GENDERED ACCESS TO RESOURCES

AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR REDD+:

A CASE STUDY FROM THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS, VIETNAM

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Contents

Abstract

This thesis explores how gender influences local access to resources through a case study of an upland community in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. It also teases out the implications of these gender dynamics for the implementation of REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) in Vietnam. To address the complexity of the chosen topic and case study, I employ a theoretical framework that fuses both Ribot and Peluso's (2003) theory of access and Feminist Political Ecology (Rocheleau et al. 1996). The qualitative methods encompass interviews, participant observation, life histories and photovoice. My findings show that gendered access to resources is shaped by various factors including gender, ethnicity, age, culture and social status. Gendered access to resources can also be negotiated through social relations including kinship, conjugal relationships and political connections to local authorities at the household and community levels. Resource access, however, is not only concerned with local actors. When it comes to decision-making regarding resource access, both national and local actors are involved. Accordingly, the legal systems of resource management imposed by the Vietnamese state and the customary ways of resource use practised by local villagers in Kala Tongu are both brought to bear in decision-making in different ways at different levels. These national-local dynamics of resource access might take different forms. On the one hand, the politics of decision making at the national level often results in gender policies being less prioritised and being limited to women's participation, which might contradict local understandings of gender. On the other hand, everyday politics within the village also feed into the wider debates about what is actually happening around resource access and reflect local expectations of how these forestry policies should be implemented.

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List of abbreviations

CAS: Country Approach to Safeguards

CFMB: Community Forest Management Board

CIFOR: Centre for International Forestry Research

COP: Conference of Parties

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organisation

FCPF: Forest Carbon Partnership Facility

FFI: Fauna and Floral International

FLITCH: Forests for Livelihood Development in the Central Highlands

FPE: Feminist Political Ecology

FPIC: Free, Prior and Informed Consent

FULRO: Front Uni de Lutte des Races Opprimées (United Front for the Liberation of Oppressed Races)

GIZ: German Society for International Cooperation

GoV: Government of Vietnam

ICS: Institute of Cultural Studies

JICA: Japan International Cooperation Agency

LEAF: Lowering Emissions in Asia's Forests

LUC: Land Use Certificate

MARD: Ministry of Agricultural and Rural Development

NGO: Non-governmental Organisation

NORAD: Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation

NRAP: National REDD+ Action Plan

NTFP: Non-timber forest product

PES: Payments for Ecosystem Services

PFES: Payments for Forest Environmental Services

PLRs: Policies, Laws and Regulations

PRAP: Provincial REDD+ Action Plan

RECOFTC: Regional Community Forest Training Centre

REDD+: Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation

R-PP: Readiness Package Proposal

SIS: Safeguards Information Systems

SNV: Netherlands Development Organisation

SOI: Summary of Information

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNEP: United Nations Environment Programme

UNFCCC: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

VFD: Vietnam Forest and Delta

VNFOREST: Vietnam Administration of Forestry

VPF: Village Production Fund

VRO: Vietnam REDD Office

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Gendered access to resources and its implications for REDD+: a case study from the Central Highlands, Vietnam

Chapter 1. Introduction

This research explores how gender influences local access to resources through a case study of an upland community from the Central Highlands of Vietnam. It also teases out the implications of these gender dynamics for the implementation of REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) in Vietnam. Before going into detail about this research, I will briefly explain how I came to choose the Central Highlands as a research location.

1.1. Prelude

The Central Highlands of Vietnam have been fascinating to travellers, missionaries and ethnographers since the French colonial period. Previous studies (see Salemink 2003), however, are often caught between two extremes: either romanticising natural and cultural landscapes of the Central Highlands or exaggerating the political struggles between local indigenous groups and the communist state over territory, religion and ethnic identity. This is especially so in recent times after the political uprisings in the Central Highlands reached a peak in the early 2000s and were subsequently suppressed by the communist state.[1] Although these indigenous movements did not last long, they transformed the relationship between indigenous groups in the Central Highlands and the central state in Hanoi for good. The Central Highlands officially become a politically sensitive region and were placed under strict surveillance.

In early 2013 I arrived in the Central Highlands (*Tây Nguyên* in Vietnamese) for the first time. Back then, my excitement about finally reaching a so-called dream destination was fuelled by beautiful visions of the Central Highlands as portrayed by French and American ethnographers. That trip proved to be an eye-opening experience, challenging those preconceived ideas. The Central Highlands certainly were not a densely forested area in which indigenous groups isolated themselves from the rest of the world any more, but had moved into the market-oriented economy. The uplanders were trapped within a paradox of development. On the one hand, they longed for development through their active engagement in the commercial production of cash crops, especially coffee. On the other, they struggled to cope with fluctuating product prices, high interest rates on private

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[1] For more details about the history of indigenous movements in the Central Highlands in Vietnam during the 2000s, see Human Rights Watch (2002).

loans and qualifying for the social transfers that the socialist state continues to direct to its 'good citizens'. One of the main topics that attracted lots of attention and debate amongst the uplanders during that trip was their local struggle to reclaim land from the state authorities or from their migrant neighbours. Consequently, I decided to pick up the topic again for my PhD, with a specific focus on gender.

As I read more about the political ecologies of the Central Highlands later, it became clear to me that the area's richness in natural resources, especially in forest and timber products, contributes to establishing the crucial role of this region in economic development and state revenue generation. After the American war and Reunification of 1975, the State Forest Enterprises (now reformed as State Forest Companies) were carefully designed to make sure that the state controlled the most valuable forested areas in the Central Highlands (To et al. 2014). Despite various forest tenure forms on paper,[2] most forested areas remain under state ownership, and only a small percentage of forestland has been allocated to individual households and communities. For example, in 2009, 25% was allocated to individual households and 1% to communities respectively (Nguyen and Sikor 2011: 6-7). The state's confidence in the stronghold it has over the forests in the Central Highlands may be why it has identified this area as suitable to contain pilot sites of PES (Payment for Ecosystem Services) and REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation). In the case of REDD+, the UN-REDD Program (UNDP, FAO and UNEP) and the World Bank (Forest Carbon Partnership Facility project) have both supported Vietnam to prepare for REDD+ (i.e. the REDD+ Readiness Stage). For historical reasons, and because Lam Dong Province is a pilot site for various environmental projects, there is on-going sensitivity on the part of the state about research conducted in this province. This sensitivity revolves around two concerns: firstly, that research may investigate underlying and long-standing conflicts between the state and indigenous people; and secondly, that research may in some ways evaluate or criticise the implementation of the pilot projects. As a result, researchers, including myself, who are interested in natural resource access and control, indigenous rights over land and forest, or local participation and mechanisms for redressing grievances, have to formulate their research in ways that are seen as non-threatening by the state. It was crucial for me to ensure that I had the leeway to study resource access in the Central Highlands without directly confronting the state's interests with respect to forest and forestland

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[2] According to Nguyen et al. (2008: vi), 'there are eight forest tenure groups in the Central Highlands including individual households, communities, communal people's committee, management boards for protection forest, management boards for special-use forest, state-owned companies, joint venture companies and the armed forces'.

and/or the actual processes of pilot project implementation. In the following sub-sections, I will first provide a brief overview of REDD+. I will then explain the main objectives, identify the scope and orientation of the research, as well as lay out the research question(s) and structure of this PhD thesis.

1.2. The context of REDD+

It is crucial to understand how REDD+ is understood and how it links to previous forestry schemes that seek to protect and manage the forest sustainably in Vietnam and Lam Dong Province. Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) is a global mechanism developed by parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to provide financial compensation for forest-dependent communities.

