

REDD+ for Red Books? Negotiating rights to land and livelihoods through carbon governance in the Central Highlands of Vietnam



Phuc To^{a,*}, Wolfram Dressler^b, Sango Mahanty^c

^a Crawford School of Public Policy, College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University, Canberra ACT 0200, Australia

^b ARC Future Fellow, School of Geography, The University of Melbourne, Australia

^c ARC Future Fellow, Crawford School of Public Policy, College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University, Australia

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

REDD+
Co-production
Property rights
Local livelihoods
Transnational governance
Vietnam

ABSTRACT

In Vietnam, initial programs to Reduce Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) have proliferated through international finance and new governance regimes for climate change mitigation. National capacity and legal frameworks have been adjusted to make the country eligible for REDD+ financing. In some local areas, activities have been implemented to ‘produce’ carbon credits intended for the international voluntary carbon market. Through a case study of a pilot REDD+ project in the Central Highlands of Vietnam, we examine how REDD+ has intersected with property rights institutions and agrarian change to influence changing property relations and commodity markets. Our findings show that REDD+ implemented through state and local institutions has articulated with the local political economy to coproduce conditions that embody local norms, needs, and desires. Specifically, local actors negotiate state-sanctioned tenurial instruments used for REDD+ governance, not for the purposes of carbon sequestration but instead in order to reassert their rights to land and forest for the cultivation of boom crops—the antithesis of REDD+ objectives. In the fine balancing act of adjusting local forestland holdings, REDD+ implementation has effectively facilitated increased opportunities for upland villagers to strategically claim land titles from local political authorities in the form of communal land certificates for forests called ‘Red Books’. In securing communal Red Books, villagers redefine or co-constitute the purpose of REDD+ to secure land for cash crop and commercial timber production. As with other forms of environmental governance, REDD+ is thus co-constituted locally in line with state and local institutions and histories and present day realities.

1. Introduction

The governance of forests and land is still commonly approached as a technical exercise (see Li, 2007). Yet these processes remain firmly political interventions, imbued with ideology, beliefs and assumptions that are ‘bound up and inseparable from the world of those it seeks to influence and shape’ (Jasanoff, 2004: 2). In Southeast Asia, transnational environmental governance co-emerges with historical state interventions as well as local discourses and practices that mediate resource access in changing landscapes (Sassen, 2005). As local actors negotiate and capture aspects of these interventions, they insert their own motives and desires in order to influence the extent to which dominant ‘external’ actors are able to “prescribe activities within spatial boundaries” (Vandergeest and Peluso, 1995: 388). In this way, land governance and local practices are co-constituted and rearticulated through identities, norms, discourses and institutions across scales (Swyngedouw, 2004; Jasanoff, 2004; Corbera and Schroeder, 2011).

Drawing on the notion that scientific knowledge, social practices and norms are ‘co-produced’ (Jasanoff, 2004), this paper examines REDD+ (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, plus sustainable forest management) as an example of processual governance. Here, the scaled processes of knowledge production and social order that REDD+ promotes, articulate with local aspirations and economic pathways to reshape REDD’s objectives. Specifically, in the Central Highlands of Vietnam, we show how technical tenure instruments intended to promote carbon conservation in a REDD+ project, merge with national institutions and local meanings and desires that disregard carbon conservation goals.

In Kon Tum province, REDD+ governance has been translated through existing bureaucracies and market structures to the local level, where it converges with and attempts to influence local land use practices and beliefs. A key development has been the connection of REDD+ with Red Books (*sổ đỏ* in Vietnamese), a state-administered land-titling instrument that enjoys symbolic significance for local

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: Phuc.to@anu.edu.au (P. To), wolfram.dressler@unimelb.edu.au (W. Dressler), Sango.mahanty@anu.edu.au (S. Mahanty).

communities in this land-constrained region. As REDD+ reinforces this important state institution, which embodies local peoples' aspirations for a better life, REDD+ develops its own generative potential (Van Wezemael, 2008). While the REDD+ project uses Red Books as a mechanism to secure carbon and delineate forest carbon rights, local forest users desire Red Books to secure access to land for cash crops and timber production. Through this process, local people appropriate – symbolically and materially – the use of this state instrument to capitalise on political and economic openings in ways that help them negotiate restrictions on land use. In this way, REDD+ is being politically reimagined in line with state institutions and local desires for new economic opportunities in remote highland areas. These local counter-narratives produce 'new arrangements of culture and power' (Tsing, 2005: 4) that are cemented and made meaningful through the labour and practice of local agents (McFarlane and Anderson, 2011).

The next section describes our methods for studying a REDD+ project in Kon Tum Province. This is followed by a discussion of the critical concepts, transnational governance and co-production, that inform this research. We then go on to examine how local political and economic dynamics have shaped the rearticulation of REDD+ in line with local interests in property, resource access and legitimacy. We then bring together our key findings, concluding that rather than being hegemonic, the conjuncture of REDD+, political economic change and local livelihood aspirations can co-produce outcomes different to those that REDD+ architects intended. In particular, the paper points to how REDD+ and local commodity aspirations work in ways that can effectively accelerate deforestation – the very process REDD+ hopes to avoid.

2. Methods

This paper is based on fieldwork conducted in Hieu commune, Kon Tum province in Vietnam's Central Highlands between 2012–2014, that examined local responses to REDD+ governance and land use change. Hieu was selected due to its recent involvement in a REDD+ project initiated by Flora and Fauna International (FFI).¹ The FFI project is the main focus of the paper. The lead author spent a total of four months at the REDD+ site over three visits. Additional time was spent in-country to review government policies and regulations on forest management at the national and local level, and to interview and conduct participant observation with relevant personnel involved in REDD+ implementation. These included staff from FFI, the international NGO responsible for implementing a Community Carbon Pool REDD+ project in Hieu since 2012. At the national level, 12 senior officials were interviewed from the departments of Nature Conservation, Forest Policy, and International Cooperation within the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD). In Kon Tum province, interviews were conducted with nine officials from the Provincial Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Forestry Project Management Board, and the district Department of Agriculture and Economic Development of Kon Plong and Hieu communes. Interviews were also held with four donor agencies and eight international NGOs (whose identities are withheld), of which four were working with FFI's REDD+ project, and three in local NGOs involved in REDD+ implementation. These interviews provided insights into REDD+ design and implementation, particular FFI project impacts, livelihood transitions, and perceptions of REDD+. Locally, the team participated in four village meetings and conducted livelihood surveys with 127 households in four villages (non-randomly selected from the 11 villages in Hieu commune).² All these

households participated in the REDD+ scheme and were purposively selected through a stratified sampling approach to reflect the range of socio-economic levels found within household groups in the village. In addition, interviews were conducted with 11 village headmen, four leaders of village forest protection teams, and 16 male and female M'Nam farmers, including both men and women, in the commune. Through participant observation, local swidden practices, logging and non-timber forest product collection were documented.

3. Transnational governance and property relations

Although global in its reach and impact, environmental governance increasingly converges with local spaces via recursive 'interactions in which political economic systems and systems of signification are inextricably intertwined' to produce local social forms and representations (Pigg, 1992: 492). The concept of 'co-production' has been used to describe and examine this process, whereby global governance flows entangle with local practices to produce hybridised social structures and categories that inform the character of ideas, norms and actions over time and space (Swyngedouw, 2004; Jasanoff, 2004; Gururani and Vandergeest, 2014). Co-production thus involves the simultaneous production and negotiation of knowledge (Gururani and Vandergeest, 2014: 343), wherein specific activities and strategies converge in space and incrementally combine to affect governance processes and outcomes (Lamb, 2014). As Jasanoff (2004) notes, the 'co-production of things' allows for an understanding of how 'social and natural orders' are drawn together to co-emerge as seemingly integrated entities (ibid.: 4). Here, 'the often invisible role of knowledge, expertise, technical practices and material objects [can shape and sustain...] relations of authority' (Jasanoff, 2004: 4). By studying how REDD+ governance is shaped by local desires, land tenure and commodity crop production in Vietnam's Central Highlands, we show how co-production unfolds in practice, and consider its implications for local livelihoods.

Although transnational governance aims to influence domestic policy, particularly through funding conditions, governance outcomes often work through existing political economic structures and agendas (Corbera and Schroeder, 2011). In the case of REDD+, rather than modifying fundamental positions toward its people and forests, state actors tend to rearticulate and steer 'global policy' through national discourses and actions (Dressler et al., 2015). At times, however, such governance may inadvertently facilitate political and economic openings 'lower down' in the state's edifice and local presence, enabling local actors to negotiate access to and use of natural resources. Such encounters often emerge in the spaces created at the interface of global policy, state laws and local needs (Gururani and Vandergeest, 2014). The 'glocal' form of REDD+ is thus co-produced across scales (Swyngedouw, 2004), through the interactions and mutual influence of multiple actors, interests, activities, and their different sources of power and authority (Corbera and Schroeder, 2011). Its governance mandate is reassembled at various points of intersection and characterised by diverse local concerns in terms of encounters and aspirations. In the process, as local relationships and trajectories shape its outcomes, REDD+ may become almost unrecognisable.

