valuable insights through its stories of children whose engagement with war was on their own terms and not simply as victims.

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The Everyday Politics of Resources: Lives and Landscapes in Northwest Vietnam. By Nga Dao. Cornell University Press, 2026. xviii+313 pp.

The Everyday Politics of Resources offers a nuanced look at everyday life before and after resettlement projects in the Northwest highlands of Vietnam, with a particular emphasis on what is lost in the resettlement process and the importance of materialities—dams, rubber and mines. Dao examines these development projects and their materialities across several decades, arguing that the result is "'resource territorial subjects'—peasants without land and fishermen without access to rivers—who are in a constant mode of becoming rather than being" (p. 2). Each of the three parts of the book, titled "Dams", "Rubber" and "Mines", illustrates this mode of becoming as predominantly ethnic minority highlanders engage in everyday attempts to make a living while becoming territorial subjects. For those less familiar with Vietnamese development history, Dao provides an overview of pertinent displacement moments, including the upland and lowland divide, early dam and economic development history, and the cultural values of ethnic minorities in the region. Many of the lowland stereotypes and state discourses about the uplands may sound familiar to those who conduct research in highland Southeast Asia, but Dao examines how ongoing processes of territorialization and differentiation are entangled with everyday politics (p. 5), demonstrating that the lowland/upland distinction is not always a lived reality.

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Using extensive survey data, focus groups, informal and formal interviews, Dao examines how materiality shapes everyday experiences in highland communities, from anxiety to shifting social relations and longing for lost rivers. Dao's attention to villager experiences provides numerous first-hand perspectives about what development initiatives *do* in and to the Northwest. Juxtaposed with official state and joint-stock company perspectives, we see how

> the difficulties they experienced in participating in the transformation of the Northwest's landscape were not limited to changes in their economic circumstances; more important to them were the changes in their ways of living, of associating with the land, the forest, and the reciprocal working relationships that they have built with their relatives and neighbors for many generations. (p. 161)

Indeed, across dam resettlement and rubber and mining communities, the villagers' ways of living have fundamentally changed, and much has been lost. In an extended interview on her village resettlement, a Mrs Bin is quoted as saying,

> When we had just arrived here, I cried a lot. We all missed our old village dearly. We used to live right by the river. Everything was attached to the river. I never had to worry about not having fish to eat. (p. 124)

Such extended interview excerpts are one of the strengths of Dao's work, humanizing and illustrating how village differentiation plays out for those who resettled. New household economies, new gendered divisions of labour and a disconnection from long histories and relations to land and place are a shared experience for many of those affected by dam development.

In the rubber industry, we see the frustrations of resettled villagers when promises from and contracts with the Sơn La Rubber Joint-Stock Company remain unfulfilled even after households contributed significant portions of their land to the rubber production "cause". Instead, households have lost income from maize and cassava

cultivation, faced grave food insecurity and struggled with the nature and conditions of rubber work. Dao shares these experiences through detailed interviews and focus groups, demonstrating that livelihood shifts are also deeply gendered as men and women are forced to negotiate shifting gendered household roles amid poverty. Women in the village take on a disproportionate amount of household labour and explore nascent income-earning opportunities such as mushroom and frog cultivation, while men increasingly turn to readily available and cheap imported alcohol and methamphetamines, often supplied by employers. Dao does not oversimplify these gendered social relations; rather, she argues that the transformation of gender roles and norms is a product of new economic burdens and everyday situations.

In the final section on mineral ore mining, Dao examines how territorialization and the making of territorial subjects is a product of the state, state-owned corporations and private mining companies that operate in the Northwest. Dao's final chapter, "Surviving the Mines, and the Everyday Politics of Marginalization", is a stark reminder that all forms of extraction have real, lived consequences for people and their environment. Like those displaced by the dam, and like rubber workers, families living near and working in mining share a deep sadness about broken promises, fractured connections to land and clean water, and a loss of autonomy. This is "a political project of exclusion through inclusion", Dao argues (p. 243). There is no happy ending to this ongoing project of marginalization in the Northwest of Vietnam, but Dao shines light on villager stories and experiences that help us understand how this regional development project exacerbates existing vulnerabilities and perpetuates inequalities.

Of note for those interested in the politics of ethnographic methods and identity, Dao provides a sincere look at what happens when a Vietnamese woman educated and trained abroad conducts research in the Northwest. She unpacks the gendered, linguistic and social hierarchies for foreign researchers but layers them with her Vietnamese identity, as a "female, lowland Kinh Vietnamese, and a mother of two children" (p. xi). These identity markers matter,

appearing throughout the book, clearly shaping her access and the research itself. Dao also shares the complications of conducting research on "sensitive" topics, sharing some of her experiences and the ways she grappled with the implications of researching politically charged topics in this region. These anecdotes are not outside the book's central arguments and explorations—moments of perceived sensitivity are telling moments about provincial authority and power and the complexities of humanistic social science research.

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