According to the official website of the Vietnam REDD Office and the official materials disseminated during the REDD+ Readiness Stage in Vietnam, REDD+ helps to mitigate the impacts of climate change through: (1) reduced deforestation; (2) reduced degradation; (3) conservation of forest carbon stocks; (4) enhancement of forest carbon stocks; and (5) sustainable forest development. To address these objectives, a number of REDD+ pilot activities have been implemented in six pilot sites, including Lam Dong Province from 2008. These activities focus mainly on building capacities for local communities and relevant institutions, establishing a fair benefit-distribution system from the national carbon fund to the household levels, developing a national system for Measuring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) and grievance redressing mechanisms, including ensuring REDD+ safeguards.

Previous research has pointed out the link between REDD+ and other forestry schemes, especially the national payments for ecosystem service, hereafter referred to as PFES.[3] This link can be demonstrated in various ways. In terms of institutional settings, the REDD+ documents show that REDD+ design and implementation will rely on existing structures. For example, at the national level, the Vietnam Forest Protection and Development Fund (VNFF) is responsible for managing, coordinating and channelling funds

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[3] In this thesis, I use PFES to refer to the Payments for Ecosystem Services scheme applied in Kala Tongu village and Lam Dong Province in general. The acronym PFES reflects how PES has been governed in Vietnam. As Trædal et al. (2016: 114) point out, when PES was first piloted in 2008, the international partners of PES in Vietnam (including Winrock International, GIZ, SNV and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) proposed and advocated for the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) to become the responsible PES Unit thanks to its experience, skill and infrastructure. MARD, being the unit responsible of PES, chose the watershed and forest management model to implement PES and to provide additional funding for forest conservation in Vietnam. The national PES scheme therefore gained the title Payment for Forest Environmental Services or PFES.

for both PFES and REDD+ (Trædal et al. 2016: 113). At the local level, the forest-patrol groups model of PFES, in which the state forest agencies sign contracts with individual households and households which then organise themselves into groups to collectively patrol the allocated areas of forest, is continuously practiced in REDD+ pilot sites. In terms of financing governance, similar to PFES, REDD+ is perceived as 'a potential source of income that can contribute both to the national payments for environmental services (PES) programme and to the national poverty reduction strategy' (Pham et al. 2012: ix).

Probably due to these similarities in objectives and operational structures, REDD+ pilot activities are often implemented where PFES has succeeded. This convergence, as well as similarities (in objectives and operational structures) between REDD+ pilot activities and PFES, however, make it more difficult for local communities and forest authorities to distinguish the two or to fully appreciate the potential benefits, if available, of REDD+. This proved to be the case in my research site, Kala Tongu village, Lam Dong Province.

Lam Dong Province was chosen as a pilot site for both PFES and REDD+ in 2008 and 2010 respectively. The PFES scheme was then formalised in 2010 with the promulgation of Decree No. 99. Meanwhile, since 2010, REDD+ measures for participatory MRV and Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) were also piloted in Lam Dong Province. Other REDD+ demonstration activities, as outlined in the Lam Dong Provincial REDD+ Action Plans, include providing local villagers with technical training, tools for forest-patrolling, agro-forestry tree seedlings and low-interest loans via a village production fund.

The PFES arrived in Kala Tongu village in 2011, and, since then, local villagers have been paid to protect 500 ha of Community Forest previously owned by the local state forest company (Bao Thuan Forest Company). At the same time, Kala Tongu village, together with Preteng 2 village, were already involved in a number of REDD+ pilot activities, especially capacity building and local consultation through FPIC commissioned by the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme. Since 2015, the village has entered the second phase of REDD+ pilot activities where they are eligible for receiving tree seedlings and loans to invest in coffee production and reduce their dependence on forest products. The current overlapping setup of PFES and REDD+ and the focus on livelihood development through monitoring and protecting the forest has resulted in local villagers being unclear about what REDD+ is and why there is a need for both PFES and REDD+.

Also, as the issues of carbon-related benefit and performance-based (rather than partici-pation-based) payments (Trædal and Vedeld 2017: 7) are often left out of the discussion between REDD+ officers and local villagers, REDD+ is often perceived by Kala Tongu villagers as a livelihood development and poverty reduction scheme. As I will show in subsequent chapters, the national contexts of REDD+ and the politics of pilot selection contribute significantly to shaping local access to and control of resources in Kala Tongu village.

1.3. Research Objectives

This research provides an ethnography of gendered resource use and management in Kala Tongu village in the Central Highlands. This research has multiple objectives as listed below.

Empirically, this research seeks to contribute a detailed ethnographic description of how a matrilineal community in the Vietnamese upland makes use of local resources (land and forest) to develop their livelihoods and respond to state-sponsored development projects from a gender perspective to the existing literature. By doing so, it unfolds the history of local (re)settlement, the remaining social structures of a matrilineal society, the changes brought about by new socio-economic conditions and the everyday politics within this village. It also seeks to trace the politics of decision-making about gender in forestry projects generally, and REDD+ specifically, from the national to local institu-tional levels.

In terms of theory, this research aims to provide a better understanding of gen-dered struggles and gendered power relations around resource access in the context of Vietnam by fusing Feminist Political Ecology (FPE) and Ribot and Peluso's (2003) the-ory of access. Using the FPE and theory of access as a theoretical lens enables me to capture the dynamics and nuances of gendered access to resources within a matrilineal system. Specifically, it offers a comprehensive tool to analyse gender relations around resource use and tenure (of wet rice fields and coffee land as well as forest) in my case study. This theoretical framework aims to identify and trace social relations among actors involved in resource access at the village level, especially those between ordinary and elite people of ethnic minority groups, between ethnic minority people and Kinh people in the region, and between local people (both Kinh and ethnic minority) and Kinh officers from outside the local area. While FPE has centrally been concerned with gendered ac-tivism and collective political actions that are organised and led by local users of re-sources, this research, in contrast, seeks to attend to negotiation around resource access

at the household and community level and situate this within the gender debates in REDD+ at the national level. An analysis of gendered politics of resource access across different levels is facilitated through the concept of 'everyday politics' (Kerkvliet 2005), which aims to illustrate how local agency and actions can feed into wider debates of gender and resource access and in some cases, transform existing systems of resource governance. Overall, it aims to deepen the theoretical approach to gendered access to resources and upland transformation in Southeast Asia and Vietnam. This research, by combining FPE and theory of access, intends to follow an intersectional approach. A careful consideration of how gender interacts with ethnicity, age, culture and social status, helps to make sense of the alignment and mismatch between national policies and local practices in resource governance and in REDD+.

In terms of methodology, this research seeks to test the value of an ethnographic approach to studying resource access in the context of REDD+, based principally on qualitative methods to collect data, especially life histories and photovoice (explained in Chapter 3). By using an ethnographic approach, this research seeks to make three contributions. Firstly, an ethnographic approach seeks to highlight the insiders' perspective of what is going on in the village and how the insiders make sense of what is going on at the national level about resource access and at the local level in REDD+ pilot activities. Secondly, it seeks to better understand the actual interests and motivations of local actors as well as external and internal factors that constrain or facilitate their actions. Thirdly, it aims to connect what is going on now with what happened in the past and explain why certain practices or ideas persist in a so-called modern society. Although traditionally ethnography has been more concerned with micro-level communities, recent practice has used ethnography to analyse organisations, institutions and development processes. I seek to build on this turn in ethnography, which allows researchers to bring local concerns and justification in relation to dynamics operating at other levels.

