10	5	88	
Voluntary associations	Volunteers, NPOs, citizen's associations, etc.	the rural area	35	28	16	9	88
		the urban area	5	35	12	26	78
	Religious organizations in temples and churches	the rural area	28	26	10	31	95
		the urban area	4	18	23	39	84
	Coworkers in the workplace	the rural area	11	4	7	10	32
		the urban area	16	35	11	12	74
Intimacy relationships	Neighbors	the rural area	49	39	7	5	100
		the urban area	32	62	5	1	100
	Family members	the rural area	88	10	0	2	100
		the urban area	93	6	1	1	101
	Relatives	the rural area	73	21	4	2	100
		the urban area	71	25	1	2	99
	Friends and acquaintances	the rural area	52	39	5	4	100
		the urban area	44	50	5	1	100

The results in both the rural and urban areas demonstrate almost the same distribution tendency. When the responses are reclassified into those suggesting reliance on particular institutions and individuals and those suggesting non-reliance on them, the results show people's high expectations of the governmental sector: "reliance" (82)(78) and "non-reliance" (17)(22) on "municipal governments". The answers concerning other institutions were as follows: "reliance" (70)(62) and "non-reliance" (27)(38) on "schools and hospitals", and "reliance" (65)(65) and "non-reliance" (32)(32) on "the police and firefighting organizations". 60 to 70% of the respondents found the "military", "political parties and politicians" and "organizations in nearby communities" reliable, whereas 30% to 40% saw them as unreliable. These figures can be seen to reflect the level of people's expectations of public institutions. Here, the group of these items is referred to as the Governmental Institutions.

On the other hand, public expectations of "volunteers", "NPOs", "civic groups" and others, and "religious organizations in temples and churches" are relatively poor in comparison with those of public institutions.

However, the level of expectations of "neighbors", "family members", "relatives", "friends and acquaintances" is very high. For example, the answers were as follows: "reliance" (88)(94) and "non-reliance" (12)(6) on "neighbors". It is surprising to the author that people in the urban area had greater expectations of their neighbors than those in the rural area. This may be due to the peculiarities of these areas. Almost all the respondents answered that they relied on family members, and nearly 100% of them found relatives reliable in the two areas. Over 90% of the respondents in the rural and urban areas relied on friends and acquaintances. The group of these items is hereby defined as the Intimacy Relationships.

In the event of disasters and other emergencies, 60% to 70% of those in Vietnamese society rely on Governmental Institutions such as municipal governments, schools, the police, political parties, the military sector and organizations in nearby communities. Some people have no expectations of them at all. Meanwhile, the level of reliance on family members, relatives, friends, acquaintances and neighbors is very high, at 90% or more. In addition, there are few people with negative views of them. A clear-cut difference between the Vietnamese and Japanese societies lies in the fact that the Intimacy Relationships in Vietnam includes friends, acquaintances and neighbors. But in Japanese society, especially in the urban areas, the Intimacy Relationships are very much limited to the family members and relatives at maximum.

Participation in Social Rites

The close ties within the Intimacy Relationships as discussed above have a significant impact on interactions with others in social rites.

For example, the surveys asked a question about the people whose wedding ceremonies should be attended. The results were as follows: "family members" (100)(99), "relatives" (99)(100), "friends and acquaintances" (97)(100), "neighbors" (99)(100), "coworkers" (81)(86), "employers" (54)(63), "those affiliated with religious organizations in temples and churches" (12)(3), "volunteers and members of NPOs and citizen's organizations" (5)(4) and "politicians"

(9)(9).

Table 13: Wedding ceremonies

	family members	relatives	friends and acquaintances	neighbors	coworkers	employers	religious organizations such as temples and churches	volunteers and members of NPOs and civic group	politicians
the rural area	100	99	97	99	81	54	12	5	9
the urban area	99	100	100	100	86	63	3	4	9

As regards the people whose funerals should be attended, the answers were “family members” (100)(99), “relatives” (99)(100), “friends and acquaintances” (98)(100), “neighbors” (99)(100), “coworkers” (80)(89), “employers” (59)(75), “those affiliated with religious organizations such as temples and churches” (60)(32), “volunteers and members of NPOs and citizen’s organizations” (10)(9) and “politicians” (37)(11).

Table 14: Funerals ceremonies

	family members	relatives	friends and acquaintances	neighbors	coworkers	employers	religious organizations such as temples and churches	volunteers and members of NPOs and civic group	politicians
the rural area	100	99	98	99	80	59	60	10	37
the urban area	99	100	100	100	89	75	32	9	11

In Vietnamese society, almost everyone participates in the wedding ceremonies and funerals of those in the Intimacy Relationships, such as family members, relatives, friends and acquaintances and neighbors. It is understood from the results that they show great courtesy to those in the Intimacy Group at the time of wedding ceremonies and funerals. It was also confirmed that friends, acquaintances and neighbors are part of the Intimacy Relationships, like family members and relatives. Their positions in today’s Japanese society, particularly among those leading urban lifestyles, are massively different.

Finally, the paper looks at the frequency of participation in local festivals. The surveys asked how often the subjects participated in festivals that took place in their districts. The answers to this question were as follows: “always” (32)(19), “as often as possible” (12)(21), “occasionally” (34)(21), “rarely” (18)(24) and “never” (4)(15).

Table 15: Participation in local festivals

	always	as often as possible	occasionally	rarely	never	Total
the rural area	32	12	34	18	4	100
the urban area	19	21	21	24	15	100

After regrouping the replies into those suggesting participation and those suggesting

non-participation, the score for participation stood at 78 in the rural area and 61 in the urban area, whereas that for non-participation was 22 in the rural area and 39 in the urban area. The results suggest a similarity to Japan in that more people tend to participate in social rites in rural areas than in urban areas. However, we have no material on the tendency of participation in Japanese society with which to make a comparison.

