



**Human development in the increasingly commodified
society in Vietnam:
A critical view building on the concepts of alienation and
commodity fetishism**

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List of Acronyms

FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
HDI	Human Development Index
HDR	Human Development Report
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

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Abstract

Based on capability approach, UNDP's concept of human development needs to be challenged by critical view from Marx' theory of alienation and commodity fetishism. Created from latter processes, insecurity of commodified life and commodity illusions affect strongly to capability to choose what people value. Interactions among those processes require crossing reference from alienation and commodity fetishism in evaluating human development. Particularly, alienation and commodity fetishism create fluctuation in the human development so that the latter is hardly sustained. To overcome this matter, it is necessary to replace the domination of circumstances and of chance over individuals by the domination of individuals over chance and circumstances. This means that human development envisioned by UNDP should be expanded to the meaning advocated by Marx.

Above points are drawn from fieldwork conducted in troubling enterprises in Vietnam. In which, the research identify adaptation of workers, managers, and owners against troubles of enterprises.

Relevance to Development Studies

Human development, alienation and commodity fetishism stand in central fields of development studies because these issues relate to human emancipation, development of society in general and of each single individual in particular. The research challenges UNDP's concept of human development from critical view of alienation and commodity fetishism. By doing that, the research not only provides better and more comprehensive understanding about human development but also indicates a suggestion in which human development can be sustained. The research is an interesting combination between developmental visions from Marx (a classical epistemologist) and Sen (a contemporary thinker).

Keywords

Alienation, commodity fetishism, human development, Marxism, capability, freedom, commodification, commodity production, labour division.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Statement of problems

In the current development discourse, UNDP defines Human Development¹ as a process of enlarging people's choice (UNDP 1990: 10). Based on Sen's capability approach, human development is considered as a process of achieving well-being (Alkire 2010b: 2). In spirit of development as freedom, human development as capability expansion means that people have capabilities, or freedom to choose set of functionings which people value. Hence, removal of various type of unfreedom is the most significant factor to achieve human development (Sen 2001: xii).

However, in a more commodified society based on high specialization of labour, people are more dependent on each other because they cannot produce all products. Accordingly, producing commodities becomes the main means for their lives, and exchanging commodities becomes the main process to meet needs. Commodities play essential role to the lives of human beings (Lysandrou 2005). For Marx, commodity is an object outside us, a thing that by its properties satisfies human wants of some sort or another, and is then exchanged for something else (Marx 2007: 41). In other words, commodity is produced by labour, satisfies human wants through exchanging on the market. The universality of exchanging commodity put human life in special living condition which included alienation and commodity fetishism.

In such a society, labours power is also a commodity and is alienated from its owner. In *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* Marx described: "The alienation of the worker in his product means not only that his labour becomes an object, an external existence, but that it exists outside him, independently, as something alien to him, and that it becomes a power on its own confronting him. It means that the life which he has conferred on the object confronts him as something hostile and alien" (Struik and Marx 1964: 108). Penetrating structurally into the social production, Alienation² becomes universal, not a personal or psychological problem. (Ritzer 2008).

Due to that alienation, Marx argues that human relation is hidden in the relations between commodities so that commodities appear as if they have their own lives, enter naturally to the relations with other ones and with human beings. That is Commodity Fetishism³ in which commodities become alien things to people who produced them (Özel 2008, Marx 1974). Consequently,

¹ "**Human Development**" (with upper case) as the concept associated with Sen and UNDP is distinguished from "human development" (with lower case) as a more general concept open to wider interpretation.

² "**Alienation**" (with upper case) as the concept introduced by Marx is distinguished from "alienation" as a general concept which is debated broadly among theorists.

³ "**Commodity Fetishism**" (with upper case) as the concept introduced by Karl Marx is distinguished from other "commodity fetishism" given by other authors.

human beings depend increasingly on the processes of producing and exchanging commodities.

Commodity production rises and falls following specific economic laws, especially the crises. In which, expanding period is always followed by a contracting period, and vice versa. Each adjustment of those processes could affect directly and indirectly to human development. For instance, the late 2000s global crisis and its enormous consequences have interrupted such processes, specifically happened to enterprises. Many aspects of human life are hit strongly through changes in workplaces and the labour market (Economic and Financial Affairs 2009: 35), food security (Stacey and Shahla 2009), environment (Anbumozhi and Bauer 2010), health (Kwon et al. 2010).

Alienation and commodity fetishism mean human lives depend highly on changes in markets in both advanced and developing economies even in the context of progress in technology, high labour productivity, and economic achievements. For example, losses of 2.6 million jobs in the United States in 2008 pushes massive number of people falling into hard living conditions despite the high index in Human Development of the United States (Goldman 2009).

Similarly, after a severe earthquake in Japan in March 2011, the radioactive contaminated water worries international consumers about Japan seafood quality lead to a range of international bans on those commodities, thus fisher peoples' livelihoods are threatened because they are dependent on exchanging fish internationally as well as locally and nationally (Foster and Nakashima 2011). Thus Human Development may be damaged gravely when their commodities are not exchangeable.

Connection between troubles in commodity production and troubles in human life indicates that alienation and commodity fetishism interact with Human Development. Given that the latter is goal of progression in society while alienation and commodity fetishism are inevitable, it is necessary to understand connection between such processes. Specifically, it is Human Development under influences of Alienation and Commodity Fetishism.

At enterprise level, the above relations appear in connection between enterprise's production and lives of related people included workers, managers, and owners. Each group engages differently in Alienation and Commodity fetishism due to differences of positions and possession in production. Also, their capabilities are diversified owing to various living conditions. Hence, if an enterprise falls into trouble, all workers, managers, and owners are affected differently.

Interestingly, their adaptations to that trouble will reveal interaction among Alienation, Commodity Fetishism and Human Development. Particularly, these adaptations are changes in key aspects of life which included time use, consumption, relations with others, and employment. Four aspects of life are valid to represent human life due to several justifications. Employment denotes working activity – the most important one in human life. Consumption and time use reveal well-beings because, in commodity production, achieving well-beings always requires commodity and time. Relations to others indicate how a person connects to society. These aspects cover all living and working activities.

Briefly, it is possible to examine interactions of Alienation, Commodity Fetishism and Human Development through three groups' adaptations on four above aspects.

With high economic growth in recent decades, Vietnam society is increasingly commodified. At the same time, Vietnam gains considerable achievements in Human Development, and then it is suitable place to investigate above issues with a critical view building on the concepts of alienation and commodity fetishism

1.2 Objectives

This study is aimed at achieving the following objectives.

1. To identify affected aspects of human life (use of time, consumptions, relations with others, and employment) under changes in producing or exchanging commodities.
2. To identify differences between such changes of workers, managers, and owners?
3. To investigate at different experiences of Human Development, whether their lives change to more commoditisation or not?
4. To identify the implications of such changes for critiquing Human Development as envisioned by the UNDP

1.3 Research questions

- When producing and exchanging commodity were in trouble, how aspects of human life (use of time, consumptions, relations with others, and employment) which reflects freedom to choose what people value has changed?
- Did these changes differ between workers, managers and owners?
- Whether their lives were more commodified or not?
- What are the implications of such changes for critiquing Human Development as envisioned by the UNDP?

1.4 Research objects and scope

To explore interaction among Alienation, Commodity Fetishism and Human Development, the research examines adaptations of workers, managers, and owners to enterprise's troubles.

Workers and managers, actually, are categorized similarly as "proletarians" or "workers" in Marx's theories because both are forced to sell their labour power as the main way to live. Differences between them are about identities. Managers usually have better education, and get higher wages than those of workers. Besides, managers have better working conditions (office versus factory). Meanwhile, owners categorized as "capitalists" or "bourgeoisies" in Marx's works. Basically, owners possess means of production; hire workers and managers to run the production. Hence, owners control the production. They do not live by selling their labour power, but by selling commodities produced by workers and managers. Profit is the main source of owner's

income. In practice, distinctions among workers, managers, and owners can be blurred. However, this research distinguishes clearly these three kinds of people in commodity production.

Their adaptation to troubles of production will reveal the interaction between Human Development, Alienation, and Commodity Fetishism. This is response of each single individual. However, the research aims to synthesise to group adaptations of workers, managers, and owners. It aims not only to identify how people in specific conditions react against troubles in commodity productions, but also compare how they are in processes as Human Development, Alienation and Commodity Fetishism.

In terms of scope and limitation, the research views the individual adaptation in four main aspects of life: employment, consumption, time use, and relations to other people. Those aspects cover working and living activities. Therefore, changes in such aspects reflect not only changes in capabilities but also in Alienation and Commodity Fetishism that people engaged in. Enterprise's troubles also show clearly its effects in such aspects. Regarding to time, the research focuses on troubles happened for one or two years from the beginning. That time is sufficient for troubles taking effects on employment, consumption, time use, and relations to other people.

The research is taken in Vietnam – a developing country. The commodified life in Vietnam is an appearance of growing Alienation and Commodity Fetishism. Meanwhile, achievement in Human Development is remarkable. However, Vietnam in general and its enterprises in particular are hurt harder and more serious in recent global and regional crises.

1.5 Background of a commodified society in Vietnam

Since 1986, Vietnam started its economic reform in which commodity production was recognised officially and legally. That is the turning point to develop commodity relations in Vietnam. Since then, commodity networks have been developed strongly in domestic and international markets. Vietnam commodities have penetrated deeply into the world market. Also, global commodities enter quickly to the Vietnam domestic market.

The growing commodified society witnessed rapid expansion in commodity production, trade, and investment. GDP has grown 16 times from \$6.5 billion (1990) to \$104 billion (2010). At the same period, exports of goods and services increase about 35 times from \$2.2 billion to \$74 billion. Meanwhile, imports of goods and services go up even at higher pace. Percentage of Trade on GDP approximate 100% in 1999, and reach 153% in 2010. That is remarkable expansion of producing and exchanging commodities (World Bank 2011).

For investment, flows of FDI in 20 years from 1990 are totally about \$60 billion. Vietnam has received total net ODA \$28 billion from 1990 to 2009. This huge investment creates big push for industries and services (World Bank 2011).

The consumption power of Vietnamese enlarges incredibly in the renewal period. GDP per capita increase over tenfold in 1990-2010. This improvement backs for household final consumption expenditure which climbs to \$68

billion in 2010 from \$5.5 billion in 1990. Besides, government expenditure also expand to \$56 billion in 1990-2010 (World Bank 2011). Both great governmental and household consumptions boost a range of markets in Vietnam which, in turn, widens social division of labour.

In particular, there is amazing development of essential commodities (signal of a commodified economy) as labour power, bonds, stocks, securities, derivatives. Labour power had become popularly commodity. With large labour forces of about 45 million employees, annually 1.5-2 million new labourers, the demand for selling labour power in Vietnam is enormous. Besides, the unemployment rate is often as low as 2% - 3%, just increases approximately 4.4% (2010) due to global crisis (World Bank 2011). These mean that selling and buying labour power are very popular in Vietnam. Furthermore, fictitious commodities as bonds, stocks, securities, derivatives are expanding. Financial market in Vietnam has grown dramatically in 10 recent years (Quan 2010: 363). In stock market, number of stock increased from 2 (2000) to 586 (2010) regardless thousands of stocks not yet offering publicly (Quan 2010: 288-292). The expansion is attracting an increasing number of international and domestic investors. Markets of those fictitious commodities have been crucial channels for companies to raise medium- and long-term capital. Dynamics of various forms of Vietnam commodities is the vibrant evidence for commodification in Vietnam.