In terms of policy, my research aims to contribute to wider reflection on REDD+ policy and its operationalisation in specific contexts. This research offers a detailed account of one pilot site for REDD+ in Vietnam and uses this to reflect upon how this global initiative is put into practice within existing contexts. It also seeks to address the voices of actors (i.e. women and the poor) who might be marginalised by REDD+ and forestry officers. This research also seeks to examine how gender policies formulated at the national level come to be understood and interpreted and how that connects with local understandings of gender. Although this research seeks to generate some implications for

policy, its central focus is not policy recommendations, but rather an understanding of how policy works and what policy comes to be at different levels.

1.4. Scope and orientation of the research

This research analyses how gender as a social differentiation interacts and intertwines with ethnicity, class (or social status) and culture to influence access to land and forest in an upland village where global and national forest conservation projects such as PFES and REDD+ have been implemented since 2009. As such, this research is not narrowly focused on gender to the exclusion of other kinds of social difference: instead it seeks to offer a gendered account of the social relations around forest resources. As a matrilineal and ethnic community nested in the forested area of the Central Highlands, the historical background and socio-economic and cultural conditions of this village render it an interesting case to understand the different factors that influence the ability of different people to benefit from, or access, land and forest.

The analysis centres on the local level but situates this with reference to the national contexts of forestry policies and REDD+ processes. Specifically, this research reveals the gendered accounts of access to resources at the local level and locates these narratives within wider gendered debates and gendered politics of decision-making at the national level. This research, therefore, does not aim to evaluate how gender mainstreaming agendas are manifested in REDD+ in isolation. Vietnam is still in the Readiness Stage and REDD+ pilot projects are still being implemented in various provinces in Vietnam with support from international donors and organisations. My intention in choosing REDD+ as a context is to understand how a global project is interpreted differently by different levels of governance and different kinds of stakeholders, with particular reference to local people in the pilot sites directly affected by this project. In doing so, this research is orientated towards understanding how these various stakeholders respond to global norms of forest use and management.

This research, moreover, explores the implications of gendered access to resources for REDD+. To do so, it seeks to engage with an emerging body of scholarship on gender issues and REDD+ that emphasises how a gender-sensitive approach is crucial in designing and implementing REDD+ (for example Larson et al. 2016, Bee and Sijapati-Basnett 2016, Westholm and Arora-Jonsson 2015). It is noted that, in the context of Vietnam, gender considerations, together with local participation, are often addressed in the discussion of social and environmental safeguards related to REDD+. This is partially to align with and respond to the global frameworks of REDD+ Safeguards as indicated in

Cancun Agreements on Safeguards 2010 (or Cancun Safeguards). Specifically, gender considerations have been addressed in the meetings of the Sub-Technical Working Group on Safeguards, in which different stakeholders come together to discuss mechanisms to translate Cancun Safeguards into the national policies. The Sub-Technical Working Group on Safeguards also serves as a platform for different stakeholders to share their project results and articulate their understandings of how to operationalise Cancun Safeguards in specific REDD+ pilot sites.

However, as I will show in Chapter 4, due both to the lack of guidance from UNFCCC and other REDD+ implementing agencies involved in safeguards projects (such as the UN-REDD Programme), and to the politics of decision-making in forestry policies and REDD+ in Vietnam, there is a tendency to interpret gender considerations simply as women's 'participation', at both discursive and practical levels. Enhancing women's participation in REDD+ and forestry activities, therefore, has been seen as the main means to address gender considerations. This essentialist approach to gender considerations risks overlooking the dynamics and nuances of gender relations and access mechanisms of local communities directly involved in REDD+ pilot projects.

This research, by providing an ethnography of how a forest community uses and manages their resources, calls for a more intersectional approach to understanding gender issues in REDD+. In other words, this research recognises the need to address gender and other social categories in shaping local access to resources, and ultimately, how these contribute to differentiating their claims, attitudes and responses in relation to gendered-REDD+ activities.

1.5. Research questions

In this thesis, the main question I ask is: 'How does gender influence resource access and what does it mean for global environmental projects such as REDD+?' To tackle the above question, I find it useful to break it into sub-questions as follows:

1. What are the main factors that influence gendered access to resources?
2. How is access manifested in gendered power relations?
3. In what ways do national and local actors contribute to decision-making regarding gendered resource access?
4. How does everyday politics articulate, contest and transform the gendering of forestry projects at national and local levels?

As I will show in the next chapter, gendered access to resources is shaped by various factors, including gender, ethnicity, age, culture and social status. Gendered access to

resources can also be negotiated through social relations, including kinship, conjugal relationships and political connections to local authorities at the household and community levels. Resource access, however, is not only concerned with local actors. When it comes to decision-making regarding resource access, both national and local actors are involved. Accordingly, the legal systems of resource management imposed by the Vietnamese state and the customary ways of resource use practised by local villagers in Kala Tongu are both brought to bear in decision-making in different ways at different levels. These national-local dynamics of resource access might take different forms. On the one hand, the politics of decision-making at the national level often results in gender policies being less prioritised and limited to women's participation, which might contradict local understandings of gender. On the other, 'everyday politics' within the village also feeds into the wider debates about what is actually happening around resource access and reflect local expectations of how these forestry policies should be implemented.

1.6. Thesis structure

This thesis is structured into eight chapters: an introduction, six main chapters and a conclusion. This introduction has given an overview of the research objectives, scope and orientation, research questions and structure of this thesis. Chapter 2 reviews the related literature, introduces the conceptual framework and indicates how it is operationalised to answer the research questions and make sense of data collected. Chapter 3 explains the research design, methods of collecting data and types of data needed. It also reflects on critical issues related to qualitative-based research, including the researcher's positionality and ethical concerns. The next three chapters present my empirical data across different levels. While Chapter 4 focuses on global, national and local structures of forestry governance and of REDD+, Chapter 5 introduces the political, economic and socio-cultural characteristics of the main case study location, Kala Tongu village, a matrilineal community in Lam Dong Province, Vietnam. Chapter 6 analyses gendered accounts of resource access, gendered land and forest rights and responsibilities, gendered forest knowledge and gendered politics of resource access at the individual and household levels. Chapter 7 contextualises local level resource access within the other levels of analysis and, in so doing, deepens the research findings of the three previous empirical chapters. Specifically, it looks at social actors' claims, interests, motivations and their strategies to gain access and how these operate in relation beyond as well as within the village. It also teases out the implications of forest access for REDD+ when it moves into the implemen-

tation stage. The conclusion chapter (Chapter 8) summarises the key findings of this research and reflects on the contribution to the wider literature as well as proposing future research.

Chapter 2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This chapter has two parallel objectives, each tackled in its own section. The first section reviews three key bodies of literature centring on gender and its relations to REDD+, gendered access to natural resources, and upland transformation in Southeast Asia and Vietnam. In each body of literature, I critically evaluate the relevance of their insights for my research and identify existing gaps in knowledge. The second section outlines my conceptual framework. I draw in turn on Feminist Political Ecology (Rocheleau et al. 1996) and Ribot and Peluso's (2003) concept of access to construct a theoretical lens for my research.

2.1. Literature Review

The existing literature on gender in REDD+ serves as the starting point for this study. Since REDD+ has been piloted and subsequently implemented in many parts of the developing world where access to land and gender equity are often contested, questions arise as to how this global environmental project impacts local communities in specific contexts. At the same time, REDD+ offers an opportunity for researchers and policy-makers to re-visit existing structures of environmental governance, identify gaps and mobilise resources to address them. It is within this specific context that a growing scholarship on gender and REDD+ has come to life. My research contributes to this body of literature through examining gender aspects of REDD+ at both national and local levels.