All the above were numerical data obtained from the surveys in the rural and urban areas of Vietnam conducted in 2010 and 2011.

Conclusions in Reports from the Institute of Sociology

This section mainly quotes some remarks from the survey reports prepared by the Institute of Sociology after conducting the surveys in the two areas and compiling the results.

To present some of the information learned from the rural survey, the Rural Report contains the following statements:

“The issue discussed throughout this research is the quality of social capital. It is assessed in relation to the relevant issues discussed. While unity, a simple and frugal lifestyle, and the peacefulness of the communal or village community are considered reasonable choices, values such as close relationships between neighbors, respect for agriculture, respect for origin, for scholars and old-aged people, etc. serve as a basis to explain this social link. Affection-based binding, or the opinion that ‘a little affection is more than a lot of reason’ may fail to help discover contract-based business models. We know that a community preserves certain values.”

On the other hand, the report also contains the following description: “Bui Quang Dung (2007) remarks that the speed with which economic relations in monetary economies penetrate into social classes depends on the opportunities and duration with which they have contact with the modern and commercial sectors. The penetration of new economic relations into communities cannot gain success rapidly. Furthermore, to have new economic relations, the community is required to adopt values introduced from outside, even values opposed to traditional styles.” After all, the permeation of a monetary economy or commodity economy conflicts with traditional values, and may at times annihilate them.

“Giao Tan is a community of self-sufficiency. ... (However,) the Giao Tan community is not completely closed. In fact, it is half closed, half open to the exterior. The majority of the population, most of whom are youngsters, have left the commune to earn their living. They tend to leave their fatherland together, forming small groups of workers.”

“Values and standard norms play their own roles in the maintenance and consolidation of relations within the village community. However, not everything in the code of conduct and values is possible to create a source of positive social capital. ... However, this is not the key to open the door to development.”

In Vietnamese villages, social links and values suited to their respective needs were established and long maintained. They led to stable reliance and relationships of mutual assistance in village communities. On the other hand, it is also true that they served as a hotbed for pre-modern human relationships and conservative ways of thinking. At present, Vietnamese

villages see their working populations drawn to cities at great speed, and they serve as sources of low-level workers for cities. The village of Giao Tan is no exception. This reality is reflected in the description “half closed, half open to the exterior,” even though the report also says “the Giao Tan is a community of self-sufficiency.” Domestic migrant workers are a bridge between the rural and urban areas in terms of economy, culture and social relations.

The authors of the report drew a prudent conclusion: “Social capital should not be considered in terms of being positive or negative. It should be looked into under the angles of being appropriate or inappropriate, suitable or unsuitable for one particular requirement.” Instead of discussing whether social capital itself is indispensable or unnecessary, the Rural Report points out that it is imperative to continuously explore what social capital functions in what manner and to what or whom they act.

Next, an interesting remark is cited from the conclusion of the Urban Report: “Through the relationships network (neighbors, relatives, friends, acquaintances, social organizations...), individuals are able to share the opportunities and also the risks of daily life. The results obtained also contain the implication of social capital theory. The social network connects neighbors based on the relationships of neighbors, friends, and countrymen, or connects people working in the same agencies with the role of colleagues, or connects the members of one social organization.” To put it briefly, the report confirms that social capital is of major importance to people living in urban areas as well.

The report adds: “The reliability on other people in the community is quite high. The results show the close relationship between social trust and regular contact with relatives, friends, acquaintances and neighbors. People tend to rely quite heavily on their close relationships as relatives, neighbors, friends or acquaintances.” This acknowledges the importance of social links within the Intimacy Relationships in Vietnamese society, including family members, relatives, neighbors, friends and acquaintances.

The report continues: “The social network becomes the useful capital source of many people. With the available relationships, individuals can advantageously assess the information that helps to improve their livelihoods. It could be said that access to information plays a key role in the development of individuals, groups, communities and society. With the available information about the aspects of life, people will select more appropriate actions in life. The variety of social networks has provided useful information about seeking jobs, opportunities for studying/training, public services, technical and health instruction, thereby helping people improve their livelihoods. In general, the unofficial networks retain an important role in helping people to access information on employment, opportunities for studying/training and technical instruction. Meanwhile, the role of the official network is more important in helping members to access information concerning public services and health instruction.”

It also says: “The survey results show that social capital retains an important role in activities including risk prevention, health care, supporting the unemployed/jobless people ...Although a majority of respondents have health insurance, the survey shows that the effectiveness of this social security form is not considerable. In the context of many hardships

in terms of medical and health care for people, because the government has gradually decreased its role as the sponsor of this activity, social capital has developed the role of supporting people's medical and health care, among which the most remarkable aspect is the binding social capital associated with the relationships between family members, friends, and close neighbors. Of these relationships, family and relatives retain the most important role in helping individuals to overcome health hardships (illness, injury). The local community organizations also play a relatively important role in sharing, thereby supporting the members.”

This excerpt also emphasizes the fact that family members, relatives, neighbors, friends and acquaintances play significant roles in urban society. As mentioned earlier, the city of Nam Dinh is a central city in the region. It is immune to the rapid economic growth or demographic mobility seen in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. A separate research project will be required to study the mutual relationships among people amid the “suburbanization” in big two cities.

At any rate, one of the facts that have been made clear by the two surveys is that the relationships of mutual assistance among the Intimacy Relationships, which are broader than in Japan, act effectively as social capital in Vietnamese society. A future research challenge should be to explore what characteristics this adds to Vietnamese society and what contribution it will make to future social development.

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