Eventually, Vietnam commodity networks are tightened with world commodities markets. Accordingly, Vietnam got consequences from global and regional recession and crises. In the global economic crisis from 2007, Vietnam economy has been affected negatively in large fields included agriculture, manufacturing, finance, and so on... In which, thousands enterprises collapsed or reduced significantly production. By 2011, there are about 48000 bankruptcy enterprises (among over 600000 registered ones) (Huyen 2011). Such problems affect different groups of workers, producers, bankers, consumers at various levels of danger.

Regarding to Human Development, UNDP appraised Vietnam for its acceleration. In 1990-2010, Vietnam is the 5th top movers in HDI (UNDP 2010b: 150) with significant improvements in three pillars: education, life expectancy, and income. In 2010, Vietnam is ranked the 113th which is equivalent to a middle-income country although Vietnam is a low-middle-income country (UNDP 2010b: 145). Notably, from 1990, life expectancy increased from 65.4 years to 74.9 years (2010). In education, Vietnamese people have additionally about 2 years at school. In terms of income, the GNI per capita (in PPP) raise from \$915 (1990) to approximately \$3000 (2010) during the same period (UNDP 2010a)

Chapter 2

Theoretical framework

2.1 Marx's conceptualization as the theoretical departure

For researching human development, the research grounds consistent on Marx's theories with key concepts as Alienation and Commodity Fetishism.

The theoretical departure from Marx's conceptualization is reasoned with following justifications. *Firstly*, Marxism is a theoretical system toward human nature and human emancipation (Wild 2011). Many Marx's concepts as Alienation, Commodity Fetishism, exploitation, class struggle, proletarian revolution are revealing and aiming to improve the human life, especially those of proletarians. Humanity spreading from Marx's theories is a good starting point to investigate human development. *Secondly*, Marxism contains profound theoretical framework of Alienation, Commodity Fetishism and commodity production which are circumstances to achieve human development. Hence, it is necessary to revisit Human Development with critical view from Alienation and Commodity Fetishism. *Thirdly*, Human Development based on capability approach have vagueness in advocating "freedom to choose what people value" because the way to achieve and value something are affected by Alienation and Commodity Fetishism. So, viewing Human Development in reference with such Marxist concepts would add more clear understanding to concept of human development.

Although Marxism are developed in many branches with outstanding scholars as Lukac, Althusser, Fromm, the research still use original concepts of Alienation and Commodity Fetishism extracted from *Economic and philosophic Manuscripts* (1844), *Thesis on Feuerbach* (1845), *Grundrisse* (1855) and *Capital* (1867). Meanwhile, concept of human development is taken from works of Amartya Sen from 1980s and series of HDRs from 1990s.

According to Marx's theories, labour is the simplest abstract determinant which appears from the ancient societies to the most developed ones. In addition, "Labour, not only as a category but in reality, has become a means to create wealth in general and has ceased to be organically tied to particular individuals in a specific form" (Marx 1976:36). Therefore, as the simplest abstraction in theory and the only factor creating wealth in reality, labour is a central concept connecting Alienation, Commodity Fetishism, and Human Development.

The research distinguishes an abstract level of reality included Alienation, Commodity Fetishism and Human Development, from a real level of reality contained aspects of human life such as employment, consumption, time use, and relations to others. This distinction suggests an investigation on real level in order to examine connections among concepts at abstract level.

2.2 Alienation and Commodity Fetishism in a commodified society

2.2.1 Alienation from Marx's conceptualization

In commodity production, alienation is a universal phenomenon so that it has been researched for a long time. Before K.Marx, the dominated conception came from Hegel and Feuerbach. For Hegel, alienation is the process in which characteristics of the god transcended to human beings. Consequently, nature of beings is built on ideal features of the super nature ego that has supreme power. In contrast, for Feuerbach, in *The Essence of Christianity* (1841), alienation of human beings results in the idea of God in which image of God contains alienated characteristics of human beings (Feuerbach 1957: 195).

After rejection, critique and inherence of ideas from Hegel and Feuerbach, Marx developed theory of alienation further with concrete background on theory of labour value. Although pointed out that alienation is a universal phenomenon, Marx paid specially attention on alienation in capitalism which both proletariats and bourgeoisies are alienated in different ways. He seems concern more alienation in early writings (*Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (1844), *The Holy family* (1844), and *Grundrisse* (1857)) and a special kind of alienation termed "commodity fetishism" in later period (in Volume I, *Capital* (1867)). Generally, theory of alienation is one of great contribution of Marx in academic literature together with theory of labour value, theory of surplus value and so on (Singer 2000: 46).

For Marx, alienation refers to phenomenon that human beings are estranged from human essence so that the human existence (the material world) is spilt from human essence (the soul). They live in the way they are not themselves in essence. In the sixth thesis on Feuerbach, after refusing the common notion "human as specie", Marx claimed that human nature is built from social relations. It is "...no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations" (McLellan 2000: 172). If essential social relations are broken, human beings are not themselves as they should be. Here, alienation means the internal relations are broken (Ollman 1976: 133). Those are some basic relations as beings and their products, beings and their life activities, beings and beings. Depending on different people and their styles of living, they are alienated in different ways. So, alienation of workers and capitalists are different.

Due to Alienation, human beings become abstraction that unique characteristics of human are distorted. All qualities distinguished human beings from other species are minimised to a lowest common denominator (Ollman 1976: 134). Such abstractions are caused because their main internal relations are interrupted in the middle, and then the alternative ones create alien characteristics. In that sense, Alienation is viewed as a mistake, a defect that need to be corrected by other process (Ollman 1976: 132).

In capitalist commodity production, workers and capitalists are alienated differently because they engage differently in such production. Alienation is constructed structurally and simultaneously in the society and in the

individuals' lives, with the latter being an emergent property of the former (Yuill 2011: 109).

Alienation of proletarians

Alienation of proletarians (includes workers, managers and others selling labour power) originates when their labour power becomes commodity which, in turn, makes labour become alienated. In alienation, the internal relation between proletarians and their living activities is broken when they cannot determine what to do and how to do. The relation between proletarians and their material world is separated when they lose possession of what produced by them. Also, there is a break in internal relations between proletarians and other people because they compete with other proletarians and capitalists (Ollman 1976: 133). In *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, Marx explains that proletarians are alienated in four types in the working process.

Firstly, proletarians are alienated from their activities because their labour is sold and does not belong to them in working process. They cannot determine working process but obey employers' management. Their living labour seems serving dead labour inside machines. It looks like proletarians become components of machines. Workers feel as strangers in working which is not voluntarily but compulsorily (McLellan 2000: 88).

Steven King, a worker, loses control in working process at a call center: "You don't have control. Your job is to work on the phones as soon as you get in". ... "It's never ending and you just have to sit there and react to these voices" (Ellis and Taylor 2006: 118).

Secondly, proletarians are alienated from commodities produced by them. Commodity is the material form of alienated labour which is objectified in production. In *Capital* (1867), Marx stressed that exchanging labour power implies that proletarians give up their rights on the whole results of the production. Consequently, proletarians cannot access what they made. The more commodities they produced do not guarantee their better life but actually the stronger power of commodity is exercised on proletarians. Consequently, products of alienated labour exercises power over both workers and capitalists. Here, the living labour is controlled by the dead labour. This is an inversion of positions in relation between producers and products in which the former is determined by the latter instead of determining the latter.

Thirdly, proletarians are alienated from human potential. As special specie, human beings have consciousness in living activities. Meanwhile, other species do not distinguish their activities for the survival and reproduction. In other words, other species act for surviving, but with human beings, surviving is just a fundamental mean to do other conscious activities. In the capitalist commodity production, proletarians work for their survival, their social existence, not for all activities that they really wish to do. It is important to note that, in Marxism model, wage is assumed to fulfil only necessary needs of living, not additional needs. Therefore, proletarians are working for living which is quite similar to other species. This alienation is caused by their alienated labour: "when alienated labour tears from man the object of his production, it also tears from him his species-life, the real objectivity of his species and turns the advantage he has over animals into a disadvantage in that his inorganic body, nature, is torn from him" (McLellan 2000: 91)

Fourthly, proletarians are alienated from other people or fellowship. Proletarians and bourgeoisies become alien to each other because the product of labour does not belong to worker (Struik and Marx 1964: 115), but belong to bourgeoisies. The whole added value is made by proletarians but shared between both bourgeoisies and proletarians. So, the more added value capitalists received, the less added value workers got. From this point, class struggle could be considered as the manifestation of alienation in relation between proletarians and bourgeoisies. Proletarians are also alienated from other colleagues due to competition for employment. Because employment is the only way to ensure existence of proletarians, high demand of jobs urges proletarians compete aggressively. Briefly, each proletarian sees bourgeoisies and other proletarians as opposed forces. Such tensions also contribute to make the workers feel strange in work, feel at home when they are not working (Struik and Marx 1964: 110).

This kind of alienation is a certain result of alienation from products, life activities, and other human beings. In *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, Marx concludes that “When man confronts himself, he also confronts other men. What is true of man's relationship to his work, to the product of his work and to himself, is also true of his relationship to other men, to their labour and to the objects of their labour”... “man is alienated from his species life means that each man is alienated from others, and that each of the others is likewise alienated from human life” (Struik and Marx 1964: 17).

The domination of dead labour over living labour is one of key manifestation of proletarians' alienation. Their living labour depends on circulation of capital as dead labour. If capitalist production falls in troubles, living labour is dismissed firstly. The necessity of living labour for the production is determined by capital. The more proletarians sell living labour, the more capital – dead labour – is accumulated, and hence, the lower status of proletarians in society as well as in production.

Alienation of capitalists

Not only proletarians, but capitalists also are alienated in commodity production of capitalism. In *The Holy Family*, Marx indicates that both capitalists and proletarians are alienated equally: “The propertied class and the class of the proletariat present the same human self-alienation. But the former class finds in this self-alienation its confirmation and its good, its own power: it has in it a semblance of human existence. The class of the proletariat feels annihilated in its self-alienation; it sees in it its own powerlessness and the reality of an inhuman existence” (McLellan 2000: 148)

Because private property is the necessary consequence of alienated labour, of the external relation of the worker to nature and to himself (Struik and Marx 1964: 117). Hence, the alienation of capitalists who owned large private property is inevitable. This alienation exists based on private property and social condition of tough competition on market.

Marx emphasizes private property as source of alienation in *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (1844): “Private property has made us so stupid and one-sided that an object is only ours when we have it – when it exists for us as capital, or when it is directly possessed, eaten, drunk, worn, inhabited, etc., – in short, when it is used by us”... “all these physical and mental senses have

therefore – the sheer estrangement of all senses – the sense of having” (Struik and Marx 1964: 139).

In the interpretation of Marx’s ideas by Ollman, capitalist’s alienation could be seen in several aspects.

Firstly, capitalists are influenced by social conditions of competition in producing and exchanging commodities (Ollman 1976: 154). They are forced to obey market demands. As producers, to some extent, they are also under control of their products. As consumers, capitalists do not have ultimate satisfaction for desired commodities. However, capitalists have larger consumption power in comparison with those of workers.