However, as shown in my subsequent chapters, REDD+, as an environmental project, was not born out of politico-ecological vacuum, nor it was a totally alien structure of environmental governance imposed by a global agency. Understanding gender and REDD+ in Vietnam, therefore, necessitates a deeper examination of gendered access to natural resources as well as the political ecology of upland and forested regions. These form the second and third foundations of my research. Following an introduction to studies on gender in REDD+, I review previous studies on gendered agrarian change to link new concerns about ensuring gender equity in global environmental projects with more established debates about the gendered nature of land and forest access. This second body of literature offers a general framework for my research to build upon by theorising how gender is played out in terms of access to natural resources. I then situate this approach to analysing gender, REDD+ and access to natural resources within the dynamics of upland areas in Vietnam where REDD+ and other environmental projects have taken place. The literature offers theoretical insights into how the relevant processes are profoundly gendered and provides socio-cultural, political and ecological context for my research.

2.1.1. REDD+ and gender: a research inquiry

REDD+ in developing countries specifically aims to combat deforestation and promote sustainable forest management. Due to its ambitious objectives and diverse implications, REDD+ has served as a platform for policy-makers and researchers to critically reassess the structural issues related to forest and natural resource use and management worldwide (see Huynh and Keenan 2017 for a list of studies on REDD+).

Discussions of REDD+ at various policy and academic fora in the early stages of REDD+, however, are heavily loaded with technical terms related to carbon sequestration and results-based payment. These discussions often focus more on the process of formulating REDD+ action plans and enhancing the capacity of involved stakeholders than addressing actual socio-cultural and political consequences of REDD+. As McElwee (2015: 89) points out, there is 'an over attentive focus on technological problems and the need to calculate comparable commodities, such as carbon per unit of forest, and the number of households that have consented to participate.' These gaps and biases in REDD+ discussion have been addressed partially in recent studies of gender considerations in REDD+ (Larson et al. 2016, Bee and Sijapati-Basnett 2016, Westholm and Arora-Jonsson 2015, Khadka et al. 2014) and local perceptions of and attitudes towards REDD+ (for example Trædal and Vedeld 2017, To et al. 2016). Due to the nature of international and national research projects that specifically aim to compare REDD+ processes, these studies are mostly concerned with macro and meso levels (except for To et al. 2016). These studies show that: (1) the process of REDD+ design and implementation is likely to be shaped by local contexts in terms of forest rights and responsibilities; (2) gender equity in REDD+ is a key principle in securing REDD+ social safeguards; and (3) gender considerations of REDD+ are often translated into specific and quantified indicators for evaluation and monitoring of women's participation. As such, there is still a need to connect the main agendas of REDD+ gender mainstreaming to other structural and practical issues such as access to land and/or local ways of land and forest governance.

In Vietnam, REDD+ is based on the institutional and capacity structures set up and run through PFES that was piloted in 2008 and officially implemented at the national level in 2010 (UN-REDD 2010). The shift to PFES was partially due to the failure of previous forest devolution programs carried out during the 1990s.[4] However, as a market-

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[4] For a detailed account of Vietnam's forestry policy changes in the past twenty years, see Dang et al. (2012).

based approach to conservation, PFES was criticised for neglecting the roots of environmental degradation, such as unequal land tenure and lack of participation of local communities, as well as for implementation failures, particularly the failure to operationalise performance-based assessment in payments (Trædal and Vedeld 2017, McElwee 2012, To et al. 2012, Pham et al. 2013). McElwee (2016) predicts that REDD+ might go down the same route with PFES.

In this political climate, research on gender and REDD+ in Vietnam is almost invisible. That which exists is mostly limited to women's participation in the formal decision-making processes of REDD+ (Pham et al. 2016). Little is known about how REDD+ interacts with existing institutions at national and local levels in shaping local access to and governance of forests and how these processes are gendered. This is especially worthy of investigation in cases where women in matrilineal societies are often seen as being less excluded from productive resources than women in patrilineal contexts (Villamor et al. 2015a and 2015b).

This research responds to the call for more empirical-based research on dynamics of gender in REDD+. By employing a nested case study, it focuses on a REDD+ pilot village in the Central Highlands of Vietnam and situates it within the context of REDD+ at the national level. The chosen village still maintains traditional matrilineal systems in land inheritance, family lineage and post-marriage residence patterns. These are likely to come into conflict with the national forestry polices, which rely on the patrilineal household as the main administrative unit. The dynamics of gendered access to land and forest between the chosen village and the national land and forest policies, therefore, make an interesting case for this research.

2.1.2. Land and forest access from a gender perspective

Literature on gendered access to natural resources covers a wide range of research across various scales of analysis. Land as a fundamental means of agricultural production attracts a great deal of attention among feminist researchers, especially in the context of agrarian changes in rural areas of South Asia and Africa. The debate between Agarwal and Jackson touches on key aspects of women's land rights and contemporary issues in gendered access to land. Agarwal's (2003) research calls for women's independent land ownership and the group approach as a potential channel for women in South Asia to gain and maintain their access to land sustainably. Jackson (2003), in her response, seeks to reframe the above issues in the context of households and the complex nexus of familial and societal relations. Her findings suggest that questions of women's land rights should

be situated in relation to men's claims to land, especially at a household level. Accordingly, independent formal titling, for married women (rather than unmarried women) might not be the first priority, since their land access is likely to be mediated by their ability to negotiate with intra and inter-household institutions. Jackson's research resonates with previous research on gender and forestry management, such as Leach (1994: 37), who suggests that 'focusing narrowly on individual women (or men) in approaching resource use is clearly insufficient.' An important contribution of this debate is to highlight how gender and other factors such as kinship, conjugality and relationships with local authorities and formal/informal organisations are played out in land access.

In addition to investigations of gendered access to land, the role of gender in forestry and agro-forestry projects has long been examined by feminist political ecologists. These works attempt to identify local users' gendered spaces and strategies to access land, forests and trees. As such, they engage in discussion of the conditions under which local users can access the ecosystem. For example, for Rocheleau and Edmunds (1997), women's gathering rights are often conditional upon their social identities, such as membership in traditional labour exchange groups or modern tree-planting clubs and their social relations with their neighbours that allow them to access tree products on a reciprocal basis. In certain cases, women's access to trees can also be enforced through customary laws pertinent to embedded resources such as bush land.

More importantly, feminist political ecologists seek to explore gendered power relations in shaping men's and women's access to forest and trees through local use and management of timber trees and gardens. Rocheleau and Ross (1995), for instance, show how the introduction of timber trees in the Dominican Republic leads to gendered conflicts within the household. These conflicts result from the unbalanced power relationship between men and women regarding land use and the household's involvement in local and regional forestry associations. Particularly, within the household, the family land is mostly taken by men to plant timber, leaving even less space for women's plants and gardens. Within the community, as timber trees are perceived as male responsibilities, women are effectively excluded from timber production, marketing activities and other decision-making related to household participation in forestry agencies.