One means by which local actors may negotiate state policies and practices – explored here – is by reinterpreting how these accord with their own, often more pressing needs. Local resource users then become active political agents as they learn about what matters and what to

(footnote continued)

consists of 10–15 villages. While each commune People's Committee has an administrative structure (e.g. leadership, different divisions responsible for population control, agriculture-forestry), a village does not have a formal administrative structure as such. Instead, each village is headed by a headman, chosen by the villagers and appointed by the commune People's Committee, who serves as an intermediary between the commune People's Committee and villagers. A village headman does not receive a government salary, but a monthly subsidy from the government.

¹ Further information on this project can be found at FFI's website: <http://www.fauna-flora.org/closerlook/the-hieu-commune-redd-project/>.

² In Vietnam, the commune People's Committee is the lowest level of state administration. The next level of administration is the district People's Committee, followed by the provincial People's Committee. Local administration refers to the People's Committees of the commune, district and provincial levels of government. Each commune typically

draw on for strategic gains (Pasmaard, 2015; Funder et al., 2013). The resulting glocal assemblages co-produce new socio-political spaces that local people understand, negotiate and exploit to better deal with the impacts and consequences of such interventions (Swyngedouw, 2004; Jasanoff, 2004). Local peoples' responses to interventions are thus informed by their everyday experiences, histories and future aspirations, which may (or may not) adhere to the desired governance ideals and practices. While histories of governance interventions in Southeast Asia have aimed to pacify, control and evict upland peoples from ancestral lands (Dowie, 2009), the 'community-oriented' shift in conservation policy throughout much of the region has also opened spaces for such communities to adopt transnational governance rhetoric in ways that offer strategic advantage, and often in association with things that have greater material traction. Such things may vary—land or land titles, fruit trees or timber—but share politically symbolic meaning and value that is both historically influenced and placed contemporarily (Sturgeon, 2004; Sowerwine, 2004; Li, 2007). We later show this process in action; whereby upland people enlist and co-opt elements of 'new' policies to the extent that they resonate and stick with recognized socio-political and economic institutions, and are valued and legitimised by the nation-state, or locally powerful actors (see Li, 2007).

Bringing these ideas together, the case of REDD+ in the Vietnamese Central Highlands exemplifies co-production in progress, providing an opportunity to understand the mechanisms and aspirations at play in the local translation of technically informed tenurial interventions. The crux of the case is how REDD+ overlays ongoing forest contests, and opens the opportunity for farmers to reassert control and claims over these resources. In discussing such land tenure and property negotiations, we understand property as 'a right in the sense of an enforcement claim' (MacPherson, 1978: 17). This understanding captures relationships among social actors with regard to the property object and how relations toward it change in varied political economic contexts (von Benda-Beckmann et al., 2006). Of relevance to our REDD+ case is the notion that clear property rights are supposedly prerequisite conditions for the functioning of a carbon market (Larson, 2011; Corbera and Schroeder, 2011; Thompson et al., 2011). Yet, as we later discuss, such property relationships are rarely if ever settled. Thus formal laws and regulations may co-exist and converge with conflicting cultural norms and ideologies to produce property relationships and practices that are synthetic in character (von Benda-Beckmann et al., 2006; Sikor and Lund, 2009). In this context, governance interventions such as REDD+ can give new meaning to property rights and create opportunities for renegotiation of these (Mahanty et al., 2013).

The history of underlying tenure contests is important here. In many countries, including Vietnam, governments have used land titling programs to provide individual land rights to households on the assumption that these 'clearly' defined rights will stimulate the 'right holders' to invest in land for various benefits. In such cases, land rights are framed and protected by the government and ostensibly allow landholders to make productive use of land; land titles are upheld as legal foundations for the title holder to prevent non-holders from encroaching. Buoyed by state discourses, the notion of secure, productive potential of individual land rights is (mis) represented as universally rational and appropriate, and so anchors the broader symbolic value and strategic importance attached to land titles and their material (cultural) artefacts (e.g., zoning, fences, and title papers, or in the Vietnamese context, Red Books). However, as REDD+ advocates for 'clear' tenure arrangements (Corbera and Schroeder, 2011; Larson et al., 2013; Sikor and Hoang, 2016), it can simultaneously simplify local-state interpretations of property and tenure as well as ongoing contests; in the process, new values and contemporary meanings are created that merge with and signify historical state restrictions, to yield complex and unpredictable values vis-à-vis property (Mahanty et al., 2013; Mario and Ribot, 2012; Yates, 2013).

Drawing on these ideas, our case study examines how targeted

communities in a REDD+ scheme find salience between the project's focus on tenure clarification through Red Books and their own aspirations to gain control over forestland for expanded commodity production and timber revenue. Local people thus negotiate the points of convergence between global governance and state institutions to produce 'new' meanings and access opportunities through existing property rights institutions. REDD+ has revalorised these institutions, and locals have strategically harnessed it. This resulting process of co-production – whereby externally driven knowledge and techniques translate through scaled institutions and interests – limits the intended REDD+ outcome of strengthening tenure to secure carbon is outweighed by local aspirations to secure land for commodity crop production. We start by describing the evolution of forestry governance, land use policies, and rural livelihood changes that intersect Vietnamese REDD+ interventions.

4. History of property relations in postcolonial Vietnamese uplands

4.1. State forestry and property rights

From the colonial period to the present, forests have remained an important domain of Vietnamese state control (McElwee, 2016; To et al., 2015). Shortly after Vietnam achieved independence in 1954, all forests in the North, including the Central Highlands region, became state property and fell under the management of the Ministry of Forestry. From the 1950s–1980s, state forestry focused on logging (Nguyen, 2001) through a system of State Forest Enterprises (SFEs, now known as State Forest Companies, or SFCs). These companies were mandated to produce timber from forests that were long used and occupied by upland villagers (McElwee, 2004; To, 2015). At the expense of local use rights, the state intensified logging in the 1970s–1980s. Increasingly, villagers were excluded from accessing forest resources. For example, swidden land was classified as forestry land under SFC management (To et al., 2015; McElwee, 2004, 2016). The forestry land managed by SFCs was so extensive that in several areas it covered residential villages (ibid.).

Years of intensive state logging and the loss of financial support from the collapsing Soviet Bloc precipitated a crisis in Vietnam's forestry sector in the 1980s, with virtually no valuable timber remaining and SFCs left with limited operating budgets (Sikor, 1998; Nguyen, 2001). The government's shift from a centrally planned to a market-oriented economy in 1986 (known as *đổi mới* or economic renovation) attempted to remedy economic hardship (Gainsborough, 2010; Hayton, 2010; Jandl, 2013). In the uplands, *đổi mới* brought de-collectivization and economic investment to further settle swiddeners and to reforest so-called 'barren lands' (Sowerwine, 2004). A key component of *đổi mới* in the uplands was the devolution of forestland rights to individual households for 50 years, through the allocation of 'Red Book' certificates (Sikor, 2012; Dang et al., 2012).

4.2. Forestland allocation and Red Books

The Vietnamese government's decision to distribute forestland to households in upland areas was driven by evidence of improved local livelihoods and enhanced crop productivity following the distribution of paddy land in the lowlands (Kerkvliet, 2005; Henin, 2002; Scott, 2003). Between 1945 and 1954, paddy land previously owned by landlords and private owners was withdrawn by the state and redistributed to landless farmers (ibid.). However, individual control of such land only lasted until 1955–1956 when the government reclaimed it for collectivized farming (Kerkvliet, 2005; Truong, 2004). During the cooperative era (late 1950s–1980s), villagers collectively cultivated state-owned paddy land for a proportion of the harvest, according to their labour input. However, collective farming faced many problems in production and redistribution, and was dismantled in the late 1980s

(Kerkvliet, 2005; Sikor, 2001). Cooperative paddy land was then redistributed to individual households based on their labour availability, with 20-year rights to exchange, bequeath, transfer, lease and mortgage the land. To certify a landholder's legal claim to the land, they were issued with a land use certificate known as a 'Red Book'. As the first land use certificate to emerge after *đổi mới*, Red Books gained significant symbolic importance for local farmers. Red books reflected the first tangible record of state-sanctioned land rights to individuals after the country's reunification in 1976. The book's materiality further reinforced this symbolism; its cover being the deep red of the Socialist state.

In practical terms, Red Books contain information on the property right holder, the size of their holding, and a sketch map showing the plot boundaries—the territorial basis of their property claim. The Red Book brings together central and local state authority, being stamped and certified by the chairman of the district and provincial People's Committee. Over time, the Red Book has increased in its legal and symbolic significance because of the long-term durability of rights given to the holder, which allow the landholder to communicate excludability to other non-holders, providing a stronger sense of entitlement to the land. It can also be transferred or sold, factors that are attributed with boosting rice production in the lowlands (Do and Iyer, 2008).