Secondly, capitalists have “theoretical attitude” which is alienated because it does not reflect real and practical activities but its absence. Marx assumes that proletarians work directly in commodity production while bourgeoisies stay aside that process. For him, “a direct working relationship to production is essential for human fulfilment” (Ollman 1976: 155), so capitalists’ attitude is not built on real and practical working activities. It is alienated from not direct working.

Thirdly, capitalists are alienated to be greedy, cruel and hypocritical in the surplus exploitation (Ollman 1976: 155). For capitalists, exploitation to workers is a non-stop process in which surplus value is accumulated to earn larger surplus value. This greed escalates along with the expansion of production and capitalists’ high evaluation of money power. The cruelty contributes for higher levels of exploitation when capitalists force proletarians to work harder in order to earn higher profit. Embedded deeply in such context, capitalists are driven by profit goal as their existence. If capitalists fail to gain profit, they can be no longer being in a position of capitalist but could be changed to proletarians. Capitalists are willing to perform any strategy to fulfil that purpose.

Source of alienation does not locate within capitalism but in commodity production which was born on the foundation of social labour division and relative separation of individual producers. *Firstly*, all activity in commodity production bases on value which represents for alienated labour, so, the spread of commodity production implicitly implies spread of alienated labour. *Secondly*, social division of labour plays important role to push people in exchanging commodities. Consequently, workers are more dependent on “particular, very one-sided, machine-like labour” so that they are “depressed spiritually and physically to the condition of a machine and from being a man becomes an abstract activity and a belly” (Struik and Marx 1964: 68). Hence, whenever and wherever social division of labour operates as a key principle of economic organization, Alienation still exist regardless to any type of production mode as capitalism and others. In other words, Alienation is irresistible and inescapable in commodity production.

2.2.2 Commodity fetishism as a kind of alienation in commodity production

In effort to critique other theories of value, Marx introduces concept “commodity fetishism” to explain the false belief that “goods possess value

just as they have weight, as an inherent property” (Elster 1986: 57). Actually, Commodity Fetishism is restated from Alienation in order to reveal essence and mystification of capitalism (Cowling 2006: 329).

For Marx, commodity fetishism refers to a social phenomenon that commodity become mysterious and appears to dominate human relationships. In the eyes of human beings, commodity seems endow naturally with its value. It looks like an autonomous and independent power in the relation with human beings (Marx 2007: 83). However, the secret behind such mystification is that value is the result of abstract labour embodied in commodity. In other words, value is embodied from labour, not come from nowhere.

Because value denotes relations between producers, so when the source of value is concealed as if it endows naturally, such relations of producers are also obscured and be abstracted to commodities. Thus, commodity itself is an objective human relationship to itself and to man and vice versa (McLellan 2000: 100).

Commodity Fetishism emerges only in commodity production. Marx points out that, in the self-production, Robinson Crusoe is not fetishized because his products contain the pure relation between the nature and him.

In short, commodity fetishism is an epistemic problem-the mistaking of appearance for commodity production (Ripstein 1987: 736). It plays important role in creating alienation of consciousness which contributes significantly to alienation of human essence.

Harvey describes in *A Companion to Marx's Capital* that “our social relation to the labouring activities of others is disguised in the relationships between things”. This is Alienation of human beings in relations with their labour and with other fellows. Such Alienations blind people to see what is going on underlined the reality. In example of buying lettuces, Harvey claims that “the material relation between the money and the lettuce expresses a social relation because the price – the “how much” – is socially determined”. All characteristics of buying lettuces are abstracted to the simple action of exchanging money to lettuces. So, it is impossible to know anything about the labour or the labourers (Harvey and Marx 2010: 39-40).

Cohen summarizes excellently Commodity Fetishism in five points: (1) The labour of persons takes the form of the exchange-value of things; (2) Things do have exchange-value; (3) They do not have it autonomously; (4) They appear to have it autonomously; (5) Exchange-value, and the illusion accompanying it, are not permanent, but peculiar to a determinate form of society (Cohen 2000: 116). Point (3) jumps to point (4) due to false consciousness of participants in commodity production. Also, Lukacs has showed that commodity takes a form of objectivity and also creates subjective behaviour for human beings (John and Dimitri 2004: 6).

Commodity Fetishism makes commodity as a signal of social status and some descriptions about people who consuming it. Hence, identity of person is revealed through characteristics of commodity, especially its value. Some people use luxury commodities or unique ones to denote their wealth, status, power, lifestyle, social relation and so on. Consequently, human relationships are obscured by commodity appearance.

In Commodity Fetishism, commodity as objects containing “naturally” value stands at the position as that of gods in religious world. Eventually, the most popular commodity, money or gold in physical form, becomes the highest fetishized thing with mere innate power so that it is turned to be the objective of many people instead of being means of their lives. Money appears as if its value exists by itself. There is no sign to trace any relations between producers hidden in money. All such relations are abstracted and represented by money.

In general, commodity fetishism comes from the fact that human beings misunderstand origin of value inside commodity. Thus, commodity becomes a mysterious thing in the eyes of human beings, then it not only escapes from the relation with its own producers but also be alien and powerful over such producers.

2.2.3 Key effects of Alienation and Commodity Fetishism on human beings

Marx’s concepts of alienation and commodity fetishism are not only philosophical concepts but also terms refers to practical reality because there are numerous evidences of alienation’s effects (Yuill 2011: 114). For example, in Whitehall II study, in medical sociology and social epidemiology, alienation’s effects on workers are found and close to Marx’s concept of alienation (Crinson and Yuill 2008, Yuill 2005, Forbes and Wainwright 2001). The research of Wilkinson and Pickett’s (2009) shows that statistical evidences about various aspects of life (health, life expectancy, violence, and so on) are negatively affected by inequality in divided societies. One of key reasons is that, in such societies, people compete with each other rather than cooperate together. That is alienation of relations among fellows (Yuill 2011: 114, Wilkinson and Pickett 2009). Some people argue commonly that the advancement of technology could help reduce alienation of workers from their work. However, working in condition of advanced technology, workers are imposed with higher expectation and aspiration resulting in deeper stress and increasingly alienation (Archibald 2009: 320).

A lot of above evidences show that alienation and commodity fetishism have structural effects on human beings. Key effects are commodified life and its insecurity, and illusions in commodity production

2.2.3.1 Commodified life and its insecurity

Alienation and Commodity Fetishism in capitalism lead human beings to commodified life in which all people have to produce commodities in order to exchange them to other commodities which satisfy their needs. Producing commodities as main way to exist; and exchanging commodities as method to meet demands, are the most important activities of human beings. Here, those activities are for living, yet they appear as if living is only for producing and exchanging commodity.

Each person produces and exchanges a particular commodity. People sell their labour power if they have no means of production. Specifically, workers and managers produce their labour power as commodity. That is why many students learn hard not only for their love of knowledge but also for the higher

working skills as a high quality commodity. For capitalists, they produce all commodities, not their own labour. In exchanging, people use their income which is another form of their commodity (like wage is a money form of labour power), to trade with suitable commodities. Simply, commodified life is continuous selling and buying commodities. There is no sign of human relation, but only relation among commodities. For workers, these are relations among labour power as commodity and other demanded commodities. For capitalist, there are relations between commodities produced by hired labour, and desired commodities. Therefore, Alienation and Commodity Fetishism develop continuously in commodity production.

This commodified life means that the whole life is nailed to markets in general and to commodity in particular. Because selling is harder than buying, commodity for selling is more important to the living than ones for buying. For both capitalists and worker, if producers sell well their commodity, they could easily buy other commodities. Otherwise, they have nothing to exchange with demanded commodities, then their living may face difficulties. For those ones selling only labour power, their lives are determined by not only their labour as their own commodity but also the production and exchange of commodity produced by them. Workers seem walk on the rope because commodity exists out of their will. Hence, their commodified lives are more vulnerable than ones of people who own the production.

Alienation and Commodity Fetishism increase insecurity of the commodified life because, now, the life of human beings is highly dependent on producing and exchanging commodity which is inherently instable. The mechanism to increase insecurity is that: *first*, human life is put into the commodity (Struik and Marx 1964: 70); *second*, commodity volatiles from positive situations to negative ones and vice versa owing to periodic business cycles (Wolff and Resnick 1987: 185). There are many factors contribute to that volatility such as government failures, market failures, conflicts between production relation and productive force and so on (O'Connor 1987: 49-107). That's why market instability is common.

More importantly, due to interconnections between markets, the troubles will spread rapidly among markets. For example, when the indexes in stock market go down simultaneously in several weeks, many investors lose their capital which, in turn, affects to bank system and estate market. Then other companies may face difficulties in approaching capital in banks because those banks are staying on the edge of collapse unless estate investors repay their debts to bank system. Thus, quickly, one problem of a commodity could be enlarged to be a serious problem of commodity system through "domino effects". All above points prove power of commodities over and to human life. That is potentially insecure and vulnerable life because the living, thinking and feeling fluctuate together with periodic stagnations, crises, and depressions in commodity production.

Insecurity and vulnerability are different from various people. Those ones laid totally on selling labour power, their lives will be dependent highly on whether their labour power as commodity and commodity produced by them are accepted. That is the double dependence. These people could not live well if their labour power is not met working requirement. Additionally, their lives

still hang on how commodities made by them are exchanged. Those ones own the production also possess commodity so that such owners are only dependent on situations on markets.

For all participants in commodity production, in living, they lack of commodities to meet their demands. In working, their tasks could be interrupted or delayed at any time. In thinking and feeling, they worry for being pushed out of the commodity production, and accessing limited to commodities. They have to be more efficient in using few of remaining commodities. Such lives are uncertain and insecure.

2.2.3.2 Illusions

Alienation and Commodity Fetishism dominate consciousness with illusions in all activities. This is very significant for human beings because, as dialectics of consciousness, people experienced the reality, then that knowledge determines what they experience (Ollman 1976: 200). Commodity Fetishism plays key role in creating one of popular illusions that inanimate commodity is a living organism with its own power (Ollman 1976: 144). In *Capital*, Marx uses the metaphor “in their eyes” in “There it is a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things” to imply illusions caused by Commodity Fetishism. Ripstein explains that human beings feel social relations as relations among things regardless whether it is true or not (Marx 2007: 83, Ripstein 1987: 739). Those illusions embed deeply to thinking, feeling and doing and change them to alien ones: “Production does not simply produce man as a commodity, the human commodity, man in the role of commodity; it produces him in keeping with this role as a mentally and physically dehumanized being – Immorality, deformity, and dulling of workers and capitalists – the human commodity” (Struik and Marx 1964: 121). E.Fromm criticized false consciousness from Alienation that “as in religion man is governed by the products of his own brain, so in capitalist production, he is governed by the products of his own hands”. “Machinery is adapted to the weakness of the human being, in order to turn the weak human being into a machine” (Fromm 2004: 41)

Illusions create high admiration to commodity. The most admired commodity is money as gold and other luxury metals. Commodity Fetishism leads to money fetishism that earning money is the highest goal of life. They live to earn money, not earn money to live. Holding money provides them illusions that they are powerful, privileged and be able to do what they want. Contrarily, losing money makes them depressed, sorrow, angry and less confident. Money becomes a popular indicator to describe human identity. People having much money are believed to be intelligent, powerful, well-educated, productive, polite and effective. Otherwise, without money, people are thought as stupid, weak, unproductive, ineffective, and little-educated. Thus, in loving money, capitalists expand globally capitalist exploitation to earn more profit. Meanwhile, workers usually take any chance to get more wages. There is strong belief that “money can solve problems”. Money is considered as the only mean granting human existence. People need to earn money as much as possible.