These works have apparent policy implications insomuch as they call attention to the ways in which global and national initiatives or projects impinge on gendered access to the ecosystem at the local and regional levels. Two case studies from Africa stand out here. A first example is found in Rocheleau and Ross's (1995) research: although the new

scheme of timber tree planting potentially creates conflicts of interests within the household, at the community and regional levels, it helps to transform local land tenure and allow forestry agencies to utilise local forest resources. On the one hand, smallholders can avoid selling their land by rendering their existing land claims and tenure security stronger. On the other hand, they are also more vulnerable to state intervention as their involvement in these new schemes of timber tree planting facilitates the forestry agency's penetration into less accessible areas of forest products. Schroeder's (1997) research, meanwhile, examines the changes in gender relations that occur during land reclamation programs conducted by NGOs and the Gambian Forestry Department in Gambia. The program incentivises male landholders to establish orchards and woodlots so as to generate more cash. Although this program aims to bring about social and economic benefits for male landholders and possibly male community leaders, it also provides opportunities for female gardeners (considered as secondary rights holders), to regain and expand their land rights.

The three case studies (Rocheleau and Edmunds 1997, Rocheleau and Ross 1995, Schroeder 1997) share a user-based approach to the socio-political implications of environmental and ecological interventions. Their findings suggest that women's access to trees and forests is indeed limited by a number of factors, such as cultural norms (for example, cultural understandings of the Arabica tree as a symbol of masculinity and male power) and gender-biased environmental projects (such as timber schemes or orchard and woodlot establishment). However, the three case studies also illustrate how women, through their membership of certain formal/informal groups and their gendered strategies, can work around the system to assert their right access to various resources.

The situation seems to be similar in other regions, such as in South Asia. Kelkar et al. (2003) observe some implications that changing state forestry policies might have for gendered access to land from an institutional approach. On the one hand, shifting to forest devolution and community forest management often results in women (especially indigenous women) being excluded from ownership, control and local forest management institutions such as protection committees. This, in most cases, has little to do with women's educational status or language barriers. In fact, it is more about 'male dominance at all levels in decision-making, which translates at the local level into a general reluctance to involve women in local forest decision-making' (Kelkar et al., 2003: 37). On the other hand, forest devolution policies also enable women to get involved more in the management and protection committees through the establishment of female forest user groups and crucial socio-political support from external actors and organisations.

Women's access to forests and forest management decision-making, therefore, is shaped by both state forestry policies and non-state institutions, such as global environmental projects and feminist environment activism.

Gendered access to resources, especially land and forests, among ethnic minorities in Vietnam, has been extensively researched. These studies focus on gendered livelihood strategies and gendered roles in new socio-economic and ecological conditions. For example, Sowerwine's (2004) thesis uncovers the impacts of state development programs and market liberalisation on local access to and control over forest resources, especially for ethnic women and the poor among Dao communities in the northern uplands. She argues that the involvement of Dao women in producing and trading traditional medicinal plants and cardamom, mostly with lowlanders, contributes to destabilising the socially-constructed division between highland and lowland people. It also shows that, instead of being victimised by the economic reform process, Dao women can contribute to improving their household's socio-economy and increasing the conservation of biodiversity and forest cover. Women's agency and changing gender relations in the upland areas are also explored in Duong's (2006) and Bonnin and Turner's (2014) research, both of which focus on gender relations in Hmong communities of the Vietnamese north-western uplands. Their findings suggest that the modernisation of farming activities, particularly the hybrid rice programs in this area, might reduce women's bargaining power within the household in terms of what and how to farm effectively. However, the marketisation process and the tourism boom in the uplands, coupled with women-led activities such as trading or trekking tour-guiding, help to sustain the crops and secure household livelihoods while generating new sources of income.

In terms of scale, these two studies are concerned with state policies and interventions and their impacts on inter and intra-household relations. Seemingly, there is a missing link between local agency, state interventions and global forces in the current studies on the political ecologies of the Vietnamese uplands. Moreover, most of the current research on gendered access to land and forest is conducted in the northern uplands. Studies of the Central Highlands, especially on land and forests, have been limited by social researchers' difficulties in accessing them as well as the political sensitivity of this region, after recent two riots related to indigenous land rights and territory in the 2000s. This research aims to fill the gap in the literature by choosing a lesser-known geographical region as a case study. In particular, it seeks to explore the dynamics and nuances of gendered access to land and forests and the gendered responses of a particular forest community in the Central Highlands to global and national environmental projects. It takes

on board the insights of previous studies on gender roles and status in the context of agrarian change, and at the same time, pays close attention to how these processes present themselves across different scales of analysis, from the individual to the global.

2.1.3. Upland transformation in Southeast Asia and Vietnam: Setting the context

This final sub-section of the literature review aims to review theories about the gendered nature of upland transformation in Southeast Asia and Vietnam to set my research in context. To begin with, previous research on upland transformation in Southeast Asia suggests that the political ecologies of upland areas characterise gendered struggles over natural access in distinctive ways, unlike the lowland or urban areas. Specifically, research in Indonesia identifies two main politico-ecological processes underpinning this transformation: territorialisation (Li 1999) and the formation of political forests (Peluso and Vandergeest 2001).

Territorialisation often targets upland areas and ethnic or indigenous communities (see also McElwee 2016). It is facilitated by the construction and circulation of certain discourses about the uplands as a backward region to justify state interventions in the name of development. In fact, both colonial and post-colonial states attempt to use territorialisation as an instrument to further penetrate into this region politically and ecologically, to extend their control over natural resources, to facilitate forest and land conversion for agricultural purposes and to utilise abundant resources and cheap labour of local and migrating population to increase state revenues, as Li (1999) points out. Territorialisation, therefore, is a part of nation-building, since it aims to incorporate the uplands into a state's political, social and economic systems and make these areas more tractable to state influence. Although territorialisation is not always achieved through non-violent means, it renders the uplanders more vulnerable to state interventions and sanctions.

Forested areas and forest products are one of the most important targets of territorialisation. Peluso and Vandergeest (2001) sum up how territorialisation in the forestry sector took place through the establishment and development of 'political forests' in Southeast Asia during the colonial and post-colonial era. States, through various strategies such as zoning and mapping, the establishment of state forestry institutions and legal codes, and selectively-endorsed customary laws, attempt to 'discipline the local population to think about and act towards the forest in specific ways' (Peluso and Vandergeest, 2001: 764). The construction of 'political forests,' accordingly, reflects how states in Southeast Asia employ forms of governmentality (Foucault 1979), or techniques of rule and subject-making in forest use and management.

McElwee (2016) provides a comprehensive theoretical account of how political ecologists share Foucault's interest in power and knowledge and how these concepts work in Vietnam. As such, various forms of governmentality are often embedded in the construction and implication of environment and conservation knowledge and actions. In forest use and management, however, it is not just the right of states to claim territory for conservation areas that is relevant, but also how state authority interacts with local ideas and actions to shape environmental outcomes. Drawing on the four practices of political rule (problematicisation, knowledge-making, intervention and subjectification)[5] McElwee (2016) shows how 'environmental rule' takes place in forestry policies in Vietnam. In other words, her work informs us of various ways environmental interventions such as forest laws have been employed as an instrument to perceive and discipline people.

Reviewing the theories around upland transformation in Southeast Asia and Vietnam makes it clear that the notion of governmentality is helpful in the analysis of the politics of decision-making from the top, and of local communities' responses to state interventions and subjectification. However, such analyses leave unclear whether and to what extent these local responses are structured by gender. Questions of how everyday struggles to negotiate with and resist national and international influences are embedded within the upland communities and how they might feed into broader debates about resource access in the uplands, in my view, are still under-examined.