When the state first distributed forestland to local households in the late 1990s, it used the same Red Book mechanism, but the subsequent distribution of forest land in the Highlands region has had important differences from this first wave of devolution. According to the 2003 Land Law, individual land title provides the households who were given forestland several use rights—exchange, transfer or leasing of land to another; and passing the land to their children or using the land as bank collateral. However, distribution of forestland to upland farmers was limited to production forest; areas classified as 'protection forest' were retained by the state.³ Much of the land with good tree cover (e.g. the area in the Central Highlands) was not distributed to farmers but retained by state management boards (MBs) or SFCs. Some of the areas now become REDD+ sites. In total, only 24.5 percent of 13.9 million ha of forestland has been distributed to upland farmers (MARD, 2014). Second, unlike agricultural land where almost all allocated plots came with Red Books, only 60 percent of the households participating in forestland allocation programs have received a Red Book to date (MONRE, 2013). One of the reasons for this is that forest plots tended to be poorly demarcated, and were often subject to overlapping claims (Castella et al., 2006; Jakobsen et al., 2007). The ensuing conflicts have slowed the issuance of Red Books in the Central Highlands, creating antagonism between local communities and state authorities (To et al., 2015).

Third, in contrast with the emphasis on household allocation, many upland peoples, including those in the Central Highland region, have traditionally managed land on a communal basis (Salemin, 2003). However, the state has harbored reservations about the communal management of forests and its effectiveness, contributing to the limited recognition of communities as land holding entities (UNREDD and MARD, 2010; Interview, Vietnam Administration of Forestry, November 2013). While individual households have received forestland with no or poor forest cover for production purposes, communities as

collective entities have often obtained land with better standing forest, but for forest protection purposes. By the end of 2013, the total forestland given to households was 2.8 million hectares (ha), whereas the area given to local communities was less than 300,000 ha (MARD, 2014). The outcome has been that forests in the Central Highlands, including Kon Tum province, including the area selected for a REDD+ we discuss in Section 5, have been formally allocated to MBs or SFCs, regardless of villagers' existing claims on the forest. In principle, if lacking a formal right to the forest, villagers are excluded from the land.

Since the 1990s, international donors and NGOs have themselves made sustained attempts to open up (institutional and physical) space for communal forest management in Vietnam. These efforts have reflected global trends of decentralization and devolution of forest governance and management (Ribot, 2004; Agrawal and Gupta, 2005; Rights and Resources Initiative, 2012). NGO lobbying culminated in formal recognition of communities as possible land holders as mandated in the 2004 Land Law. This has underpinned donor support for community forestry management pilots in the Vietnamese uplands, usually through the transfer of forest rights from MBs and SFCs to local communities through communal titling; this entire process has been formalized through the granting of Red Books to communities as collective entities.⁴ This collective Red Book mechanism provided a legal tenure basis for FFI's community carbon pool project, which commenced in Hieu commune in 2012 (see Section 5).

Despite the state restrictions described here, local demand for individual and communal Red Books is high. Given the partial process of land devolution in the uplands, communities currently perceive communal titling as the only available means to reclaim land and forest areas that were earlier taken by the state, particularly better quality protection forest that is not accessible to individual households. In some community forestry pilot areas where communities have received Red Books, they have been permitted to selectively harvest timber, and have derived revenue for communal projects (e.g. road improvements, school repairs) and individual income for participating households (UNREDD and MARD, 2010). For historical reasons, notwithstanding the limitations of communal Red Books, farmers continue to view them as the only means to secure their access to forestland and forest products.

4.3. REDD+ and forest tenure in Vietnam

Vietnam was one of the first countries to implement REDD+ in Southeast Asia, commencing its initial REDD+ pilot in 2009. By 2013, the number of REDD+ projects had grown to 43, with a net worth over US \$81 million (Nguyen and Dang, 2014). To facilitate the implementation of REDD+ activities, the government has been adjusting legal mechanisms and policies on forest use and management. Examples include the state's establishment of the Vietnam REDD+ network, National REDD+ Office and National REDD+ Action Plan.⁵

So far, however, the state's REDD+ activities have been confined to national level mandates and policies to reduce national carbon emissions, with less tangible action at a local level (Nguyen and Dang,

⁴ However, these collective Red Books differ from those given to individual households, with more stringent state oversight and control compared with household rights on agricultural lands. For example, communal Red Books for forestland are not transferrable, and require Provincial People's Committee approval for timber harvest. The duration of land rights given to the individual and community is the same, which is 50 years.

⁵ In 2010, the government established REDD+ network and technical working groups to discuss policy and technical issues related to the designing and implementation of REDD+ activities. The national REDD+ Office was established in 2011 to coordinate REDD+ activities at national and local levels. In 2012, the government approved the national REDD+ Action Plan encompassing five key areas of REDD+ intervention: (i) capacity building and institutional development for management of REDD+ activities; (ii) establishment of an emission reference level; (iii) designing the monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV); (iv) establishment of REDD+ Fund; (v) piloting REDD+ projects on the ground. The Action Plan states clearly that insights from REDD+ pilot activities will serve as the foundation for upscaling REDD+ implementation nationwide.

³ Under the Forest Protection Act (1991), three forest categories were designated (special use, protection, and production), each managed through different institutional arrangements. While the first two types of forest have been retained by government management boards, the latter one has been distributed to local households, communities, and retained by state forest companies. Making up 60 percent of the total forest area, production forest is a source of wood and forest-based products and is meant to contribute to ecological protection. Protection forest, which accounts for about 30 percent of the total forest area, is set aside for the protection of watershed, soil, and the environment. Special use forest, which comprises about 10 percent of the total forest area, is intended for nature conservation, protection of the ecosystem and flora and fauna gene resources, and historical, environmental, and cultural sites.

2014). As the government's REDD+ focal point revealed in our interview: "As long as we are able to reduce emissions at the national level [and thus be eligible for REDD+ money], we can do what we want to do with the forest", suggesting that no change in forest tenure is envisaged. Indeed, REDD+ activities have been largely based on existing state forest and land use categories, which are managed by SFCs rather than local actors (Interview, national REDD+ focal point, June 2014). This would help REDD+ actors avoid tenure complication and high transaction costs associated with smallholders.

In this ostensibly state-managed context, however, a political opening has emerged for more influential NGOs to negotiate for the deployment of communal Red Books as a REDD+ implementation mechanism. FFI, for instance, has pitched this instrument as a necessity to access the voluntary market, which requires secure tenure and carbon rights. In this setting, FFI views communally allocated Red Books for forests as the only means for the project to secure carbon rights over the forest, and therefore to secure carbon conservation (Interview, REDD+ project coordinator, November 2013). This set of interests underpins FFI's deployment of communal Red Books, with its range of unintended consequences, given their historical significance and representation, locally. The next section discusses this process in further detail.

5. FFI REDD+ community carbon pool project in Hieu commune of Kon Tum province

5.1. The historical context for REDD+ in Hieu commune: settlement and local forest management

Hieu commune, in Kon Plong district of Kon Tum province (Fig. 1), is home to around 2800 M'Nam ethnic minority people.⁶ There are currently 660 households distributed among the 11 villages within the commune. The commune's total land area is 20,505 ha, of which over 90 per cent is classified as forestland (the remaining 10 per cent is residential, garden and agricultural lands) (Hieu Commune People's Committee, 2014). FFI staff describe Hieu as a commune with particular features that the NGO aims to overcome. It is described as 'difficult to reach', with 'little exposure to the market economy... limited access to science and technology and low levels of education' (Dang, 2013: 3). The report notes that, 'the main livelihood activities are paddy rice cultivation and burning forest for swidden cultivation with backward techniques', and that 'logging and collection of non-timber forest products and swidden cultivation practices with short fallow are great pressures on the forest in the commune' (ibid.). Based on these perceptions, the REDD+ project aims to curtail extensive cultivation by locking in tenure boundaries with communal Red Books.

Traditionally, M'Nam villagers lived in small clusters and were forest reliant, with unfavorable climate and land shortages constraining agriculture and exacerbating poverty. The commune's first six villages, each with 10–15 households, were established by the state in the 1950s. Since then, the settlements have moved location three times. The first move was in the 1960s when people left the area to avoid war; villagers only moved back to the area in 1975 after the war. The second move occurred in the 1980s, when the district People's Committee wanted villages to be close to the national road QL 24 to enable easier management by local authorities. More recently, the district People's Committee has divided the six original Hieu villages into 11 villages with smaller and 'more manageable' populations. Changes in the settlement locations have interrupted villagers' historical ties to the area, as elsewhere in Southeast Asia (cf. Hall et al., 2011).

⁶ M'Nam, also known as Xo Dang, are one of the 54 officially recognized ethnic groups in Vietnam. In 2009, the total number of Xo Dang people in Vietnam was 169,501. Xo Dang villagers are found in 41 of 63 provinces in the country. Approximately 61.8 percent of the national Xo Dang population resides in Kon Tum province, where they comprise 24.4 percent of the province's total population (General Statistics Office).