In the Britain, OXFARM called “In over 70 countries Oxfam is helping people work themselves out of poverty”.... “With your £2 a month we can help

them with seeds, tools” ... “Please do something remarkable today and help make a dream a reality. Telephone Oxfam today and give £2 a month.” (Lawrence 2002).

It seems that poverty could be easily erased by money. These illusions make people ignore that just real things as skilled labour, means of production, infrastructures can fix troubles. Essentially, the only effective resource is labour (Lawrence 2002). Actually, money is just another image of labour. The criticism of money illusion appeared a long time ago when Aristotle said in *Nicomachean Ethics*: The life of money-making is one undertaken under compulsion, and wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking; for it is merely useful and for the sake of something else (Walton 2007: 58).

Together with high concern about commodity, human beings also appreciate and care intensively about exchanging value (appearance of value) which is the only similarity between commodities and the only bridge connecting within commodity relations and producer’s relations. Based on that attention, people impose price on everything from inanimate objects to humanistic things. Hence, everything could be exchangeable even priceless things as love, dignity, honour and so on. For example, flight attendants have to sell their emotional labour which require them show graceful attitude even when they are really disturbed by guests. Here, flight attendants separate from their real feelings in order to sell artificial feelings, and reactions which are not their personality (Hochschild 2003: 137-61). Thus, human feelings are commercialised. In working, they are alienated from their own identity. In addition, illusions about value and price lead many people consider value and money as criteria to evaluate human activities, and to orient their lives.

2.3 Human Development in the light of Alienation and Commodity Fetishism

2.3.1 Human Development and capability approach

Human Development is defined internationally by the UNDP since 1990 in the series of HDRs (Alkire 2010a). Earlier, paradigms of human development raised worldwide attention from 1970s after huge challenges as unemployment, poverty, and inequality growing in period of fast industrialisation. Since late 1970s to 1980s, the Basic Need Approach dominated the literature of human development (Fukuda-Parr 2011: 126). This approach focuses on ensuring basic goods and services to help people get out of poverty. Some basic needs are healthcare, primary education, foods, clean water, and housing. Higher income is considered as the mean to achieve such basic needs. Nevertheless, the capability approach introduced by Amartya Sen became more prominent and be brought to global sphere from 1990s in HDRs (Stewart and Deneulin 2007: 410-420). In the first HDR, UNDP claims that Human Development focuses on human choices rather than on the provision of goods and services as the basic need approach advocates (UNDP 1990: 9).

Underpinning Human Development, capability approach refers to capability expansion to do functionings. Functioning reflects the various things a person may value doing or being. The valued functionings may vary from elementary ways, such as being adequately nourished and being free from

avoidable disease, to very complex activities or personal states, such as being able to take part in the life of the community and having self-respect (Sen 2001: 75). Such functionings are not judged in a hierarchical way. Each of them is seen to have value if it allows the individual to flourish (Hart 2007: 41). Based on this concept, Sen defined capability as “alternative combinations of functionings that are feasible for her to achieve”. So, Sen considers the human life as a set of functionings which can be chosen from a range of functionings (set of capabilities) (Robeyns 2003: 11). In other words, capabilities are options open to the person, possible functionings from which a person may choose (Crocker 1995: 162).

The capability approach praises freedom of human beings “by expanding the range of things that a person can be and do, such as to be healthy and well nourished, to be knowledgeable, and to participate in community life”, in short, it is freedom to choose what people value (Fukuda-Parr 2003: 303). Hence, Human Development is aiming to freedom as final goal of development. In 20 published HDRs, Human Development maintains to be conceptualized as “a process of enlarging people's choices” (Alkire 2010b: 7). In 2010, the concept is declared explicitly that it aims to expand people's freedom - the worthwhile capabilities people value - and to empower people to engage actively in development process, on a shared planet. And it seeks to do so in ways that appropriately advance equity, efficiency, sustainability and other key principle (Alkire 2010a: 39). In the latest report 2010, Human Development is the expansion of people’s freedoms to live long, healthy and creative lives; to advance other goals they have reason to value; and to engage actively in shaping development equitably and sustainably on a shared planet. People are both the beneficiaries and drivers of Human Development, as individuals and in groups (UNDP 2010b: 22). In which, the economic freedom is very important. The development process must change economic freedom for the few to the freedom for all, “especially for the members of the least privileged classes in the society, in order to broaden every individual’s range of choices to achieve happiness” (Naqvi 2002: 215).

It is necessary to make clear that “expanding people’s choice” does not mean more choices are always better. Sen had warned that “sometimes more freedom of choice can bemuse and befuddle, and make one’s life more wretched” (Sen 1992: 59). Here, expanding quality of choice is more important than increasing number of choices (Deneulin and Shahani 2009: 34). Among range of capabilities, Sen advocates to promote valuable capabilities. However, there is no fixed list of valuable capabilities for different societies. Because, the choosing among capabilities is a value judgement which is different in various places (Alkire 2010a: 31). In practice, valuable capabilities are listed by various groups of researchers. For example, Nussbaum introduces 10 central human capabilities included life, bodily health, bodily integrity, sense – imagination – and thought, emotions, practical reason, affiliation, other species, play, control over One’s environment (Nussbaum 2007: 23-24). Meanwhile, Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi identify 9 other ones: health, education, economic security, the balance of time, political voice and governance, social connection, environmental conditions, personal security, subjective measures of quality of life (Alkire 2010a: 34). These lists almost always include health, education, security which appear also in the basic need approach.

2.3.2 Understanding Human Development as capabilities expansion in the light of Alienation and Commodity Fetishism

Expansion of freedom to choose requires enlargement of capability to get commodities that people value. Certainly, functionings and commodities are not the same things but, in commodity production, each functioning requires to consume commodities. Hence, a person having freedom to choose functioning also can get commodities to realise such functioning. For example, among a range of what can be done, if a girl wants to reshape her hair style, she has to have enough money for that hair service. It is true that richer people have wider range of commodities can be got, thus they have more freedom to choose what they value. Nevertheless, it does not mean that Human Development is simply enlarging income or financial resource of people.

In *Commodities and Capabilities*, Sen pointed out, in commodity production, functionings come true by consuming commodities (Sen 1999: 6-11). Here, commodities are resources to realise functionings. There are conversion factors determining the processes of translating commodity characteristics to functionings. *Firstly*, it is personal characteristics such as metabolism, physical condition, sex, reading skills, intelligence. *Secondly*, it is social characteristics such as public policies, social norm, discriminating practises, gender roles, societal hierarchies, and power relations. *Thirdly*, environmental characteristics included climate, infrastructure, institutions, and public goods. Such factors imply that holding commodities does not guarantee that functionings are done and that person achieved well-being (Crocker and Robeyns 2010: 68). Hence, “the functionings themselves have to be examined, and the capability of the person to achieve them has to be appropriately valued” (Sen 1989: 44).

However, Sen only focused on the side of use value of commodity. He ignored its exchange value by advocating that commodity is not compulsorily an exhalable object for money (Robeyns 2003: 12). This ignorance makes a weak point of his approach to Human Development because absence of value in capability approach means that alienated labour inside commodity has been neglected. So, Sen overlooks alienation in working time and just focuses on the life after working.

Human Development viewed from UNDP and capability perspective need to acknowledge Marx’s view that human development is a process “...replacing the domination of circumstances and of chance over individuals by the domination of individuals over chance and circumstances” (MacLellan and Marx 1977: 190). Marx also advocates freedom of individuals and go further that it is not only freedom to choose what people value, but also freedom “over chance circumstances”. It could understand “circumstances” as commodity production, Alienation and Commodity Fetishism. Currently, those factors force individuals living and working in the way dominated by commodities, not the way they actually value. When the domination of individuals over circumstances could be achieved, human beings would have not been alienated by influence of circumstances. They also could get out of influence of commodity. In that context, Alienation and Commodity Fetishism could be removed.

In that sense, freedom overcoming such circumstances, as Marx mentioned, is broader than freedom within such circumstances, as Sen advocated (Bagchi 2000: 4416). There is a group of very rich people already approach such freedom overcoming circumstances. Nonetheless, their apparent freedom is “bought at the cost of enormous unfreedom for hundreds of millions” (Bagchi 2000: 4418). Therefore, human development mentioned by Marx is closed to human emancipation.

Steve Jobs seems to be emancipated because he can overcome circumstances around. “I was voluntarily poor when I was in college and India, and I lived a pretty simple life even when I was working. So I went from fairly poor, which was wonderful, because I didn’t have to worry about money, to being incredibly rich, when I also didn’t have to worry about money”. He criticizes those ones change their lives by having money. “It’s crazy. I made a promise to myself that I’m not going to let this money ruin my life” (Isaacson 2011: 105)

Of course, it could be criticized as a utopian idea of Marx but, indeed, broadly defined human development should be understood as Marx advocates, then human beings could follow that goal as far as possible.

2.3.3 Human Development under the effects of Alienation and Commodity Fetishism

In commodity production, Alienation and Commodity Fetishism are inevitable, but Human Development is not. The latter is achieved in the context of the formers. Particularly, Human Development is affected by insecurity of commodified life and illusions built in Alienation and Commodity Fetishism.

Firstly, insecurity of commodified life affects to availability and certainty of capability to choose. As mentioned above, functionings is fulfilled by consuming commodities which are bought on the markets. However, in the commodification of life, to buy desirable commodities, it is necessary condition that people must sell successful their commodities. Nevertheless, crises could come globally or regionally at any time so that workers and capitalists cannot sell their commodities at any time, and then stop buying other commodities. This means that capability to choose is not available for them in case of crises. In addition, that capability is not certain because it could be lost in near future regardless how much people achieved Human Development before. For example, Finland is always one of the leading countries in Human Development (UNDP 2010b: 148) contributed considerably by Nokia Corporation. However, as the most important enterprise of Finland, its failure in competition with Apple and Google not only hurt Finland’s budget which is supporting social benefit for many citizens (The Wall Street Journal 2011), but also increase unemployment rates (Finland News 2011). As a result, falls of both Nokia and Finland economy restrict indirectly range of freedom to choose for citizens (Irish Times 2010). Hence, capability to choose is hard to be sustained in a long time when people are under effect of Alienation and Commodity Fetishism.

Secondly, illusions made from Alienation and Commodity Fetishism drive strongly choices what to do and what to be. Although the capability approach does not judge what people choose to be and to do according to a hierarchical values, but illusions could lead people to be and to do inhuman things. Illusion about money guides both workers and capitalists choosing to be as rich as

possible. They spend time to accumulate money as much as possible. Such living is considered as meaninglessness. When asked about the most surprised things of humanity, the Dalai Lama XIV said that it is man's behaviour "because he sacrifices his health in order to make money. Then he sacrifices money to recuperate his health. And then he is so anxious about the future that he does not enjoy the present; the result being that he does not live in the present or the future; he lives as if he is never going to die, and then dies having never really lived" (Dalai Lama XIV 2011).

2.3.4 Human Development in situation of troubles at the enterprise level

Human Development is not a linear process but it faces many challenges included poverty, environmental issues, gender inequality, economic crisis, food security and so on. Among those, economic reasons, especially economic crises, are always the most difficult challenges.