Elmhirst's (2011) paper, by exploring gendered access to resources among migrant communities in Indonesia, is one of few studies that emphasises a feminist perspective and agency to govermentality. Specifically, Elmhirst contextualises migrant households' strategies to access resources in the new resettlement areas within three aspects of governmentality and 'political forest' development in Indonesia: (1) spontaneous migration and resettlement of lowland migrants to Lampung's uplands; (2) locally transmigrated resettlements; and (3) multi-local settlements in the reform-era (p.174). Her research findings show that across these three areas, conjugal partnership and ideologies of family serve as a 'technique of rule' (Foucault 1979) for the Indonesian state to discipline and control its citizens, as well as a crucial mechanism for migrant men and women to negotiate and materialise resource access in the Indonesian uplands. Elmhirst's (2011)

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[5] According to McElwee (2016: 17-21), 'problematicisation refers to the process of making a component of nature visible and frames it as a problem in need of solution; knowledge-making refers to the process of giving value to a component of nature through expert knowledge and mechanisms of calculations, intervention refers to the process of shaping the conduct and in turn, resisting the techniques of rule, and subjectification refers to the process of forming the subjects or transforming how people consider, evaluate, think and act'.

discussion of conjugal partnership and its implications for both state environmental projects and migrants' (and indigenous people's) positioning is also relevant to Vietnam. However, it has not been fully explored in studies of the uplands and uplanders in Vietnam. My research, therefore, takes into account how conjugal partnership and other social relationships as well as local agency (of both migrant and indigenous communities) engender resource access in the Vietnamese uplands.

Throughout this sub-section, I have shown that the picture of upland transformation in Vietnam still lacks research that address the link between local ideas and practices with national and international influences in shaping the outcomes of environmental projects and local access to resources. This research, using a nested case study, seeks to uncover the everyday struggles of an upland community that has been the target of various global and national environmental projects. It offers a better understanding of how individuals and households make use of the new policies to sustain the flow of financial and technical support from both state and non-state agencies and maintain traditionally-established access to land and forests in their localities. By situating these local narratives within the broader context of REDD+ processes in Vietnam, it also traces how global environmental norms are translated into practice by national and local stakeholders and how these new environmental norms subsequently shape gendered access to resources at both levels.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

To pursue the research questions and fully address the complexities of the chosen field site, I adopt a theoretical lens that fuses FPE (Rocheleau et al. 1996) and Ribot and Peluso's (2003) theory of access. In the following paragraphs, I will first introduce the theory of access as a lens for analyse socio-political, cultural and ecological factors that shape an individual's ability to benefit from resources. I will then discuss how FPE helps to understand human-nature relations from a gender perspective and multiple scales of analysis. Lastly, I will draw together the two theoretical bases and explain how I utilise them to analyse my empirical data and respond to my research questions.

2.2.1. Ribot and Peluso's (2003) theory of access

In this section, I will discuss ideas of access and access mechanisms, built mainly upon the theory of access proposed by Ribot and Peluso (2003). I will also critically assess whether and to what extent the theory of access can contribute to my approach.

Ribot and Peluso (2003:153) define access as 'the ability to benefit from things, including materials objects, persons, institutions, and symbols.' Access to forests in my research, under this definition, refers to the ability of social actors to benefit from forests and forest-related products. Regarding the mechanisms of access, Ribot and Peluso suggest that social actors' access to resources is conditioned by two main mechanisms: namely, rights-based and structural and relational-based access mechanisms. Structural and relational-based access mechanisms are additional factors or kinds of power relations that influence how benefits are obtained and sustained, and in many cases, as Ribot and Peluso (2003: 162) note, 'they mediate or operate parallel to rights-based access mechanisms.' As such, there is no definite distinction between the two mechanisms of access. For instance, customary/conventional access is categorised as rights-based, but in many cases, it tends to closely intertwine with access via social identity and other forms of social relations that fall under the structural and relational-based mechanism.

Within the rights-based means of access, a community, state, or government is expected to be involved in enacting a claim. Specifically, law-based property rights take different forms such as formal titles or deeds of real property, permits and licenses. Customary or conventional access, meanwhile, is facilitated by 'social acceptance of a given circumstance or practice by which people gain benefits' (Ribot and Peluso, 2003: 162). Structural and relational-based access mechanisms refer to other political, economic and cultural conditions that might influence access to resources. These include technology, capital, markets, labour, knowledge, social identities and social relations (Ribot and Peluso, 2003: 164), all of which are developed on Blaikie's (1985) original discussion of 'access qualification.' The structural and relational mechanisms of access are manifested in varied forms and closely linked to one another. Among these, social identities-based and social relations-based access mechanisms influence and are influenced by technology, capital, markets, labour, and knowledge, as well as by rights-based access mechanisms. In this research, I focus on these two access mechanisms (social identity and social relations) to tease out their link to both rights-based access and structural and relational-based access.

As one of the most widely applied theories in political ecology, Ribot and Peluso's theory of access and the discussion of rights-based and structural and relational-based mechanisms of access have seldom been challenged. One critique of the theory of access can be found in Howson and Kindon's (2015) research on access to REDD+ benefits in Indonesia. According to them:

> Despite its influence, Ribot and Peluso's (2003) theory does not have universal support...The appropriate access categories are spatially and temporally contingent and further tailoring is required to help understand the role of local agency. However, it is a robust framework for analysing power relations between actors across scales. (p.102)

Ribot and Peluso's theory of access, which aims at mapping various mechanisms of access and how they are interconnected, is a useful framework for investigating how actors mobilise 'bundles of powers' to derive benefits and to explore how power relations are negotiated across space and scale (and time). Despite its strengths, however, the theory of access would benefit from better recognition of 'local agency' in shaping access to resources. Though gender is listed as a channel through which access can be sought, it is not a major focus of Ribot and Peluso's (2003) theory of access.

As such, Ribot and Peluso's theory of access is not enough to tackle my research question. For this reason, I am also employing FPEs to broaden my approach. This is firstly because FPE helps to problematise, analyse and theorise struggles to gain, maintain, and control access to resources from a gender perspective. Secondly, by focusing mainly on social actors and their environmental perceptions, attitudes and actions, FPE can also potentially fill in the existing gap of Ribot and Peluso's theory of access regarding local agency.

2.2.2. Feminist Political Ecology (FPE)

Rocheleau et al. (1996:4) state that FPE,

> treats gender as a critical variable in shaping resource access and control, interacting with class, caste, race, culture and ethnicity to shape processes of ecological change, the struggles of men and women to sustain ecologically viable livelihoods and the prospects of any community for sustainable development.

FPE brings a feminist perspective to political ecology and draws on different bodies of literature and theories, including feminist geography and cultural ecology. Centring on resource access and control, FPE suggests that gender is intertwined with other axes/relations of social differentiation to (re)configure humans' relationship with nature and natural resources.

To problematise gendered access to resources, FPE focuses on three research themes: gendered environmental rights and responsibilities, gendered environmental knowledge, and gendered environmental activism. The three research themes of FPE cut

through various levels of analysis: the individual (environmental knowledge), the household and the community (environmental rights and responsibilities) and the international and national (environmental activism). FPE proponents seek to explore the interconnectedness between different levels of analysis in understanding gendered access to and control of resources, gendered production and application of knowledge pertaining to the environment, and gendered conflicts and resistance to environmental injustice. Moreover, as noted earlier, FPE is concerned with how environmental ideas, attitudes and practices are gendered, rather than arguing for gender as the most important attribute in shaping these processes.