Throughout these historical transitions, access to forestlands has remained important for local livelihoods. Villagers used flat areas with good water access to build terraces for rice production; they also collected non-timber forest products and used timber. In addition to its material value, forest was culturally significant for villagers. A village head revealed: 'Different patches of forest are guarded by powerful spirits, who only permit certain local activities. If we don't respect this rule, we will be punished,' (Interview, June 2013). When the villagers moved to a neighboring province in the 1960s to escape the war, they stopped paddy cultivation and instead learned swidden cultivation from villagers in the new area. With the war's end in 1975, villagers returned to the commune, rehabilitating their old paddy fields as well as clearing nearby forest areas to grow local varieties of cassava. Both paddy and swidden land were under an informal system of ownership.

Villagers recalled that during the collectivization era (1970s–1980s), their paddy lands were collectivized, while their swidden areas were not. However, the cooperative farming system in Hieu was short-lived and was dismantled in 1988. As elsewhere in Vietnam, cooperative paddy land was redistributed to local households based on their labour availability, and the district People's Committee granted these households individual Red Books to certify their legal rights to the land. Without the permission from the household who was granted the land and Red Book, encroachment on the land by others is illegal. As a result, those without land (e.g. newly established households) had to cultivate their parent's land, seek suitable areas for new terraces, or open new swidden fields in the forest. Over time, villagers' access to swidden land became more restricted as the level of state control over forests in the uplands increased (see below).

5.2. State control over forests in Hieu

In Hieu, the presence of state forestry was not felt until 1986, with the arrival of the Mang La State Forest Enterprise. Shortly after arriving, the Mang La enterprise claimed forest rights and started harvesting timber. In principle, this terminated villagers' access to these lands. Logging by the enterprise occurred from the early 1990s. However, once the valuable and easily accessed timber was gone, villagers started to enter these areas to establish swidden fields. By 2000, with virtually no valuable timber remaining, the enterprise stopped logging, enabling the villagers to gain relatively unfettered access to swidden land.

This changed in the early 2000s, when the state-based management regime in Hieu's forests shifted from extraction to protection and conservation. In part, this was a government response to timber depletion, and the declining SFE revenue (Sikor, 1998; To et al., 2015), as well as growing global interest in biodiversity conservation (McElwee, 2004, 2016; Sowerwine, 2004; Zingerli, 2005). In 1994, Mang La enterprise gave up 18,000 ha of previously logged forest as 'a critical watershed area' and turned it into Thach Nham protected area, where more stringent access regulations were adopted and applied.

Property relations for Hieu's forests were further complicated in 2004 when, following central government policy, forest management was transferred from Mang La SFE to the Hieu commune People's Committee.⁷ Additionally, from 2005 to 2008, with the support of Japan's International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the provincial People's Committee of Kon Tum permitted JICA and the provincial Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to pilot a community forestry project in Village 5 of Hieu commune. This involved the transfer of 808 ha of forestland previously managed by Mang La enterprise to Village 5, which was formalized via a communal Red Book for Village 5. With the Red Book granted to the village, the project

⁷ Although the Forest Protection and Development Law (2004) does not recognize the commune People's Committee as a forest user, in Vietnam approximately 2 million ha of forest falls under commune authority management. This is because in many areas SFEs have failed to protect forests near communes, due in part to their lack of capacity and resources to manage the large forest areas allocated to them (To et al., 2015).

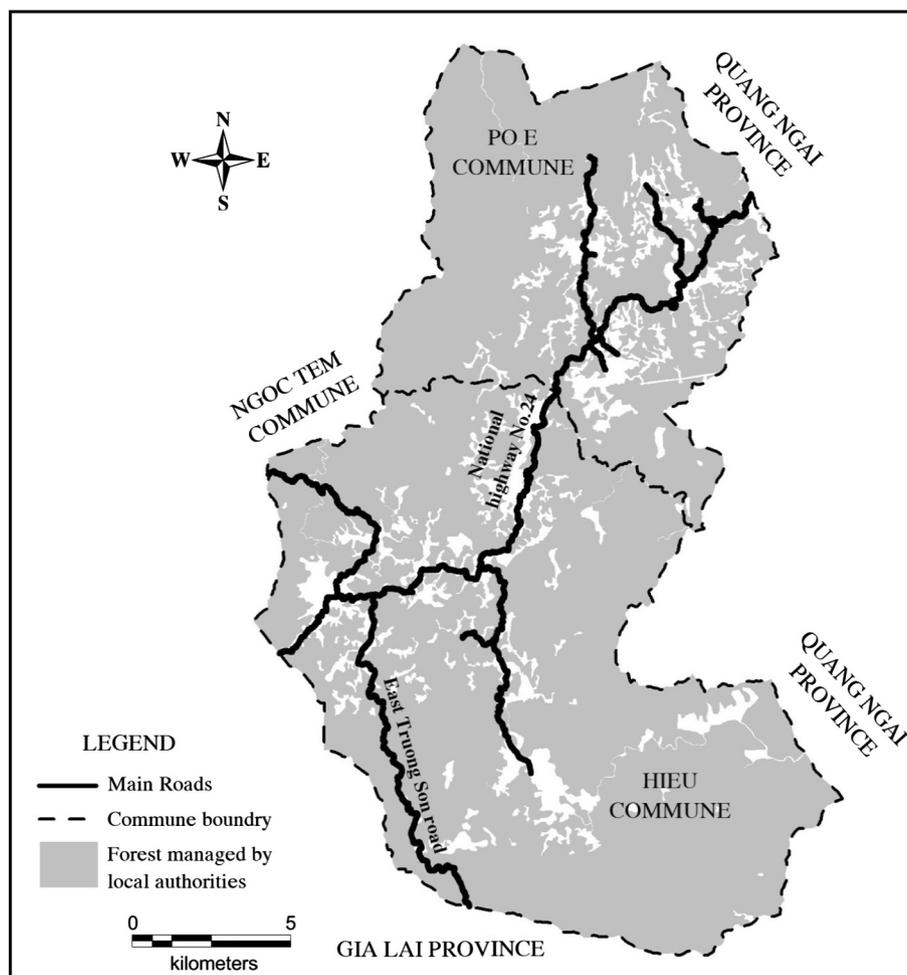


Fig. 1. Hieu commune in Kon Plong district of Kon Tum province.
Source: Produced by authors.

designed a sustainable timber harvesting plan intended to allow households in the village – as shared Red Book holders – to selectively log this forest area. Under the pilot project, income from timber sales would be distributed to all village households. Although this plan remains unimplemented, due to central government restrictions on harvesting timber from natural forest, households in Village 5 still hope that with the Red Book they will one day gain permission to harvest timber.

These shifts in forest use and management in Hieu since the 1950s have thus co-produced overlapping tenure claims and management regimes at the local level over different forest types, while also re-positioning Red Books as a vehicle for conservation and development. We discuss next how the emergence of commodity markets for industrial cassava is furthered complicating property relations by way of introducing Red Books for carbon governance.

5.3. Emergence of commodity markets: cassava

In addition to timber harvesting, the recent boom in industrial cassava has enticed upland farmers, including the M'Nam in Hieu commune, to expand their cassava production areas into forest areas, regardless of the illegality of the practice (To et al., 2016). Today cassava is the only cash crop grown on permanent fields in Hieu. Local cassava varieties are not commercially valued, and have been replaced by more productive hybrid varieties. The expansion of cassava peaked from 2008–2012, with local traders playing an important role in this process.⁸ In 2013, shortly after the FFI REDD+ project commenced in

Hieu, the pace of cassava expansion almost halted, mainly due to lack of cultivable land, and the increasingly stringent government control over forest conversion (see Section 5.5). In 2013, the commune People's Committee recorded a total of 245 ha under cassava production in Hieu (Hieu People's Committee, 2014), although our household survey revealed an area at least three times larger than this official figure. Currently, the average annual household income from cassava production is around 2–3 million Vietnam Dong (VND) (US\$95–142), making cassava the most significant and stable income source for most Hieu households.⁹

Within Hieu's changing property and market dynamics, REDD+ arrived with hopes of curbing deforestation by rewarding villagers for engaging in land use practices that enhance carbon stocks or reduce carbon emissions through REDD+ benefits derived from carbon sales (elaborated below). At the same time, the cassava boom, population growth and land shortages have continued to drive upland villagers to expand swidden plots into forest areas for both subsistence and cash crop cultivation, and increased the appeal of gaining income from

⁸ The dynamics of the cassava boom in Hieu are analysed in detail elsewhere (To et al., 2016).

⁹ Despite the uptake of cassava cultivation, paddy lands remain important to Hieu residents as a source of subsistence crops for household consumption. However, the average amount of household paddy land – just 0.5ha – with one crop per year produces insufficient rice for households to sustain themselves. As a result, the cassava grown on swidden plots is critical for household income. Throughout the Central Highlands region, land shortages are prevalent, with 64.5 percent of surveyed households reporting that they had insufficient cultivation land.

harvesting timber. Next we examine how REDD+ and Red Books attempted to change these livelihood trajectories and land use pressures.

