

Research on Characteristics of Domestic Land Grab and its Consequences for Livelihoods and Differentiation among Local Peasants: A Case Study of Rubber Plantations in Ethnic Minority Uplands, Vietnam

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Title : Research on Characteristics of Domestic Land Grab and its Consequences for Livelihoods and Differentiation among Local Peasants
- A Case Study of Rubber Plantations in Ethnic Minority Uplands, Vietnam-
(対内ランドグラブの特質と地域農民の生計様式及び階層分化に与える影響に関する研究ーベトナム少数民族居住高地におけるゴムプランテーションの事例分析ー)

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Thesis Summary

This research aims to investigate the land grab processes dominated by a domestic state-owned enterprise (SOE) investor, namely Dien Bien Rubber Company (DBRC), a subsidiary company of Vietnam Rubber Group (VRG), and its consequences for the transformation of land use and control, livelihoods, and the peasant differentiation patterns within ethnic minority populations through a case study of rubber plantations in Dien Bien, Vietnam. In doing so, the study attempts to explore five main research questions: (i) What extent does the socialist state-led domestic land grab continue to follow its egalitarian socialist principles and practices, and subsequently, through what means do such principles and practices manifest themselves in the early phase of developing a rubber plantation in Northwest Vietnam? (ii) What are the distinctive roles and features an SOE investor would have in their domestic undertaking of agrarian land grab project in its home country? And how is it distinct from the case of SOEs investing in the host countries? (iii) How does the socialist state seek to involve the ethnic minority population under customary land control in official land deals to strengthen its power over the frontier area? (iv) How have the different ethnic minorities, who have customarily owned the land, formed alternative livelihood strategies due to the land loss, what livelihood pathways have been shaped on the long-term macro-scale? (v) What patterns of peasant differentiation have been emerged in the post-land acquisition stage?

Based on the adoption of livelihood perspectives, agrarian political economy framework, and land grab literature, the study developed an integrated conceptual framework as lenses for underpinning the empirical results in Vietnam. The framework allows us to uncover individual livelihood perspectives that are embedded in agrarian political economy approach, contributing to the understanding of dispossession, accumulation, differentiation as consequences of land grabbing. Likewise, the state formation perspective was used as lenses to explore the incentives of a socialist state in facilitating domestic land grab in the frontier area. Underpinning by these frameworks, the research draws on fieldwork undertaken in six ethnic minority villages in Dien Bien province, Northwest Vietnam.

Mixed methods were used, generating both quantitative and qualitative data. Primary data were also collected from group discussions and in-depth interviews with villagers, semi-structured

interviews with the staff of rubber company and local officials, and participant observation and 205 households surveyed by questionnaires. A range of secondary data was collected from policy documents and reports of VRG and DBRC. Data collection was undertaken from July to September 2018. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic and then axial coding, while descriptive analysis of quantitative data was completed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

The research has revealed several critical findings. First, the Vietnamese government, while maintaining land distribution policies for its rural farming population, has increasingly sought to bring these policies more in line with the global trend of large-scale land acquisition at the expense of the traditional interests and livelihoods of the local population. By seeking to justify their essentially non-egalitarian land grab processes through the policy of post-land grab 'egalitarian land re-distributions' in areas with disembedded customary control, the domestic state actors deployed a cunning duplicity in their persistent adherence to agrarian egalitarianism. Second, with the supports from the local and central governments, the domestic SOE investor carved out its land grab processes with more freedom, leverage, and power than similar firms investing abroad through land concessions. Third, the post-land grab redistribution of land rights materializes state formation through re-territorialization of and re-legalization within the frontier zone. Fourth, even sharing the identical operational source of land acquisition, the affected local people with different social-economic backgrounds under varying political and spatial contexts responded significantly different. Consequently, various livelihood pathways were created, in turn generating the peasant differentiation and class formation among and within ethnic minority groups. Last, the research highlights that the characteristics of domestic SOE land grabs and its consequences for livelihoods and differentiation reflect the penetration of the capitalism into the ethnic minority uplands, of which the socialist state has facilitated for accelerating 'accumulation by dispossession' of state capitalist inside the plantations and private capitalists in the local rural, and industrial area.

In sum, the thesis contributes to advancing our understanding and debates of land grab processes, mechanisms dominated by domestic SOE investors, and consequences of the land grab for the livelihoods and differentiation among local peasants in ethnic minority uplands, Vietnam.