Focusing on the possible mechanisms through which gender and other social categories such as ethnicity, class, social status, and culture intertwine, interact and mutually constitute one another, FPE proponents call for an intersectional approach (Elmhirst 2011, Ge et al. 2011, Nightingale 2011, Truelove 2011). An intersectional approach enhances the inclusiveness of research on gender (in)equality and (in)justice, especially in relation to natural resource access and control where conflicts and resistance are likely to arise due to unequal power relations, by overcoming 'the limitations of gender as a single analytical category' (McCall, 2005:1771). In this research, I adopt and adapt the three themes of FPE and an intersectional cross-scale approach to tackle the questions of how the everyday politics of resource access is shaped by gender and other social attributes. Although gender is explicitly emphasised as one of the most crucial factors, the fact that the chosen case study is located in the uplands, which are mainly populated by an indigenous ethnic group called the K'ho and operated under the traditional structures of matrilineal systems, means that ethnicity, social status and culture are also important influences over the processes with which this research is concerned. Moreover, I seek to bring insights from my case study to further develop FPE. In the following paragraphs, I will explain how the three themes of FPE (environmental rights and responsibilities, environmental knowledge, and environmental activism) are contextualised to better reflect the actual practices of gendered access in the studied area.

First, environmental rights and responsibilities are interpreted in this research depending on the level of analysis. For instance, within the household, 'environmental rights and responsibilities' refers to the gendered division of labour, in which the different positions of male and female members of the household determine what work is done by whom. When extended to the community, 'environmental rights and responsibilities' might manifest in local land and forest tenure rights and forest labour contracts between local people and state forestry institutions to protect the allocated forests. At the national

level, 'environmental rights and responsibilities' takes the form of adherence to legal documents such as Land Use Certificates (LUCs), forest protection contracts, or policy texts.

Second, environmental knowledge needs to be critically examined. Knowledge does not refer to a set of practices, experiences and behaviours of local communities (i.e. indigenous knowledge) that have remained fixed and stable across generations. The distinction between two bodies of gendered environmental knowledge (that of men and of women) is distinct, but in ways that, in most cases, are not clear. While ecofeminists suggest that women are inclined to be closer to nature and thus more knowledgeable about plants and trees in the forest (e.g. Shiva and Mies, 1993), in this research, I seek to challenge this essentialist approach to gendered environmental knowledge and de-naturalise the women-nature link. In my research, knowledge is defined by the meaning ascribed to the environment, and to forests and land in particular, by people. Knowledge, accordingly, is not simply the technical 'know-how' of utilising land and forest-related resources. In this study, knowledge is situated within the politico-economic, social, cultural and spiritual spheres and has implications for land and forest management as well as for each individual in the community. It is therefore crucial to capture how knowledge is gendered and how this process influences men's and women's access to land and forests. Gendered environmental knowledge, by and large, is closely linked to gendered environmental rights and responsibilities; as to a certain extent, local ways of understanding and articulating their gendered environmental rights and responsibilities also constitute a part of gendered environmental knowledge.

Third, FPE is deeply concerned with agency and resistance, be they everyday forms of resistance or formal and more organised collective actions. Informal forms of resistance might gradually develop into socio-environmental movements and political involvement, although this is not always the case. FPE studies (including those that do not identify themselves as such) have focused on both open and subtle forms of resistance, as lively manifestations of the sort of 'local agency' that FPE builds upon. There are, however, only a few studies of FPE that use everyday forms of resistance in Southeast Asia (Park and White, 2017:1106). It is within this particular body of FPE literature that this research situates itself. Accordingly, this research attends to the everyday politics of forests in the village and the interplay between villagers and outsiders who are directly or indirectly involved in global and national forest projects. As I will show, due to the nature of the state of Vietnam, environmental and socio-political movements concerning natural resources are still not legitimised. In the Central Highlands specifically, these movements

are even more restricted, as they are seen by the state and state actors as related to historical conflicts regarding indigenous territories in the past and the links between indigenous ethnic groups with Christian and anti-communist groups from overseas (Salemink, 2015).

The three themes of FPE (gendered environmental rights and responsibilities, knowledge, and activism) provide a framework in which to situate local struggles around resource access within global and national discourses, policies, and influences as well as identify where (and if possible why) the mismatch is likely to arise. Also, FPE is grounded in feminist-oriented studies and an agency approach, which is closely aligned with my approach to this particular research.

Although both FPE and Ribot and Peluso's (2003) theory of access are concerned with access relations and operate within a wide range of scales, FPE is not a theory of resource access *per se*. FPE, in fact, is a broader framework of how society and environment work while Ribot and Peluso's theory of access emphasises which social categories and power relations are at work in influencing individual's access to resources. Bringing in the theory of access, therefore, is appropriate and useful for my research as it looks at a nested case study with a strong focus on a local level in relation to wider contexts of global and national levels.

2.2.3. Locating the theory of access within FPE

As shown in 2.2.1 and 2.2.2, it is necessary to combine both the theory of access and FPE to analyse gendered access to resources in my case study. Bringing these together, I argue, helps to address their respective shortcomings and makes each work better. I summarise how the theory of access is deployed in this research below. I then move on to explain how the theory of access is located within FPE, how the two are connected to one another, and what additional concept is needed to effectively couple the theory of access and FPE.

The theory of access is deployed in two different layers. Firstly, I examine how local villagers establish their relationship with the surrounding ecosystem, i.e. how they classify their land and forest, what they use these resources for and to what extent these resources contribute to their livelihood and well-being. Secondly and more importantly, I attempt to understand the underlying power relations between different social groups in the village and between villagers and other national and sub-national actors regarding who is able to claim what, who is entitled to what and why this is the case. As this research is concerned with a forest community involved in PFES and REDD+, I assume that these power relations are shaped and reshaped on a daily basis and during the course of the intervention schemes of state and non-state agencies.

I draw on Ribot and Peluso's (2003) theory of access to tease out possible mechanisms for local people to access natural resources that involve social identities and relations. I argue that a villager is entitled to or can claim certain things (land/forests/trees) due to his/her membership in certain social groups and his/her ability to negotiate and mobilise his/her available social relations. These two mechanisms to gain and maintain access might be analysed separately, but my research findings suggest that a villager's negotiating power over social relations is, in this specific context, tied to his/her membership of certain social groups, and thus can be analysed simultaneously. The theory of access is further developed when situated within FPE. In my view, FPE helps to contextualise the concept of access from a feminist perspective and across multiple scales. Situating the theory of access within FPE also helps to better address local agency in struggles over resource access. I will further explain these two aspects in the following paragraphs.

First, FPE takes 'gender' as a crucial factor in determining who is able to access resources. In other words, particular men or women are entitled to or able to claim certain types or pieces of land. On the surface, this emphasis on gender seems to limit FPE's range of analysis. In fact, FPE, through an intersectional approach, provides a broader framework to analyse mechanisms and processes of access (i.e. under what conditions a villager can benefit from things). Moreover, a feminist perspective in FPE reminds us that the three pillars of political ecology, including 'the ecological conditions, socio-political relations, and cultural practices' (Nygren and Rikoon 2008) are necessarily gendered and therefore, these gendered dynamics need to be observed. It is noted that FPE proponents such as Elmhirst (2011) see gender not as a descriptive term or categorisation, but an analytical concept for considering the working of power (see also Butler 2004 and Cornwall 2007). As such, while my research is about gender in resource access and governance, gender should not be considered a fixed entity. For example, as I discuss gender divisions of labour in forestry activities, I do not assume that men and women in the community have pre-determined roles and that this division is clear and straightforward. This is also in line with the FPE conceptualisation of gender and intersectionality. In her earlier work in Indonesia, Elmhirst (1998) called for an alternative conceptualisation of gender divisions that does not see gender divisions as a determinative organising principle but instead considers the cultural construction of gender differences and the gendered division of labour through livelihood practices. As Turner and Bonnin (2014: 1303) point out, 'identity categories such as gender do not exist a priori, but are continually produced

through social relations, in this case, through the domestic political economy of agriculture.'