According to theories of business cycles, commodity production operates in Kitchin inventory cycle (3-5 years), Juglar fixed investment cycle (7-11 years), Kuznets infrastructural investment cycle (15-25 years), and Kondratiev wave or long technological cycle (45-60 years). This means that crises come globally and regionally again and again each several years (Kitchin 1923, Kondratieff and Stolper 1935, Korotayev and Tsirel 2010). From late 20th century to early 21st century, crises seem to be more frequently such as: the 1997/1998 financial crisis, Bursting of dot-com bubble 2001, the global crisis from 2007/2008 (Corbett and Vines 2000: 67, Cassidy 2002: 295-312, Bergeijk et al. 2011: 5-16).

Under such instability of commodity production, enterprises always face threats of collapses and troubles which, in turn, affect strongly to capabilities of related people. Workers, managers, and owners will be alienated and fetishized commodity in different ways. Therefore, troubles of enterprise become a special context to see interactions among Alienation, Commodity Fetishism and Human Development. Outcomes of interactions are diversified because people in enterprises are workers, managers, and owners who embed differently in Alienation, Commodity Fetishism and capability expansion.

To understand practical outcomes, it is necessary to look at aspects life such as employment, consumption, time use, and relations to others. Adaptations in such aspects will reveal Human Development as capability expansion under effects of Alienation and Commodity Fetishism. These adaptations appear visibly in each single individual's life. Definitely, the ways workers, managers, and owners adapt to troubles are different from each other. Specifically, there are differences between the ways capabilities are narrowed and the processes they are hurt from those capability contraction.

Chapter 3 will show how lives of workers, managers, and owners in adapting to trouble of production are examined. Findings and discussions of that investigation are presented in chapter 4.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

3.1 Data collection

3.1.1 Selected methods

In this qualitative research, primary data are collected through group discussion and ethnographic observation. Methods are introduced by D.Silverman, S.Wilkinson, R.Barbour (Barbour 2007, Seale et al. 2007, Silverman 2004, Silverman 2005).

The secondary data is collected from academic books, journals, research papers, and trustable websites and so on.

The method “group discussion” is selected for several reasons. *Firstly*, it allows to explore deeper not only aspects of life in adaptation of workers, managers, and owners, but also links among such aspects. Discussions within groups will uncover difficulties, thinking, feelings, and ways to adapt troubles in commodity production. This method also reveals links among problems of life aspects. *Secondly*, homogeneity within groups allows identifying precisely affected aspects of life without using individual interviews. Group discussion reduces time and cost of research but still produce reliable data as individual interviews. *Thirdly*, interaction among participants produces collectively data about adaptation of three groups. This bring quickly a comprehensive understanding differences of their lives in trouble time, in turn, this helps to know more about interaction between Human Development, Alienation, and Commodity Fetishism. In addition, the researcher can ask for more details and get multiple replies. Answers from each group are various because life of each person is different from others. So, data are enriched from contribution of all participants. This is a good base to have interesting findings. *Fourthly*, this is not a quantitative one. So, it is not necessary to collect quantitative data. Ideas emerged from discussions, and links among them are suitable to see how freedom to choose what people value (Human Development) is affected from troubles in commodity production.

The researcher also uses a list of paper questions to take basic details of participants after discussion with groups finished. First part of the list contains classification questions to understand participants. The other parts examine details of individual adaptations. These parts are aiming to collect some key statistical data about affected aspects of life. It will provide good description and evidences for findings and discussion in chapter 4. Unfortunately, this part is not designed well so that participants understand differently and imprecisely. As a result, data of those parts are not highly reliable.

With ethnographic observation, senses as seeing, touching, and hearing are used to observe things in research locations. This method is necessary to support the method group discussion. The latter is not effective in exploring situation from outside view because discussion was done among trouble-

experienced people. From outside, the researcher through his senses can observe reality of Alienation and Commodity Fetishism.

Moreover, the ethnographic observation is also effective to know how people suffered and adapted to troubles in enterprises. As analysed above, Alienation and Commodity Fetishism appear structurally in reality, and even root in culture. Therefore, appearance of those processes is implicitly or explicitly in everywhere. The researcher needs to use his senses to feel and understand such appearance from outside. Also, ethnographic observation is a tool to confirm points in group discussion. By seeing workplaces, chatting with people before and after group discussion, hearing stories, the researcher understands more about how hard their living and their working are in troubles of enterprises. For example, some workers told that they want to continue their work even the company is worse. However, they may lie because the researcher also listen other conversations between such workers in break time in which they disagree with owners and want to move out.

3.1.2 Requirements for research locations

The research investigates troubles of enterprises in which workers, managers, and owners were affected simultaneously but differently. Some requirements for finding such enterprises are followings.

First, companies should be private ones so that position of owners is clarified clearly.

Second, companies should be big enough to have different specialisation as workers, managers and owners. If it is small, owners could be managers at the same time, or managers are also workers. So, it is difficult to see how different people react to troubles in enterprises.

Third, troubles should be unique for only that company. This requirement is to examine how groups related to a certain commodity suffer a shock in commodity production while other people are safe. This situation is different from the one that many companies face the same trouble. In the latter case, many people fall in trouble at the same time and they may react differently in comparison with their reaction in the former case.

Fourth, troubles of company must prolong in a certain time so that people working in company could adjust their lives to follow effects of such trouble.

3.1.3 Specific research location

The group discussions and ethnographical observations take place in two factories in suburb of Hanoi and a company in Bac Giang province. Each of them faces different difficulties.

The Cake Factory was affected strongly from trouble of the Milk Factory because the two belong to the ANCO Corporation. The owners in ANCO Corporation took capital from the Cake Factory to rescue the Milk Factory. Accordingly, the Cake Factory lacked financial input to run its production. At the same time, it was competing aggressively by other rivals and lost its market share. Thus, the production was contracted quickly from about 100 staffs to about 30 staffs (at the time of interviewing). Its production was instable.

The Milk Factory was accused of melamine contamination which could generate cancer for consumers. Originally (in 2000), the factory was owned by

Nestle Company and operated well. After transform to ANCO corporation (in 2006), the performance worsened to the lowest point that the products were accused of melamine contamination and could not be traded on the market in late 2008. Consequently, the production collapsed to nearly zero and almost workers had to stop working and got the factory's support which valued 70% of minimum wage. The Milk factory only run better in early 2011 when managers found new investors pouring capital to rescue it. The production is very limited and frequently interrupted and its market share was narrowed considerably.

The Samwon Company, a Korean company, exports its commodity to Korea, Taiwan and other international markets. From 2007, sometimes, its goods were not met the quality standard of importers. The company lost that shipped goods and paid compensation to its partners for the missed contract. In addition, the Korean boss put hard pressure on Vietnamese staffs to run company well. However, many of them left and the boss has to recruit new staffs who, also, moved out after several months. All those things came together lead production worse. Workers and managers work unstable with low and late paid wage.

3.1.4 Organizing group discussion as the main method to collect data

For selecting participants and group size, the researcher requests to set up, in each factory, 2 groups of male and female workers (6-8 members), a group of managers (4-6 members). The researcher also suggests discussing with group of 2-3 owners. All participants must suffer company's troubles in about two years in the factory. The requests were sent to the General Director of ANCO Corporation then forwarded to chief managers of two factories, finally, personnel staffs in each factory organised such groups. However, these staffs may not understand fully requests; so, some groups have fewer members as requested or new recruited ones.

Venues for group discussion are done at workplace depending on actual contexts. At Cake factory, due to lack of room, all group discussions take place at a big room contained three other desks for other managers. That is not a good venue because some workers may hesitate to speak their real thinking when managers are still working next to the discussion. However, the topic is about life, not too related to the Cake factory, so this mistake does not affect to the result of discussion. At the Milk factory, the discussions were in factory's kitchen with female workers, in a store with male workers, and in the guest room with managers.

As regards interaction among members and role of moderator, actually, members do not actively interact with others; rather they speak individually and directly to the moderator. In the role of moderator, the researcher makes the central question and other explained questions, encourages participants discuss, drives members to make clear vagueness in previous discussion. For example, when a member shared that he was tired, the moderator asked others to discuss why and how was that feeling.

3.1.5 Limitation of field data

Firstly, the group discussion was hindered to reach the best effective due to lack of experience of the researcher. Particularly, as a moderator, the researcher has limited experiences in encouraging quiet members, discouraging talkative ones, asking sensitive questions... So, the group discussion runs without critical debate among members. It looks like one-way conversation between participants and moderator, not real discussion among participants. Therefore, the researcher needs improve in raising question and connection ideas in group discussion. Besides, he may invite another experienced one to help him moderate group discussion.

Secondly, list of paper questions were not uniform across interviews. The researcher has changed format of questionnaire two times during all discussion. This reduces homogeneity of data among discussion. Moreover, unit of measurement in accessing is not consistent so that data from different questionnaire are not comparable. Some participants confuse meanings in value of unit of measurement. Due to such mistakes, the researcher can only draw qualitative data, not reliable statistical data. However, it should be noted that the question list plays a supportive role in this research. Main data and key findings are drawn from group discussion and ethnographical observations

3.2 Data analysis

3.2.1 Data collected from group discussion

The researcher uses both content analysis and ethnographic analysis but leaning to content analysis which allow the researcher to access deeply data (Silverman 2004: 182-195).

Content analysis is aiming to “produce a relatively systematic and comprehensive summary/overview of the data set as a whole, sometimes incorporating a quantitative development” (Wilkinson 2011: 169).

Ethnographic analysis is to produce a selective description of issue “what is going on” between the participants in some segment of data. “ethnographic analysis aims to be contextual, .., and it aims to represent the social world from the participant’s perspective,..., rather than analyst’s view (Wilkinson 2011: 169)

3.2.1.1 Content analysis

- **Workers’ adaptation to troubles in commodity production**

There are four discussions with two female worker groups and two male worker groups in two factories. The most affected aspect is employment; consumption is the second; aspect of relation with other people is lesser affected. Their feelings become more depressed.

In term of employment, there are dramatic changes in wages, pressure, tiredness, and working environment. In both factories, wages of workers are reduced to 70% of minimum level which is very low to cover living cost. Moreover, wages are paid unusually and late. All wage supplements are cut down. All workers’ groups agree that decrease of wage is the hardest challenge for their lives.

Due to instability of factory's production, workers are busy in short time for unusual orders from partners, but have no working in the rest of month. Totally, within a month, their working days are very few, about 8-10 days, in comparison with 22-24 days in stable working months.

There is over half of workers moved out from factories since troubles had happened. So, the remaining workers have to do more tasks. Many workers are commanded to perform several specializations. Sometimes, if the factory recruits few new workers, the experienced workers must do their working tasks and guide new comers. In other words, there are more pressures and tiredness for workers.

Both male and female workers find that the working environment is not maintained as good as before troubles. Even basic working accessories as caps, gloves, gauze masks are not renewed so that some workers have to buy new ones by themselves.

As main adaptation, workers do additional works in order to earn another income replaced to loss of wages in main job. These additional works are temporarily and reactively. Workers do the second job when they are free from the factory. Alternative jobs usually are agricultural ones, working at construction sites, serving at restaurants, stores. They always try to sell their labour power. However, with over-30-year-old workers who know agricultural skills, they also expand self-productions such as raising animals, planting vegetables and fruits. Products are aimed to both selling on markets and consuming by their family. This is very unique reaction which is opposite with commodity production. Young workers also rarely adapt like that because they have no agricultural skills but some also join self-production together with other members of family. In that sense, there is a tendency that parts of workers become less commodified when they produce by and for themselves.