5.4. The FFI Community Carbon Pool Project in Hieu

FFI's Community Carbon Pool Project is Vietnam's only voluntary market scheme and sits within the NGO's regional Community Carbon Pools Programme.¹⁰ Funded by the European Union (EU), the project commenced in January 2012 and was expected to be operational by late 2014. The FFI project proposal states that the project aims to: 'Contribute to reducing deforestation and forest degradation through Improved forest governance and the development of financial incentive mechanisms that provide benefits to forest-dependent local and indigenous people' (FFI, 2010:3).

FFI chose Kon Tum because the extent of its carbon stock and biodiversity was 'very high' but in a state of 'severe degradation' (FFI, 2010:6). In addition, FFI identified Kon Tum as 'a place of global importance for biodiversity conservation' and that 'local authorities at various scales expressed their political willingness and effort in socio-economic development in relation to sustainable forest management' (ibid.). The project proposal identified varying threats to sustainable forest management in Kon Tum, including weak forest governance, lack of sustainable local livelihoods, and lack of rights to the forest for locally dependent communities (ibid.). Developing a REDD+ policy for community forestry was therefore seen as way to strengthen community ownership and participation in forest management (ibid.). The project site covered the entire forest area in Hieu commune, including the surrounding 11 villages, totaling about 10,200 ha. This area included both production and protection forest managed by the Hieu People's Committee, Thach Nham MB, Mang La SFC, and Village 5.¹¹

The project envisioned that local communities would benefit from future sales of carbon credits and states in the proposal document that FFI has 'successfully established connections with an extended network of clients and investors such as BHP Billiton, Rio Tinto...' (FFI, 2010:17). Following the project, household income derived from future carbon sales will be 'a main potential income source in comparison to other sources.' (ibid.). To attract global buyers for carbon credits, FFI adopted the Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) methodologies for forestry, which is regarded as 'the most robust and respected voluntary standard in the world.'¹² In addition, it employed the Climate, Community and Biodiversity (CCB) standard, which emphasized multiple-benefit approaches that 'simultaneously address climate change, support local communities and smallholders, and conserve biodiversity.'¹³ Two tiers of experts were mobilized to implement the project. The international group included experts on carbon measurement, GIS, biodiversity resource monitoring, hydrology, and financial management. The national group consisted of a country coordinator, a site coordinator, and experts on forest inventory, biodiversity and community development. All members of the national group were foresters and biologist who had little or no knowledge about upland communities.

The adoption of VCS methodology and CCB standard required clarity in land tenure recognized through a long-term land use rights certificate—Red Books. Vietnam's forestry law generally restricts the distribution of mature forest, such as that found in Hieu, to individual households. However, JICA's community forestry pilot in Hieu's Village 5 created a precedent for state distribution of such forest to a community as a collective entity. Citing this case, FFI persuaded the

district and provincial People's Committees to adopt the same community forestry approach, distributing forestland to each village through a communal Red Book. FFI believed such communal titling would meet tenure requirements under VCS and CCB, while providing the basis to distribute community revenues from future carbon sales. However, it took some work for FFI to convince the local authorities of this approach. FFI organized several workshops on the role of community forestry and communal carbon pools with the use of Red Books to highlight the advantages of community forestry for forest protection and local livelihoods. FFI also invited provincial and national policy makers to visit their 'successful model' in Indonesia and the Philippines. The FFI project coordinator shared: "We adopted several different strategies...In the provincial workshop we got experts to talk to provincial authorities about the importance of land allocation to local communities... The national level workshop in Hanoi enlisted national policy makers to explain to provincial authorities that the existing legal framework allows the distribution of forests to local communities." (Interview, FFI Project coordinator, October 2014).

To pursue communal forest titling in Hieu, FFI undertook various preparatory activities. These included participatory land use planning, community identification and analysis, forest inventory and allocation, community-based forest regulation, the establishment of forest protection groups, and benefit sharing mechanisms (FFI, 2010). Specifically, in early 2012, a socioeconomic team went to each village to undertake Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). Consultations discussed the relationship between climate change, forest management and REDD+; benefit sharing mechanisms and carbon measurement; introduction of the REDD+ project and its coverage; benefits to participating villagers; activities allowed and not allowed under the project; and project risks (Dang, 2013). FPIC involved various social groups (men, women, youth and elderly) and project facilitators concluded that 'more than 92 percent of the villagers agreed to participate in the project' (ibid.). Despite this claim, most of the villagers interviewed during our fieldwork did not clearly understand what REDD+ was about. One stated that REDD+ was 'something about the air.' Another stated: 'It was forest protection.' Many had no idea what REDD+ was. The lack of clear understanding about REDD+ among villagers was the result of the FPIC being primarily conducted by Kinh (lowland) project officials using a combination of Kinh language and REDD+ technical language, which was inaccessible to many villagers.

FFI sent a specialist team on land tenure to each village to examine local practices on different types of land, household land availability and wood consumption. Their survey revealed that each household with an average of 5–6 members did not have enough cultivation land to sustain their livelihoods. It also revealed that household wood consumption was substantial and increasing. The survey team found that villagers' ongoing collection of *lá kim cương* (*Anoectochilus setaceus*), a non-timber forest product sold to local traders, depleted biodiversity. In their report, the land tenure team concluded that villagers' swidden practices, timber harvesting and collection of non-timber forest products were key drivers of deforestation and 'if no sustainable use and management is undertaken it would lead to deforestation and forest degradation' (Dang et al., 2013). The conclusion appeared to ignore the driving forces behind these activities, notably the outstanding problems of land scarcity, limited livelihood opportunities and lack of alternative sources of fuel for heating in a cold climate region.

The land tenure team noted that 'villagers [...] lack responsibility in forest use and management because they are not real legally forest holders.' (Dang et al., 2013: 20). This 'lack of responsibility' was reflected in various practices, such as villagers failing to patrol the forest and report forest violations, as well as allowing outsiders to encroach the forest and harvest timber (ibid.). According to FFI, giving forestland to the community and granting them Red Books – thus turning them into legal land holders – would help protect the forest. To facilitate the land transfer, FFI staff went to the field with villagers to identify 'traditional'

¹⁰ In addition to Vietnam, the other three participating countries are Cambodia, Indonesia and the Philippines.

¹¹ Of this total, the Hieu People's Committee managed 4500ha of both forest protection and production forest; Thach Nham MB controlled 1900ha (all protection forest); Mang La SFC held 3000ha (all production forest), and Village 5 held 808ha (production forest).

¹² <http://www.v-c-s.org/methodologies/what-methodology>.

¹³ <http://www.climate-standards.org/ccb-standards/>.

village boundaries for each village as well as forest areas and its conditions within this boundary. FFI emphasized that *'performance-based payment can only succeed if land and carbon rights are clearly identified.'* (FFI, 2010: 7).

A suite of measures was enacted to measure forests and restrict forest clearance. FFI's carbon measurement team used remote sensing techniques and analyzed land use changes to determine the biomass of different forest types within the commune boundaries, and to identify forest integrity, conditions, species and habitat value (Citroen, 2015). The team and villagers went to the field and classified the targeted forest area into nine different carbon pools.¹⁴ In the field, the team identified emissions factors and measured carbon stocks in 60 sample plots over two seasons (ibid.) the data then were used to calculate the baseline scenario and a comprehensive emission reduction plan was then drafted. Specifically, and with apparent support from villagers, FFI prepared plans for land use, forest management and village forestland allocation, establishment of community-based forest protection regulations and forest patrolling and monitoring systems. To address the drivers of deforestation and enhance forest carbon stocks, FFI requested that villagers not work on fallow swidden lands in the future. They also asked villagers not to open new swidden fields in forests, and to reduce household wood consumption, so as not to affect carbon stocks. To protect biodiversity resources, FFI requested villagers not to collect *lá kim cương* or hunt in the forest. FFI calculated that if this emission reduction plan was effectively implemented, the forest within the project boundaries would generate about US\$5–6 million from carbon sales for a period of 30 years (as project cycle), or about US \$13,900–16,700 per village every year, a potentially enormous sum for villagers.

In addition, to strengthen local forest management, FFI supported the establishment of paid forest protection teams in each village. A village head led the team, and members were usually males from every village household. Each team was divided into 5–6 different sub-teams per village. FFI also supported each village to compile community-based forest regulation guidelines, which detailed local activities allowed or not allowed within the village 'traditional boundaries.' The chairman of the commune People's Committee approved the formation of the forest protection teams, and community-based forest regulation guidelines. Forest within 'traditional boundaries' was then divided into different plots. Each sub-team was assigned to protect several plots and to patrol their assigned plot every 2–3 three weeks. Costs related to patrolling (e.g. buying foods, drinks, snacks and cigarette for the members) were covered by the project. During our interviews, forest protection teams reported cases where they spotted illegal loggers from other communes and chased them away. A team member proudly said: *'we [sub-team members] were in a big group so illegal loggers were afraid of us and ran away... government forest protection officials rarely went to the forest, and if they went they were small in number and if they bump into illegal loggers, they themselves ran away, not the loggers.'* Thus local actors felt somewhat empowered in managing forest use. With these measures in place, FFI would facilitate communal land titling with Red Books, so that forests managed by state agencies could be allocated to each village for communal management.