Workers hardly find other better and stable jobs at outside because their limitedness of education, skills. Taking extra training is not always a possible option for workers due to many reasons.

Loan, a female worker at Milk Factory said: "bọn em cũng mong muốn được đi học nhưng khả năng kinh tế không có. Ví dụ như liên thông từ trung cấp lên đại học, em hỏi chồng em là cho em đi học nhé thì chồng em bảo là ừ, đi mà học, có tiền đi mà học, tức là gia đình em không có đủ điều kiện để đi học"⁴.

Among female group, married females were urged stronger than singles to take additional works because the former is usually the breadwinner in their family meanwhile the latter still get parental support.

In terms of consumptions, both female and male groups are forced to consume as less as possible owing to huge decrease of wages and worries about insecurity of future. Females usually minimise their spending to basic commodities such as foods, clothes, medicines, and children's education. They

⁴ "We also want continue training but lack of financial resource. For example, for upgrading from vocational training to bachelor degree, I asked my husband to allow me that upgrade, he said "yes, if you self-finance the tuition fee", that condition is impossible for me"

reduce spending in their own needs. For example, no fashion, no cosmetics, no new shoes, no hair caring service. For male workers, they also cut spending for meeting friends, parties, drinking beer, cigarettes, and other relaxation. Some even keep longer hair for saving money. In addition, part of workers produces their own food based on their self-production as alternative work. This non-commodified food helps them to save a certain volume of income. With transportation, workers reduce using vehicles and replace by bicycles or walking. Some young workers spend money for extra education with hope that new skills help them to get better jobs. Almost workers diminish totally tourism since the production was in troubles.

In general, workers' consumption is tightened dramatically in associated with cutting down wages. Therefore, they adapt by being more economical, changing consumption strategy to "reduce quantity, ensure acceptable quality", expanding self-products, and accepting lack of commodities.

With regard to relations with others, workers cannot maintain well connections with friends, neighbours, and relatives because they have less time, less income to afford such activities, and bad moods. Male workers would not meet friends as frequently as previous time. Many workers feel shy and bored with relatives' questions about works and activities required much money.

Hoang, a male 25-year-old worker at Cake Factory, said: "Hàng xóm thấy mình không đi làm thì người ta hỏi thôi. Người ta có thể nghĩ mình thế này, thế khác trong công việc"⁵.

For most workers, maintaining good relations within their own family (among husband and wife, parents and children) is the hardest thing. *Firstly*, workers are stressful and tired at works, and be worried for lacking money. So, easily, they get angry with other members in family. *Secondly*, the shortage of commodities makes them unsatisfactorily, and then tensions emerge.

Thuy, a female 35-year-old worker at Cake factory said "Mối quan hệ gia đình dễ nảy sinh mâu thuẫn. Con đòi một đôi dép đẹp nhưng không có tiền mua, con khóc thì bố nói"⁶.

Regarding relations with colleagues, the connection worker-manager and worker-owner worsen when workers dissatisfy with instability of production, low wages, poor working conditions, and gloomy future of factory.

Workers usually take advantages from family relationships to overcome troubles. They find family as a spiritual support to release considerably pressures and stress, and a helpful financial backing.

Ly, a female worker at Milk Factory, answered whom she would ask for financial demand "Vay bố mẹ. Khoản tiền nào nhỏ thì vay bạn bè, ai giúp mình thì mình vay, tùy từng đối tượng"⁷.

⁵ "My neighbours may ask why I staying at home. They may think that I did wrong things at works"

⁶ "Family relationship is easy to be taut. If my child wants a nice pair of shoes but I could not afford, then he cries, and my husband feels annoying for that. He may criticise me"

Generally, workers' relations with others are loosened in trouble time. Workers react by accepting those situations, and select helpful relationship to rescue them from difficulties.

In terms of time use, workers change both schedules within a day and time length for many activities. Their working time at factories become uncertainly. They have to work intensively in two or three days a week then free in the rest of week. This affects to other time of additional jobs. So, total time for working is expanded or contracted depending on workers' arrangement among jobs, stability of factory's production, availability of additional jobs. That is one of the most annoying things with workers. Workers are more tired in extra working because they try to earn additional income as much as possible. Although working time fluctuates, many workers willing to work more about 2 hours with females and 4-5 hours with males. Time for basic needs as sleeping and eating is not changed much but schedules shift within a day. For example, some workers have lunch in the afternoon, go to sleep earlier and then get up earlier. Time for caring home also varies depending on working time. In most cases, workers are busy at work and so tired after that, they have no time to care other activities at home. However, if not working, they can look after other family members. Time for recreation and entertainment is definitely cut down and replaced by working time. Workers want to increase earning-money time by reducing non-earning-money time because of tiredness after long working day, nervousness for insecurity of family, and lack of money for those activities.

Workers adapt to changes of time use by rebalance among time for all activities in privilege for working time, cutting down non-earning-money time. They accept to trade off time for recreation, time for caring home to working time.

- ***Manager's adaptation to troubles in commodity production***

There are two manager's groups from the Cake Factory (2 persons) and the Milk Factory (4 persons). However, managers are not homogeneous in positions in the factory. Some managers have high positions, some does not. Among aspects of life, managers' lives are affected mostly in employment and consumption.

In terms of employment, wages are declined significantly and paid later than wages of workers who are prioritized to get wages. Managers get bad moods in working because of pressures and tiredness. They have to do more tasks which are not their duties before; even some of them have to work as real workers if the production requires more people. They highly disappoint with current situation because managers have high expectation on works but factory remains in troubles for a long time.

A technology manager named Tuan at Cake Factory said “Mình trước cũng đi làm một số công ty nữa. Khi mình quay về đây thì cũng kỳ vọng công ty nó phát

⁷ “I borrow from my parents. With shortage of small money, I ask my friends. Depending on each situation, I ask help from those ones that I think they can help me at that time”

triển mạnh và công việc mình ổn định. Thế nhưng mà, khi mà đùng một cái thì vấn đề công việc nó không ổn định nữa thì mình cũng hụt hẫng”⁸.

To ensure lives, they do additional jobs which are long-term ones, not temporarily as ones of workers. The additional jobs will be prolonged even when the factory recovers. Hence, in hard time, they adjust very quickly and strongly by expanding the additional jobs.

Manager named Nam at Milk Factory: “Khi công ty gặp khó khăn thì mình mở rộng chăn nuôi nhưng nếu công việc ổn định thì mình lại làm ở công ty”⁹.

In terms of consumptions, within decreased income, managers reduce budget for daily spending and other luxury needs. However, they keep constant spending for basic needs, especially food, but avoid buying valuable stuffs. Managers also adjust transportation cost by using inexpensive ways. Interestingly, almost managers do not pay more money for extra education, not because they have no money but they are educated quite well. Saving is declined significantly. Also, they cut down activities like parties, and travelling.

Mr.Nam, a manager of production department at Milk Factory, said ‘trước đây thì sinh nhật hay ngày lễ thì mời bạn bè, gia đình nhưng gần đây thì chỉ tổ chức trong gia đình thôi’¹⁰.

Generally, those managers still feel acceptable with their consumption.

As regards time use, working time of managers occupies time for other activities, especially caring family and recreation. Although time at official work is reduced, managers expand working time at other places. So, totally, managers’ time at work increases and be more flexible. Meanwhile, time for eating and sleeping are not reduced but changed in timetable.

In terms of relations with others, their relations with people could not be maintained as good as before, especially relation with lowered colleagues, when these people become more aggressive and less manageable. Some unsatisfactory workers could against management in production in order to showing their anger with bad situation of the factory. To equalise tension, managers have to be patient, endure such anger and try to solve cleverly. They communicate difficultly with workers because many workers are bored in working.

Milk Factory’s manager named Tien said: “Gọi công nhân làm thì họ sẽ không làm vì viện cớ là không được trả lương, đôi lúc cũng phải nhường nhịn họ”¹¹.

⁸ “I worked for some companies before moving to this factory. I expected highly on strong growth of factory and my job is stable. However, when the production is instable suddenly, I feels disappointed”

⁹ “I increase raising animals when the factory is falling in trouble, but come back to official jobs when the production is stable”

¹⁰ “I often invited friends to my birthday or other festivals, but recently, I just organize these events within my family”

¹¹ “I call workers to work but they against my request reasoning that they have not got wages, so I have to endure and being patient with them”

Relations inside managers' families are not fine because income and consumption are contracted. Managers try to widen relations with friends and partners in order to get benefit for additional jobs. However, relations with some partners were worsened.

Manager Tien at Milk Factory said “Có thể người ta làm việc với mình được 1-2 lần có lợi nhưng lần thứ 3 không tốt thì sẽ thay đổi thái độ ngay, dễ xảy ra xung đột”¹².

- ***Owner's adaptation to troubles in commodity production***

Both Cake Factory and Milk Factory belong to ANCO Corporation. It is very difficult to contact with members of Administrative Board of ANCO. So, discussion with owners group is actually in-depth interview with one important owner who is the General Director of ANCO Corporation. In troubles of enterprise, changes in his life begin from not only loss of property but also moving to management. That movement could be considered as a response of a boss in hard time. Consequently, his life changed significantly. At the time of discussion, he was an owner and just took seat of General Director 6 months ago to rescue “the sinking ship”. In this case, the line between owning and managing is blurred. Hence, his response to troubles is different from responses of other owners who changed their investment to other fields.

In relation to working, he spent almost all day for the work. His working had changed totally from a free owner to a busy General Director. He was tired in both mental and physical health to negotiate debts with banker, find new partners, new markets, reorganize structure of corporation, assure workers, maintain production within limited resources, and deal with other hard issues. *Time* for other activities was minimized, especially recreation activities. When property collapsed to about 20% of the volume before hard time, he consumed more economically, for example, stop driving his car but taking taxi in necessary cases. His wife is a good money earner, thus, *daily consumption* was not affected too much. It is clearly that those ones having a solid support from family, his or her difficulties were absorbed well. *In terms of relations with around people*, friendship and relation with partners were the most affected. He was so busy to contact normally with friends. In addition, the bad mood prevents him to meet and chat freely with friends. Besides, some friends and partners try to leave the owner for not involving troubles of ANCO Corporation. However, he was still autonomous in his life due to remained property and social capital. Generally, owner adapted strongly from a person enjoying the life to the one suffering tiredness, stress and pressures from work.

3.2.1.2 Ethnographic analysis

In group discussions, through voices, behaviour, attitudes, participants reveal unknowingly how they are engaged in Alienation, Commodity Fetishism, and how they are affected from troubles in enterprises.

At Cake Factory, when the discussion is finished with envelopes contained money as gifts, all male workers are really happy. It is interesting that they

¹² “Partners got benefits from working with me once or twice times, but if the third times is not fine, they may change quickly their pleased attitude to me”

changed to be more cooperative. Similarly, at Milk Factory, female workers are very happy and surprised with money-gifts so that two workers who had left the discussion also hinted to get such gifts. It looked like an effect of money. It seems that commodity production injected naturally and implicitly to human beings such characteristics. That behaviour does not appear only in workers but also in managers. At Milk Factory, after discussion, one of manager who got the money-gift guides the researcher enthusiastically to know the production and introduces much technical information in his department. That is a good opportunity for understanding hard working conditions. In difficult time, workers and managers seem to be more sensitively with money or other material benefit. In that sense, both gaining and losing money may change very much them to positive or negative feelings. In other words, their attitude toward the gift showed that people concern highly to commodity, their feeling also change depending on how many commodity they have.

At Cake Factory, after knowing the purpose of discussion, female workers showed clearly their deep disappointment because the researcher cannot help them to solve issue of social insurance. All participants misunderstand that the moderator is responsible to put pressures on owners of Factory. Their main complaint is that the factory has not paid their social insurance for four years. Their strong disappointment proves unintentionally that social insurance is very important issue. They worried for insecurity that their health will not be guaranteed by social insurance. With some workers, social insurance is the only reason keeping them to work at Milk Factory. The oldest worker in the group is the one lost much benefit from having no social insurance. Knowing that the discussion is not helpful, she corporates limited in discussion. The disappointment in faces, behaviours, voices implies how insecure they are. Troubles in production may worsen their worries. This case also hints that social protection plays important role in the commoditization time.

3.2.2 Data analysis of Ethnographical observation

In lunch time at both factories, Alienation and Commodity Fetishism are appeared in scenes of hard working, worsening situation, workers' endurance, and no other choice for workers. For example, foods are poor in quality, insufficient in quantity, especially with males. Meal cost is VND11.000/person (about 33cent of Euro) while an average meal is about VND30.000 (about 1 Euro). Hence, many male workers were hungry before ending the working day. The Cake Factory knew this situation but it cannot increase payment for meal owing to difficulties in finance. At Milk Factory, workers even build an extra budget for food in which each person contributes a small amount of money to buy fruits for dessert. The chef complaints that it is hard for her to cook within limited expense. Such poor lunch time implies how hard employees are working. This situation is worsening and workers have to accept reactively difficulties in working. Their endurance also means that they have no capability to work comfortably. In turn, this signifies their uncomfortable living. In general, they had suffered difficult conditions in living and working.

Broken machines on the lobby at Milk Factory imply an aspect of Alienation that fate of machines determines human lives. Many machines were abandoned when the factory fell in troubles. It cannot install new ones with limited capital. So, its production is contracted and more instable.

Consequently, lives of employees become difficult, insecure and depressed. Human capabilities seem to be closely associated with machines.

At the Korean company named SAMWON, bored attitude of middle-age workers reveals their disrespect to the work. They are fed up with on/off situations of the production which cut down considerably their wages. Instead, they are happier with their self-production in which they can control working process. Although it is hardly to find other jobs due to limitation in education and middle age, they are skilful in agriculture, so they choose to work at home, not try to sell labour power. Income from such activities is not high but makes them felt safer. Apparently, people work for earning, not for appreciation in working. They do more seriously and are happy if the work brings higher income.

Working pressures escalates to quarrels at SAMWON Company. At the beginning, all staffs work comfortable in the office. Unexpectedly, a bank staff came and informed that the debt is overdue so that some company properties will be captured and monitored by the bank. Immediately, the Korean manager and other Vietnamese staffs were nervous and compromised to extend the deadline for the debt. However, that effort was failed and turned office climate to high tension. Quarrels among Korean managers and Vietnamese staffs emerged while the bank staff sits there quietly. Extremely terrible moods in quarrels are proved how commodity could dominate human life in the way people behave, think and feel.

All above ethnographical observations uncover different ways that people, especially workers, suffered from troubles of enterprises. These are also multi-dimensions of surface of Alienation, Commodity Fetishism and Human Development.

Chapter 4: Findings and discussions

4.1 Reflected in employment, consumption, time use, and relations with others, capability to choose is narrowed when commodity production falls in trouble

All four key aspects of life (employment, consumption, time use, and relations with others) are worsened when commodity production is in trouble. Specially, employment is the most affected aspect which, in turn, changes other aspects.

In terms of employment, when troubles of enterprises emerge, wage of employees and profit of production's owners are cut down immediately. The loss in income depends on how serious the troubles are. Adapting to this situation, all workers, managers, and owners find their own ways to earn additional income in order to cover living cost of their families.

Manager named Tuan at Cake Factory said: “mức lương mà công ty hỗ trợ coi như là rau dưa”... “Khi không có việc làm, mình phải cố gắng bươn chải, khi công ty không có việc thì mình phải kiếm việc ở ngoài để làm, mình không thể ngồi chờ công ty, chẳng hạn dăm tháng, ba tháng gọi mình đi làm. Mình vẫn phải tìm việc làm để đảm bảo mức sống gia đình¹³.”

So, earning replaced income is the most important adaptation of workers, managers, and owners. This change affects all aspects of life.

Due to additional jobs, working time becomes very uncertain, in which, it is divided into two parts. The first one is working time at the factory which is reduced. The second one is at other workplaces and depends on the first one. Totally, groups discussed that working time is expanded. Consequently, pressures and stress increase at work. Working becomes not only more uncomfortable than before but also more alien to workers, managers, and owners.

With respect to consumption, swaying directly and strongly from loss in income, people are forced to reduce what they are consuming in both quantity and quality. People must trade-off between buying commodities for recreation and ensuring commodities for basic needs such as food, education (for children), housing, and transportation. This change also diminishes their satisfaction in living. In language of capability approach, some functionings are cut down because capabilities to choose what people value are narrowed. All those changes indicate that the more employment, especially wages, is affected, the more consumption is adjusted negatively.

In terms of time use, because working time becomes easily variable, other parts of a day also change very much. All participants in group discussion complaint about chaos of their time use which are annoying them. As similar

¹³ “The remained wage is just enough for a few foods”... “When having no works, I have to try hard. When the Factory stops its production, I must find other jobs to earn income which ensure quality of living activities. I cannot wait until the Factory recovers”.

as changes in consumption, parts of time use for recreation are mostly replaced by parts of working. Time for caring family and home is also forced to be decreased. These adaptations aim to expansion in working time. By doing that, people are more alienated. Besides, when non-working time is narrowed, capability to choose is contracted not only by itself but also by limited time to do what people value. Overall, in troubles of enterprises, Human Development is constrained because of both reasons: people have fewer commodities and less time to do what they value.

As regards relations with others, troubles in production raise tensions in relations between persons and near people (family members and relatives), and loosen connections with valued people (friends). Especially, some relations building on market interactions (with friends, commercial partners, colleagues) are damaged because people cannot receive benefit from each other. Relations with others changing negatively is a backward step for human development and a forward one for Alienation because, as introduced in Marx's Theses on Feuerbach, human essence is defined within totality of social relations (McLellan 2000: 172).

In summary, troubles in enterprises increase stress and commodification in working (employment), living (consumption and time use), and social networks (relations with others). These issues requires that, to fully understand human development, approach of Sen and UNDP needs to engage with the world of work, where human beings can experience grave insecurities that has differing implications for people's well-being.

4.2 Difference in adaptations of workers, managers, and owners and their Human Development

Table 4.1

Difference in adaptation of workers, managers, and owners

	Workers	Managers	Owners
Employment	Reactively and temporarily find additional work Expand self-production	Additional work is more stable and independent from first job	Try to overcome troubles in current production, longer working time
Consumption	Minimized as much as possible	Reduced	Reduced
Time use	Reactively changed	Reactively changed	Actively changed
Relations to others	Loosened relations; Tensions within family relations. However, family becomes a place to absorb troubles that workers faced	Loosened relations with social friends, but expand relations with some friends to absorb their troubles	Developing relations with others for business purpose to overcome troubles.

Adapted to employment, workers do temporarily additional works in the time that they are free from working at their factories. Simply, they sell labour power for other commodity productions. Besides, they expand self-agricultural-production for their own needs and exchanging purposes. Meanwhile, additional jobs of managers are long-term in comparison with those of workers. Managers still maintain their additional jobs even when the production recovers.

Manager Tuan at Cake Factory: “Thực tế, đến giờ phút này, hai công việc là song song. Không có ý định dừng lại công việc ở công ty này, hoặc là dừng lại

công việc kinh doanh của mình. Mình vẫn duy trì 2 công việc song song, ổn định”¹⁴.

For owners, they focus all efforts to overcome enterprise’s troubles, and pause temporarily other investment. Owner named Danh who stayed outside production of the ANCO Corporation before troubles had to take position of to manage the Corporation going through troubles. Only when productions run well, owners expand to new business affairs.

He said: “Tại thời điểm này, mình đang tập trung 100% sức lực vào đây. Khi nào nó khỏe mạnh lên rồi và chạy tốt rồi thì chuyên mở thêm hướng kinh doanh là bình thường”¹⁵.

This adaptation is very different from those of workers and managers who diversify their livelihoods in trouble time but keep single main livelihood in normal periods.

Adapted to consumption, workers try to de-commodify through reducing in consuming, and replacing commodities by self-products, while managers and owners only reduce to a level which still allows a certain satisfaction. For workers, their consumption lays on income which is dependent on their employment. Hence, difficulties in earning income force workers adjusting strongly the way they consume. On the one hand, they consume fewer commodities. On the other hand, they replace commodities by their own self-products. So, they reduce to involve in commodity production. For managers and owners, their incomes had been accumulated from high wages and high profit before. Moreover, in trouble time, their additional works bring better income than what workers got. Consequently, workers need to control more strictly their expenditure than managers and owners. Such situations signify that capabilities of workers are constrained more considerably in comparison with managers and owners. For example, in group discussion about time gap from the beginning of troubles to the moment people feel difficulties, the gap is about one month with workers, over two months with managers. The most visible consequences are declining wages and limited consumptions. This implies that workers not only face more insecurity but also suffer larger reduction in freedom than other groups.

Adapted to time use, owners adjust actively working time and non-working time while such time of workers and managers are changed reactively. Under Alienation and Commodity Fetishism, living is grounded on working, so, working time determines changes of time for other human activities. Workers and managers have to accept working time controlled by owners. Therefore, their parts of other time are also changed reactively. Particularly, being commanded to attend in two continuous working shifts, they are extremely tired and have no time for caring their home. Sometimes, they are informed suddenly to work, so they must cancel other activities which are planned. Contrarily, sometimes, production stops unexpectedly, they are free for all day

¹⁴ “Currently, my two works are running parallel. I do not intend to stop working at the factory or at my additional work. I am going to maintain both works”.

¹⁵ “At this time, I focus 100% of my efforts handle troubles in production. When it runs well and stable, it is normal to expand investments to other fields”.

and other days later. Such inconsistency in time use affects to capabilities of workers and managers. For instance, they cannot eat at healthy time slot when production is busy suddenly at that time.

Adapted to changes in relations with others, to absorb difficulties from troubles in production, workers depend more on family; managers expand relations with some friends; owners use their own capacities and develop relations with others for business purposes to overcome troubles.

From all adaptations, it can be seen that freedom of all groups are cut down significantly. However, owners still have activeness in choices while managers and workers have to choose reactively in working, living and joining social relations.