5.5. Local responses to REDD+ and the desire for Red Books

Although the anticipated future benefits of carbon markets were widely disseminated by FFI, with Red Books providing the legal foundation for local benefit distribution, villagers wanted Red Books for a wider set of reasons. Villagers observed that the FFI-initiated communal Red Books provided a means to secure local control over land and forest resources. Locals in Village 5, for example, believed that

they could use Red Books to derive more tangible, material benefits from intensified land use and logging.

First, villagers embraced Red Books as a mechanism to guarantee their access to land for cultivation and to help overcome their land constraints. Swidden lands were viewed as important for the security of current and future generations, providing a 'land bank' for the future. One villager expressed this as: *'People in the lowlands have money to give to their children; we in the uplands don't have money but only land. When our children get married, we give them 1–2 plots of land.'* (Interview, October 2013). Among M'Nam households in Hieu, it is common practice for parents to give land to sons and daughters to establish new families. Another stated: *'We still lack land. We wanted to expand our swidden area not only for us but also for our children.'* (Interview, October 2013). These and other discussions with villagers revealed their perception that land was chronically short due to state forest control and rapid population growth (at about 2.3 percent annually) (Hieu People's Committee, 2014). The lack of land produced food insecurity, in relation to rice, and income insecurity, by limiting cash crop production for the villagers. In this precarious setting, villagers' strong desire for Red Books came from their desire to improve livelihood security and to safeguard their future land holdings. The head of Village 6 emphasized the importance of Red Books in order to extend villagers' access to swidden land: *"With the Red Book, the forestland is ours, not Lam Truong [SFE] anymore... we can cultivate the land."* (Interview, November 2013). This does not imply that villagers would turn all of the allocated forest into swidden fields, nor that forest conversion would be completely uncontrolled. Opening new swidden fields is a significant labour investment, to clear and prepare the land. This often excludes households without sufficient labour resources access to new lands. Additionally, the associated change in land use is often subject to stringent government control. In this context, villagers strongly believed that becoming a legal landholder would provide them with secure access to land, now and in the future.

Villagers hoped that holding a Red Book would pave the way to derive significant benefits from timber. As previously discussed, this belief came from their experience with the prior JICA-supported pilot project on community forestry, which provided Village 5 with a communal Red Book for 808 ha of forestland. In that project, the village created a sustainable timber harvesting plan which permitted them to harvest and sell about 600 m³ of timber annually from the community forest. According to the plan, ninety percent of the money from the sale, or around 800 million VND (US\$40,000 in 2008), would then be distributed to all 32 households in Village 5, with the amount given to each household was determined based on their labour contribution to forest protection and timber harvesting.¹⁵ This substantial sum appeared to be *'much larger than our lifetime saving'* said one villager (Interview, October 2013). Although government logging restrictions prevented Village 5 from realising these ambitions in practice, it fueled hope for future timber harvests and revenue in the area. Recent periodical visits by forestry experts from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to Village 5 – undertaken to help the villagers move forward with their plan – fortified these dreams. The promise of timber benefits – all made possible by the Red Book – not only sustained Village 5 but also spread to other villages in Hieu in light of the FFI REDD+ project. During our fieldwork, the main road outside Village 5 featured a large sign advertising the JICA-funded project, describing Village 5 as a 'forest holder'. Consequently, there was a widespread perception among the villagers in this region that Red Books would similarly allow them, with secure property rights, to gain material benefits from forests, whereas the possibility of securing future revenues from the more abstract commodity of carbon was uncertain. As one villager said: *'What is carbon? It is something we cannot see, we*

¹⁴ The forest categories identified by the project include rich, medium, poor, restoration forest with biomass and without biomass, bamboo forest, and several others.

¹⁵ The remaining 10 percent of the amount is allocated to the commune People's Committee.

cannot taste, we cannot touch... how are you going to sell such a thing? I am not sure if we will get money for it.' (Interview, October 2013). In contrast, 'If we have a Red Book for the land, the trees will belong to us and we can log them ... Forests in our village are as rich as that of [Village 5] so we would have the same benefit from timber as villagers there.' (Interview, November 2014).

Red Books also offered villagers authority over the forests around their villages. Such authority in turn helped villagers partially rebalance skewed power relationships between themselves and state forest agencies. As state property, local authorities could readily disregard villagers' forest claims, effectively criminalizing local practices in the forest. In 2012, for example, two households in Village 1 cleared protected forest to plant cassava. However, the location of the fields was very obvious and spotted by the Vice Chairman of the district People's Committee. The Vice Chairman then dispatched staff from the Forest Protection Department to the village, resulting in fines for the two households (VND 20 million (US\$950) for one and VND 5 million (US\$240) for the other). The two families refused to pay these substantial sums. Justifying their forest clearing for swidden cultivation in moral terms, the head of one household told us: 'We had to do it [open new swidden plots] otherwise we would go hungry for the whole year. If they want to fine us they have to fine all villagers.' (Interview, November 2013). In spite of their resistance, the two households and other villagers felt intimidated by the department because 'they can easily send us to prison' (Interview, December 2013). Thus, without formal rights in the form of a Red Book, villagers were exposed to prosecution under forestry law. With a Red Book, in contrast, villagers felt they would be empowered in their dealings with government. Red Books would symbolically and materially turn villagers' informal access to these lands into property that was legally recognized and sanctioned by the state.

Thus, villagers equated Red Books with the authority to secure and expand their forest access rights. A villager in Village 9 stated: "If we have the Red Book we are the owners of the land so the Forest Protection Department cannot fine us" (Interview, June 2013). In a meeting between FFI and villagers, when FFI staff asked villagers about the reasons for their prevalent poverty, they were told 'we don't have enough land for cultivation.' When FFI staff then asked what could be done to help villagers move out of poverty, the villagers responded, 'Give us a Red Book', reflecting their equation of Red Books with more secure land access.

In summary, FFI's intent to use Red Books in order to preserve carbon for sale on the global carbon market, coalesced well as an incentive for villagers to engage with REDD+. However the motivation of villagers was not to use Red Books for carbon revenues per se, but to prevail in their long-standing struggles over access to forestland and forest resources.

6. Discussion and conclusion

In the Hieu case, transnational REDD+ governance had to navigate different levels of the Vietnamese state and as well as Non-Governmental actors to define property rights for carbon that were deemed 'communal' and 'appropriate'. Yet local priorities reworked this 'communal' tenure arrangement to produce unanticipated outcomes. Although the Vietnamese state holds exclusive power to allocate land use rights to non-state actors and local forest users, so far the allocation of such rights to forest users has been partial and contested (To et al., 2015). The resulting unresolved property claims in many upland areas underpin many resource conflicts and NGO proposals for interventions that 'fix' tenure — a fix that is also seen as a precondition for REDD+ (Dwyer, 2015). In the case of FFI's 'Community Carbon Pool' arrangements (involving the use of communal Red Books), REDD+ governance merged with state and local property claims to land and forest resources. Here, FFI's intervention was rearticulated in line with local desires and perceived resource entitlements, which have been accen-

tuated by markets for cash crops and timber (Hall et al., 2011; Sikor, 2012). In this setting of historical infringement on local resource access, REDD+ tenure interventions were seized upon as a means of 'safeguarding' local rights to land and opening up new (land-based) market opportunities.

While property rights are an important mechanism for drawing benefits (Ribot and Peluso, 2003), rights in themselves do not guarantee that the right holder will realise any benefits (ibid.; Lyster, 2011). There are ample political, technical and contractual obstacles faced by communities after rights are won (Larson, 2011). States may be unable or uninterested in defending communities against competing interests and elite capture (ibid.). States may also violate local rights they themselves give to local people (Pasgaard, 2015). In addition, translating rights into practice requires transparency and enabling governance structures (Lyster, 2011; Karsenty et al., 2014). Community forestry experiences in Village 5 add to the evidence that simply gaining formal rights does not enable communities to exercise them freely, for instance to harvest and sell timber. In this locality, timber rights from local authorities were over-ridden by the central government's introduction of a logging ban. This shows that rights are volatile because of the institutional gaps that exist between different levels of jurisdiction. In addition, a country with a state-dominated forestry sector like Vietnam (Gainsborough, 2010; To et al., 2015), common to Southeast Asia more broadly, can lack mechanisms to protect villagers' rights vis-a-vis the state. In other words, rights endorsed by Red Books do not guarantee tangible or enduring benefits to villagers in Hieu commune. The Hieu case does show, however, that local aspirations, rather than government policy, or REDD+ project goals that drive local engagement in the scheme. Ultimately, the outcomes both of REDD+ and local benefits from forest use are moderated by such contingencies.

As with many NGOs, the FFI REDD+ project offered up a 'tenurial fix' as a key solution to enhancing governance, rights to land and sustainable livelihoods and, of course, forest and carbon conservation. However, such interventions often presume that forest resources are poorly managed by local people, rather than necessarily engage the varied, interconnected factors that drive livelihood change and deforestation. The ensuing misdiagnosis — a common practice observed by political ecology scholars in the 1980s–1990s (Hecht, 1985; Leach and Mearns, 1996) largely ignores villager's fundamental problems — a lack of land, food security and income, among others.

More broadly, the Hieu case study shows that, while REDD+ aims to implement global carbon mitigation ideas and associated knowledge and practice, it is ultimately 'co-produced' locally through complex layers of state administration over different types of forest, territorial boundaries and shifting local expectations. The concept of 'coproduction' (Jasanoff, 2004) usefully describes how global ideas and practices of REDD+ have both shaped and been shaped by local desires and interests at the conjuncture of complex histories of forest use and management, state interventions, and emerging commodity markets (Li, 2014). We have shown that REDD+ co-production involves the simultaneous production and negotiation of knowledge through varied spatial and material practices (Gururani and Vandergeest, 2014: 343), wherein regional and locally specific activities and strategies converge in space to affect land use outcomes over time (Lamb, 2014). In our case, then, REDD+ governance flows became entangled with local practices and strongly aligned with local social ideas, norms and hopes in the context of agrarian change (Swyngedouw, 2004; Jasanoff, 2004; Gururani and Vandergeest, 2014).

In the process, the REDD+ knowledge base, its objectives and outcomes are redirected and influenced by nationally important symbolic regulations (Red Books) and local histories of agrarian change and livelihood aspirations. Here REDD+ co-emerges with state tenure regimes and local agency, which is buoyed in line with new commodity aspirations in ways that contradict REDD+ objectives. In the context of REDD+ governance, both the project and the villagers strongly desired Red Books. However, Red Books held different meanings for these

actors, based on their disparate concerns and interests. For the state, the Red Book was a legal artifact granted to landholders to certify their legal status over the land, associated with state-sanctioned bundles of rights, notably the rights to use land and timber, and draw the associated benefits. For FFI, the granting of Red Books was a mechanism to meet the requirements of forest carbon production and trade. For villagers, Red Books were tied to local histories of struggle over forest access, use and control, as well as improved opportunities to engage in new commodity markets. The varied meanings of Red Books co-emerge at the juncture of different systems of knowledge and power, institutions, practices and discourses that underpin forest resource access and control, specifically about how forest resources should be used, and by whom.

In this way, the core state-based and sanctioned implementation mechanism for REDD+ – Red Books – converged with local needs and desires in unexpected ways. Our case shows that as FFI implemented REDD+ to convey and impart different skills, knowledge and actions across scales, the state used its own well-recognized institutional structures to inadvertently renegotiate local land access. The implementation of REDD+ through Red Books and their symbolic significance has reinforced upland villagers' desires for land and timber rather than carbon, and the institutional pathway to achieve this. Moreover, the implementation of REDD+ made key state agencies more open to communal titling, which in turn opened the space available for villagers to enlist Red Books in support of their claims. In the process, the value and significance of Red Books was amplified locally. The original purpose and legitimacy of this state instrument gained new value through FFI's application of Red Books to secure tenure for communal carbon pools. The outcome of REDD+ has thus been the co-production of a new, reified value of Red Books that could well undermine the intervention.

More broadly, this co-production of conflicting governance outcomes is facilitated because REDD+ has been implemented through state institutions and structures that have historically contrasted with local claims, uses and needs over time. In the context of overlapping rules and regulations for forest governance, and as people adjust their productive activities to accommodate changing market and livelihood circumstances, the challenges of implementing REDD+ are amplified. Global REDD+ ideas and practices around forest carbon necessarily intersect these kinds of contrasting local ideas and values concerning forests and land tenure, which have been shaped by different systems of values in changing political economies

Rather than facilitating a hegemonic 're-regulation' of local people and forest environments, in our case REDD+ interventions become reshaped through intensifying livelihoods and commodity flows (Bridge and Jonas, 2002: 761). In this setting, REDD+ governance and state interventions through land use planning, zoning and communal land titling jointly enabled a degree of local agency, or what local people consider as 'just outcomes' (Sikor and Hoang, 2016), despite the motives of the former to regulate landscapes that reflect histories of struggle (Bridge and McManus, 2000).

In sum, in contrast to those studies showing how environmental knowledge and governance can marginalize local people (Gururani and Vandergeest, 2014; Barney, 2014), the Hieu case illustrates a different story: local people as active agents of change, who may superficially embrace REDD+ – and the associated (perceived) entitlement to land and timber – in pursuit of their livelihood needs and concerns. Villagers' responses to REDD+ parallel their enduring struggles over access to and control over land and forest resources, in the context of dominant state forestry as well as rapidly expanding commodity markets. Seen in this way, REDD+ carbon benefits are highly fragile, not only from the villagers' perspective, but also in terms of any tangible climate change mitigation outcomes. Moreover, the technical agenda of tenurial clarification through REDD+ quickly fell by the wayside, as villagers seized the opportunity to renegotiate tenure. The story told here underlines the importance of understanding how REDD+ governan-

ce—and forest governance more generally—fits with changing state-society relations, local conditions, needs and aspirations and intensifying land uses. Without this, the goals of REDD+ could remain elusive.

Acknowledgements

This paper is based on fieldwork supported by the Australian Research Council Discovery Project (DP120100270), The Political Ecology of Forest Carbon. We would like to thank two anonymous reviewers for their useful comments on an early draft of the paper. The first author thanks Forest Trends for supports in some aspects of the research. The views expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the funders.

References

- Agrawal, A., Gupta, K., 2005. Decentralization and participation: The governance of common pool resources in Nepal's Terai. *World Dev.* 33 (7), 1101–1114.
- Barney, K., 2014. Ecological knowledge and the making of plantation concession territories in southern Laos. *Conserv. Soc.* 12 (4), 352–363.
- Bridge, G., Jonas, K., 2002. Governing nature: the re-regulation of resource access, production, and consumption. *Environ. Plan. A* 34, 759–766.
- Bridge, G., McManus, P., 2000. Sticks and stones: environmental narratives and discursive regulation in the forestry and mining industries. *Antipode* 32 (1), 10–47.
- Castella, B., Nguyen, T., Novosad, P., 2006. Impact of forestland allocation on land use in a mountainous province of Vietnam. *Land Use Policy* 26, 147–160.
- Citroen, S., 2015. Carbon accounting and methodologies. In: FFI Report on the National Workshop for: Sharing Lessons Learnt from REDD+ at Sub-National Level in Vietnam, Hanoi on 5 March 2015, Retrieved at <<http://www.euredd.efi.int/documents/15552/227916/Report+FFI+VRO+Workshop+subnational+implementation.pdf/bd957f2c-9c13-41cc-ada6-e10adcd99a9a>> (accessed 5 November 2015).
- Corbera, E., Schroeder, H., 2011. Governing and implementing REDD+. *Environ. Sci. Policy* 14, 89–99.
- Dang, L., 2013. How to Implement REDD+ in Kon Tum. FFI, Technical Report 2.
- Dang, L., Trinh, T., Bui, D., 2013. Implementation Procedure and Results of Community Consultation in the EU – REDD+ Project Area in Hieu Commune, Kon Plong District, Kon Tum Province, Vietnam. Technical Report.
- Dang, T.K., Turnhout, E., Arts, B., 2012. Changing forest discourses in Vietnam in the past 20 years. *For. Policy Econ.* 25, 31–41.
- Do, Q.-T., Iyer, L., 2008. Land titling and rural transition in Vietnam. *Econ. Dev. Cult. Change* 56 (3), 531–579.
- Dowie, M., 2009. *Conservation Refugees: The Hundred-Year Conflict between Global Conservation and Native Peoples*. MIT Press, Massachusetts.
- Dressler, W., Mahanty, S., Clendenning, J., To, P., 2015. Rearticulating Governance through Carbon in the Laos PDR? *Environ. Plan. C* 33 (5), 1265–1283.
- Dwyer, M., 2015. The formation fix? Land titling, land concessions and the politics of spatial transparency in Cambodia. *J. Peasant Stud.* 42 (5), 903–928.
- Fauna and Flora International (FFI), 2010. Development of Community-Based Carbon Pool Funds for Emissions Reduction Through Efforts in Reducing Deforestation and Forest Degradation and Enhancement of Carbon Stocks (REDD+) in Hieu Commune, Kon Plong District, Kon Tum Province. Project Proposal.
- Funder, M., Danielsen, F., Ngata, Y., Nielsen, M., Poulsen, M., 2013. Reshaping Conservation: The social dynamics of participatory monitoring in Tanzania's community-managed forests. *Conserv. Soc.* 11 (3), 218–232.
- Gainsborough, M., 2010. Vietnam: Rethinking the State. *Silkworm Book*, Bangkok.
- General Statistics Office. Retrieved from <<http://www.gso.gov.vn/default.aspx?tabid=512&idmid=5&ItemID=10798>> (accessed 23 July 2015).
- Gururani, S., Vandergeest, P., 2014. Introduction: New frontiers of ecological knowledge: Co-producing knowledge and governance in Asia. *Conserv. Soc.* 12 (4), 343–351.
- Hall, D., Hirsch, P., Li, T.M., 2011. *Powers of Exclusion: Land Dilemmas in Southeast Asia*. NUS Press, Singapore.
- Hayton, B., 2010. Vietnam: Rising Dragon. Yale University Press, New Haven and London.
- Henin, B., 2002. Agrarian change in Vietnam's northern upland region. *J. Contemp. Asia* 32 (1), 3–28.
- Hecht, S., 1985. Environment, development and politics: capital accumulation and the livestock sector in Eastern Amazonia. *World Dev.* 13 (6), 663–668.
- Hieu Commune People's Committee, 2014. Socioeconomic Situation: 2013 Annual Report.
- Jakobsen, J., Rasmussen, K., Leiz, S., Folving, R., Nguyen, Q., 2007. The effects of land tenure policy on rural livelihoods and food sufficiency in the upland village of Que, North Central Vietnam. *Agric. Syst.* 94, 309–319.
- Jandl, T., 2013. Vietnam in the Global Economy. Lexington Books, Lanham, Boulder, New York, Toronto, Plymouth, United Kingdom.
- Jasanoff, S., 2004. *States of Knowledge: The Co-Production of Science and Order*. Routledge, New York.
- Karsenty, A., Vogel, A., Castell, F., 2014. "Carbon rights", REDD+ and payments for environmental services. *Environ. Sci. Policy* 35, 20–29.
- Kerkvliet, B., 2005. The Power of Everyday Politics: How Vietnamese Peasants Transformed National Policy. Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London.
- Lamb, V., 2014. "Where is the border?" Villagers, environmental consultants and the