4.3 Trend of commodification and Human Development

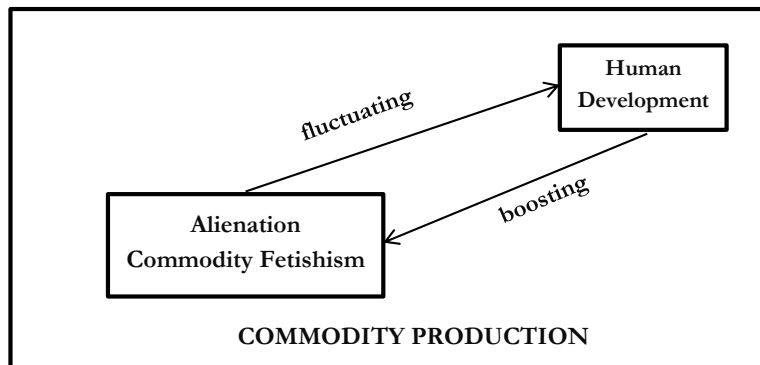
Alienation and Commodity Fetishism are reflected very clearly in the way workers, managers, and owners counter troubles in enterprises. In group discussion, all three groups underline again and again how important the loss of income (with workers and managers), of profit and property (with owners). They accuse lack of money as the main reason for their lives through connecting other aspects of life (consumption, time use, and relations with others) with consequences in employment (reduction in wages and profit). They blame loss of income as determinant forcing changes in declined consumption, more chaotic use of time, loosened relations with others. Besides, all groups concern highly on commodity and money. The owner of ANCO Corporation asserts explicitly that, for him, money is a measurement of success.

From adaptation of specific groups, our findings suggest that managers and owners involve more with commodity production. For managers, they develop quite stable additional jobs which are not dismissed even when the factory recovers. Therefore, they plan to join deeper commodity production alongside selling labour power to the factory. For owners, they expand activities related to commodity production in order to gain what they have lost in troubles. In case of the interviewed owner in this research, he moved from outside position to the seat of General Director in order to drive his Corporation to overcome the troubles. This adaptation requires him to participate more actively in commodity production.

Both managers and owners perform different freedoms but, overall, they become more commodified as consequences of troubles in commodity production. Based on their better characteristics in education, wealth, and life expectancy, UNDP will evaluate that they have larger achievements in Human Development. So, it is possible to draw 2-ways interactions between Alienation, Commodity Fetishism (process 1) and Human Development (process 2): process 1 leads to fluctuations of process 2; meanwhile, process 2 boost escalation of process 2.

Figure 4.1

Interactions between Alienation, Commodity Fetishism and Human Development



Meanwhile, adaptation of workers is various so that direction of commodification is not clear. Some workers try to sell labour power, especially males. They are willing to work 2 hours (with females) and 4-5hours (with males) in extra time to earn more income. In that sense, they become more commodified.

However, many other workers expand their self-production. Their products are aimed to meet their own needs, and also to exchange on the market. So, those workers become less commodified. It should be noted that those ones engaged more to self-production cannot find better jobs to sell their labour power. In other words, they become less commodified because they cannot be more commodified. Those workers admitted that they have limited working skills, low education. In addition, their individual situations do not allow them to work at other regions. They also fear uncertainty of changing workplace. If moving out, they have to get acquaintance with new colleagues, new working rules and face possible uncertainty of new workplace. Then, many employees choose to stay in the company in hard time and self-produce at home. As well, those workers carry out domestic activities in their home.

Workers also demand strongly social insurance for protecting their lives. It is not a commodity but very important for workers because it ensures their security of health.

A female worker named Nguyet shared that “Việc không có bảo hiểm y tế ảnh hưởng rất nhiều đến cuộc sống: không có để đi khám chữa bệnh, nó ảnh hưởng đến tâm lý. Bọn chị có đi làm nhưng công ty lại không đóng bảo hiểm cho bọn chị...bọn chị đi làm mà công ty không có cái gì chắc chắn cho bọn chị cả”¹⁶.

So, in trouble time, part of workers involves more domestic activities, self-production, and social services instead of commodity production.

Generally, for almost people, troubles in production push Human Development, and Alienation and Commodity Fetishism in opposite

¹⁶ “The absence of social insurance affects strongly to our lives: We cannot access health care service without it, this upsets our moods. We had worked but the factory did not register this service for us...we feel unsafe and uncertain for this mistake”.

directions: Less Human Development, more Alienation and Commodity Fetishism. For a part of workers, their Human Development reduces but not become more commodified or more embedded in Alienation and Commodity Fetishism.

All these findings and discussions point out that Human Development is not sustainable and influenced strongly by Alienation and Commodity Fetishism which are inevitable and has tendency to expand regardless expansion or contraction of production. Hence, Human Development itself is not enough to evaluate real human development. And it is necessary to pay attention on Alienation and Commodity Fetishism.

4.4 Implications of such changes for critiquing Human Development as envisioned by the UNDP

Firstly, Human Development needs to be maintained only at present but also in the future. Adaptation of workers, managers, and owners show Human Development is uncertain by instability of commodity production. There is insecurity of their lives due to Alienation and Commodity Fetishism. All workers, managers, and owners always want security from their lives at all time. Therefore, evaluating Human Development at a specific moment is not sufficient. In other words, Human Development needs to be sustained and evaluated in long term. To fulfil this requirement, the production should be kept in stability. As discussed above, employees complain not only reduction of wages but worry also instability of production. The latter affects directly to health, psychology in working, total monthly wage, personal timetable, additional works, and home caring and so on. So the more stable commodity production is, the longer Human Development is sustained.

Secondly, social services as social insurance could help to achieve Human Development for longer periods. From group discussion, if workers' requests of social insurance are met, their Human Development would have ensured even under troubles of enterprises. And then, they are not forced urgently to earn income by engaging in commodity production which, in turn, increases Alienation and Commodity Fetishism.

Thirdly, non-market relations (family relation, friendship) are good indicators for evaluating Human Development. Group discussions show that those relations are effective to absorb consequences of troubles in commodity production. With supports from family members, people have more capability to do what they value. In emergent cases, workers usually ask help from their families. Even owners also got help from family. Owner Danh of ANCO Corporation even leaves all expenditure of his children for his wife who is a good money earner. For managers, they ask some friends for additional jobs, those non-market relations help to increase capability without both using more commodity and requiring more alienated labour. Hence, they could help to ensure Human Development without boosting Alienation and Commodity Fetishism

Fourthly, Alienation and Commodity Fetishism penetrate structurally and firmly to human characteristics so that concept of Human Development needs

to be expanded to those humanistic features rather than stopping at capability expansion.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

From Marx's theory of Alienation and Commodity Fetishism, the research has challenged Human Development envisioned by UNDP and based on Sen's capability approach. For Marx, Alienation and Commodity Fetishism appear irresistibly and increasingly in commodity production with emergence of capitalism. Consequently, commodities become so important for human survival, and dominate the way of seeing, thinking and feeling. Consequently, Alienation and Commodity Fetishism create commodity illusions and insecurity of commodified life.

According to Sen's capability approach, Human Development can be seen as capability expansion which aims to enlarge freedom of choices what people value. However, commodification and insecurity of life have impacts on freedom to choose, meanwhile, commodity illusions affects to the way people value being and doing.

To examine interactions among Alienation, Commodity Fetishism and Human Development, the researcher conducts a fieldwork in troubling enterprises in Vietnam. Through doing group discussion and ethnographic observations, the researcher identifies adaptation of workers, managers, and owners against troubles of enterprises. And then, implications are made to discuss about Human Development envisioned by UNDP. The last purpose is to have more comprehensive understanding of human development.

The research has answered explicitly all research questions made at the beginning. *Firstly*, reflected in employment, consumption, time use, and relations with others, capability to choose is narrowed when enterprise's production falls in troubles. *Secondly*, adaptations of workers, managers, and owners are much diversified. In which, possessing the production, owners adapt actively while managers and workers controlled in such production adjust reactively. *Thirdly*, in enterprise's troubles, for almost people, the trend is less Human Development and more Alienation and Commodity Fetishism. Interestingly, for a part of workers, Alienation and Commodity Fetishism do not intensify although their capabilities decline. *Fourthly*, Human Development as envisioned by the UNDP need to be evaluated in long term, not at a specific moment, because current Human Development is meaningless if it is contracted significantly in the future. In addition, Human Development should be reflected in associated with non-commodified services like social insurance, with non-market relations and humanistic characteristics.

Generally, Alienation, Commodity Fetishism creates fluctuation in Human Development so that the latter is hardly sustained. Meanwhile, the former is expanded by the latter although evidences from fieldwork prove that some people can be de-commodified. To overcome these matters, as Marx advocated, it is necessary to replace the domination of circumstances and of chance over individuals by the domination of individuals over chance and circumstances. Hence, to fully understand human development, approach of Sen and UNDP needs to engage with the world of work, where human beings go through insecurities affected by Alienation and Commodity Fetishism.

The research is an aspiring combination between developmental visions from Marx (a classical epistemologist) and Sen (a contemporary thinker). Although no specific tool or solution is suggested to achieve human development, the research hints that all pathways to achieve Human Development are required to solve issues of Alienation and Commodity Fetishism.

Appendices

LIST OF PAPER QUESTIONS ON FIELDWORK – TIME – PLACE

I. Personal information			
1. Age		2. Gender	
3. Education: a. High school b. Vocational training c. Graduation d. Other		4. Religion	
5. Working experience in current company (months)			
6. Working experience before joining current company (months)			
7. Migrant status: Native or Migrant (Time of migration)			
8. Marriage status: a. Single b. Married c. Divorce d. Other			
9. Income from wage: a. < 3 million VND b. 3 - 5 million VND c. > 5 million VND			
10. Income from all sources a. < 3 million VND b. 3 - 5 million VND c. > 5 million VND			
II. Life and commodity			
1. How old did you start to work for money?			
2. You want to stop earning money at which age?			
3. Working time per day (number of hours)			
4. Working time per month (number of days)			
5. Would you like to work more in extra time for the company?			
6. How long do you want to work in extra time?			
III. Commodity's effect on the life			
1. How your employment changed under pressures of troubles of the company?			
	Quantity Constant/decreased /increased	Ranking of change	Quality Constant/decreased / increased
Wage			
Working time per day			
Working environment			
Working safety (accessories)			
Working pressure			
Tiredness			
Holidays			
Additional jobs			
Relations with colleagues			
Other			

Noted: Ranking of change: The strongest change → write 1,
The second, the third strongest change... → write 2,3,...

2. How your use of time changes under troubles of your company?

	Quantity Constant/decreased /increased	Ranking of change	Quality Constant/decrease d/ increased
Working time			
Eating			
Sleeping			
Caring your family			
Resting			
Recreations			

3. How your spending changes under troubles of your company?

	Quantity Constant/decreased /increased	Ranking of change	Quality Constant/decrease d/ increased
Eating			
Transportation			
Miscellaneous (tobacco..)			
Medicines			
Personal and Health Care for individual and a family (prescribed medicines, drugs and pharmaceutical products)			
Products for beauty (hair care, skin care, dental care, eye care)			
Personal education			
Children			

education			
Reading newspaper, watching TV			
Playing sports			
Travelling			
Other recreation			
Accommodation			
Savings			

4. How your relations with people change under troubles of your company:

Kinds of relations	Which relation is hard to maintain as good as normal? (ranking) Ranking: 1→3 1 strongest 3 lowest	Which relation is easy to be worsened? Ranking: 1→3 1 strongest 3 lowest	When you need supports, who labourers like you will ask for? Ranking: 1→3 1 strongest 3 lowest
Familial relationship (member of family, relatives)			
Working relations (colleagues)			
Social relations (friends, neighbors...)			

Mobile number:

Email:

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