- 'work' of the Thai-Burma border. *Polit. Geogr.* 40, 1–12.
- Larson, A., 2011. Forest tenure reform in the age of climate change: Lessons for REDD+. *Global Environ. Change* 21, 540–549.
- Larson, A., Brockhaus, M., Sunderlin, W., Duchelle, A., Babon, A., Dokken, T., Pham, T., Resosudarmo, A., Selaya, G., Awono, A., Huynh, T., 2013. Land tenure and REDD+: the good, the bad and the ugly. *Global Environ. Change* 23, 678–689.
- Leach, M., Mearns, R. (Eds.), 1996. *The Lie of the Land: Challenging Received Wisdom on the African Environment*. James Currey, Oxford.
- Li, T., 2007. Practices of assemblage and community forest management. *Econ. Soc.* 36 (2), 263–293.
- Li, T., 2014. *Land's End: Capitalist Relations on an Indigenous Frontier*. Duke University Press, Durham.
- Lyster, R., 2011. REDD+, transparency, participation and resource rights: the role of law. *Environ. Sci. Policy* 14 (2), 118–126.
- MacPherson, B., 1978. *Property: Mainstream and Critical Positions*. University of Toronto Press, Toronto.
- Mahanty, S., Dressler, W., Milne, S., Filer, C., 2013. Unravelling property relations around forest carbon. *Singap. J. Trop. Geogr.* 34 (2), 188–205.
- Marino, E., Ribot, J., 2012. Special issue introduction: adding insult to injury: climate change and the inequities of climate intervention. *Global Environ. Change* 22, 323–328.
- McElwee, P., 2004. Becoming socialist or becoming Kinh? Government policies for ethnic minorities in the socialist republic of Vietnam. In: Duncan, C. (Ed.), *Civilizing the Margins*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, pp. 182–213.
- McElwee, P., 2016. *Forests are Gold: Trees, People, and Environmental Rule in Vietnam*. University of Washington Press, Seattle and London.
- McFarlane, C., Anderson, B., 2011. Thinking with assemblage. *Area* 43 (2), 162–164.
- Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), 2014. *Decision on Declaring the Country's Forest Condition as of 2013*. (decision dated 28 July 2014).
- Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE), 2013. *Land use and land Cover Change in Vietnam in 2013*. MONRE, Hanoi.
- Nguyen, D., 2001. *Vietnam Forestry Sector: 1945–2000*. Hanoi Agriculture Publisher, Hanoi.
- Nguyen, C., Dang, Q., 2014. *Flows of REDD+ Finance in Vietnam*. Forest Trends, Hanoi.
- Pasgaard, M., 2015. Lost in translation? How project actors shape REDD+ policy and outcomes in Cambodia. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 56 (1), 111–127.
- Pigg, S., 1992. Investing social categories through place: social representation and development in Nepal. *Compar. Stud. Soc. History* 34 (3), 491–513.
- Rights and Resources Initiative, 2012. *What Rights? A Comparative Analysis of Developing Countries' National Legislation on Community and Indigenous Peoples' Forest Tenure Rights*. RRI, Washington, DC.
- Ribot, J., 2004. *Waiting for Democracy: The Politics of Choice in Natural Resource Decentralization*. World Resources Institute, Washington, DC.
- Ribot, J., Peluso, N., 2003. A theory of access. *Rural Sociology* 68 (2), 153–181.
- Salemink, O., 2003. *The Ethnography of Vietnam's Central Highlanders*. University of Hawaii Press, Hawaii.
- Sassen, S., 2005. The repositioning of citizenship and alienage: emergent subjects and spaces for politics. *Globalizations* 2 (1), 79–94.
- Sikor, T., 2012. Tree plantations, politics of possession and the absence of land grabs in Vietnam. *J. Peasant Stud.* 39 (3–4), 1077–1101.
- Sikor, T., 1998. Forest policy reform: from state to household forestry. In: Poffenberger, M. (Ed.), *Stewards of Vietnam's Upland Forest*. Asia Forest Network. Research Network Report, pp. 18–38.
- Sikor, T., 2001. Agrarian differentiation in Post-socialist societies: evidence from three upland villages in north-western Vietnam. *Develop. Change* 32 (5), 923–949.
- Sikor, T., Hoang, C., 2016. REDD+ on the rocks? Conflict over forest and politics of justice in Vietnam. *Human Ecol.* 44, 217–227.
- Sikor, T., Lund, C., 2009. Access and Property: a question of power and authority. *Develop. Change* 40 (1), 1–22.
- Scott, S., 2003. Gender, household headship and entitlements to land: new vulnerabilities in Vietnam's decollectivization. *Gender, Technol. Develop.* 7 (2), 233–263.
- Sowerwine, J., 2004. Territorialisation and the politics of highland landscapes in Vietnam: negotiating property relations in policy, meaning and practice. *Conserv. Soc.* 2 (1), 97–136.
- Sturgeon, J., 2004. Post-socialist Property Rights for Akha in China. *Conserv. Soc.* 2 (1), 137–161.
- Swyngedouw, E., 2004. Globalisation or 'glocalisation'? Networks, territories and rescaling. *Cambridge Rev. Int. Affairs* 17 (1), 25–48.
- Thompson, M., Baruah, M., Carr, E., 2011. Seeing REDD+ as a project of environmental governance. *Environ. Sci. Policy* 14, 100–110.
- To, P., 2015. State territorialisation and illegal logging: the dynamic relationships between practices and images of the State in Vietnam. *Crit. Asian Stud.* 47 (2), 229–252.
- To, P., Mahanty, S., Dressler, W., 2015. 'A new landlord' (địa chủ mới)? Community, land conflict and state forest companies (SFCs) in Vietnam. *For. Policy Econ.* 58, 21–28.
- To, P., Mahanty, S., Dressler, W., 2016. Moral economies and markets: 'Insider' cassava trading in Kon Tum, Vietnam. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 57 (2), 168–179.
- Truong, H.C., 2004. Winter crop and spring festival: the contestations of local government in a Red River Delta commune. In: Kerkvliet, B., Marr, D. (Eds.), *Beyond Hanoi: Local Government in Vietnam*. ISEAS Publications, Singapore, pp. 110–136.
- Tsing, A., 2005. *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- UNREDD and MARD, 2010. *Design of a REDD-Compliant Benefit Distribution System for Vietnam*. Retrieved from <http://vietnam-redd.org/Upload/Download/File/Viet_Nam_REDD_Benefit_Distribution_Study_FINAL_February_2010_4420.pdf> (accessed 1 September 2015).
- Vandergeest, P., Peluso, N., 1995. Territorialization and state power in Thailand. *Theory Soc.* 24, 385–426.
- Van Wezemael, J., 2008. The contribution of assemblage theory and minor politics for democratic network governance. *Plan. Theory* 7 (2), 165–185.
- von Benda-Beckmann, F., von Benda-Beckmann, K., Wiber, M.G., 2006. The properties of property. In: von Benda-Beckmann, F., von Benda-Beckmann, K., Wiber, M.G. (Eds.), *Changing Properties of Property*. Berghahn Books, New York, pp. 1–39.
- Yates, J., 2013. Uneven interventions and the scalar politics of governing livelihood adaption in rural Nepal. *Global Environ. Change* 22, 537–546.
- Zingerli, C., 2005. Colliding understandings of biodiversity conservation in Vietnam: global claims, national interests, and local struggles. *Soc. Natur. Resour.* 8, 733–747.