Second, in terms of scale, while the theory of access is useful to analyse ecological processes and power relations in and around resource access at the household and community level, FPE allows me to scale up and down these analyses, as well as trace links across various levels of analysis. Specifically, in this research, the analysis is extended up to global and national levels so as to link the gendered struggles to access local resources to the gender considerations regarding REDD+, the gendered politics of decision-making and policy formation (about who is entitled to what and why), and gendered discourses about development in Vietnam. The analysis also focuses on the most local level, the individual. At this level, gendered struggles to access local resources add another layer to their on-going and open-ended struggles to articulate their perceptions of surrounding environments as well as to conform or confront the state policies and intervention. As the analysis of access is scaled up and down within FPE, the concept of 'everyday politics' is useful to capture how non-state (including local people) and state actors engage in negotiation and resistance in relation to natural resources. It is noted that FPE studies might have attended to everyday politics, yet they do not use the concept. In this research, to understand operationalise the theory of access within FPE, I first seek to understand what 'everyday politics' might mean and how they might interact with gender and other social identities and social relations in shaping one's access to resources. Specifically, the concept of 'everyday politics' is inspired by Kerkvliet's (2005) research on how peasants contribute to contesting and reworking state policies and the subsequent demise of collectivisation in Vietnam. Kerkvliet develops his concept of 'everyday politics' from a number of classic studies of peasant societies, especially Scott's (1985, 1986) ideas of everyday resistance as well as his own research (Kerkvliet 2002) in other Southeast Asian contexts. 'Everyday politics', as Kerkvliet shows, is an articulation of local responses to state policies, most of which are concerned with resource allocation (i.e. agricultural and productive land in rural areas), and despite having different shapes and meanings, often emerges in a non-confrontational and unorganised manner.

In this research, I focus on various forms, subtle or direct, of everyday negotiation and resistance by local people, in relation to other social actors from the national level, to materialise their access claims. I find Kerkvliet's concept of everyday politics relevant and effective to contextualise perceptions and attitudes of an individual regarding resource access. In other words, it provides a tool with which to address the 'horizontal' interactions among individuals and trace the connections between villagers' claims and

actions with those of outsiders (Kinh villagers from other villages, forest officers, NGO practitioners). However, 'everyday politics' is not limited to conflicts, disputes or resistance, as Kerkvliet suggests: it also includes negotiations, and in some exceptional cases, cooperation among social actors. This, on the one hand, shows how local agency might contribute to shaping their responses to others' claims and actions; and on the other, it implies that such differentiation might be conditioned by other social identities and relations. Using 'everyday politics' as the operationalising concept within FPE recognises the various ways in which power operates in resource access in the Vietnamese uplands. The concept of 'everyday politics' is specifically useful in this case study as it also aims to: (1) factor 'intersectionality' into my analysis; (2) go beyond the class-based approach of Scott's (1986) everyday resistance to address complex relationships among social actors from various levels involved in resource access and governance (as shown above); and (3) better recognise the role of local agency, which has been seen as a shortcoming of Ribot and Peluso's (2003) theory of access.

In summary, this research adopts a theoretical lens that builds upon Ribot and Peluso's (2003) theory of access situating within FPE. While the theory of access meticulously points out the factors influencing access at the local level and how they link to one another, it lacks the necessary tools to analyse how resource access is gendered at individual and national levels. FPE, meanwhile, complements the theory of access with its strong grip on gender and gendered power relations, and couples productively with its agency approach. However, as I have shown in 2.2.1 and 2.2.2, neither the theory of access or FPE alone suffice for my conceptual framework. Instead, the theory of access should be situated within FPE and operationalised through the concept of everyday politics. The coming together of the theory of access and FPE and the mediating of the operationalising concept helps to deal with the existing limitations of both frameworks and bring out the strengths of the theory of access in conceptualising an individual's relation to resources and of FPE in an agency approach and intersectional manner.

2.3. Summary

Throughout this chapter, I have reflected on the three bodies of literature that contribute to this research theoretically and methodologically. The first is gender and REDD+, which offers an entry point to develop the political ecology of resource access and control. This is due to the fact that the implementation of REDD+ raises questions about potential social and environmental impacts for involved communities. My findings suggest that currently, research on gender and REDD+ is still mainly about women's participation. It

is the lack of knowledge about the connections and disruptions between gendered frameworks of REDD+ at the international and national levels and the existing structures of gendered perceptions of forest rights, responsibilities, knowledge, and power relations around forest use and management on the local level that inspires this research. However, I do not intend to engage only with gender issues and REDD+. In fact, the main literature I draw on relates to gendered access and control of natural resources within FPE and upland transformation in Southeast Asia and Vietnam. These two bodies of literature provide a theoretical framework within which to investigate mechanisms of access to land and forests and to contextualise the case study within a legacy of studies of the upland/lowland binary and upland socio-cultural and political struggles.

Based on insights from reviewing related literature, in the second section, I propose a conceptual framework that fuses Ribot and Peluso's (2003) theory of access and a FPE approach. The combination of theory of access and FPE helps to identify factors influencing access and how they are interconnected with one another, and highlights local agency and the gendered nature of resource access. The pairing of the theory of access and FPE in my conceptual framework, therefore, addresses the shortcomings of using either the theory of access or FPE alone. In this research, I adopt and adapt certain elements of the theory of access and FPE and, at the same time, effectively deploy the concept of everyday politics to operationalise my conceptual framework. These concepts help to conceptualise and contextualise my case study within the chosen conceptual framework and offer theoretical tools to design my study and analyse my data at a later stage.

Chapter 3. Research methodology and research contexts

This research is an ethnographic study of how a particular forest community in the Central Highlands of Vietnam use and manage their resources, including land and forest, and how gendered dynamics of resource access are played out in the context of new environmental projects such as PFES and REDD+. This chapter takes a closer look at my research methodology and the context of the whole study. Specifically, I provide rationales for selecting a nested case study and an ethnographic approach to collecting data. I also reflect on the process of ethnographical data collection and presentation through a discussion of positionality, ethical considerations and data analysis of this research. In the last section, I introduce the national and sub-national contexts of the case study to justify why this particular case study was chosen.

3.1. Research methodology

3.1.1. Justification for using an ethnographic approach and a nested case study

This section highlights and justifies the methodological position of this research. Since I aimed to gather exploratory data about the gendered accounts of resource access at multiple levels, I employed an ethnographic approach and chose a nested case study. Using ethnography and qualitative-based methods allows the researcher to better capture how individuals and groups in my research locations perceive and react to certain socio-political contexts. In other words, the inductive orientation of this approach facilitates the generation of knowledge that reflects reality (Mills and Birks, 2014: 23). A nested case study that encompasses national and local levels, meanwhile, helps to produce a deeper qualitative research of gender relations and resource access, and how these concepts are connected across these levels.

Selecting a nested case study requires the researcher to conduct multi-sited fieldwork. During my fieldwork, I collected data in three places: Hanoi (the capital city/national level), Dalat City (the central city of Lam Dong Province/provincial level) and Kala Tongu village (local level). Specifically, because of the focus of my research, I prioritised the local level where I spent more time living in the village to conduct ethnographic research on gendered strategies and struggles to access to resources. I also attended the core policy fora related to REDD+ and interviewed government and non-government actors in Hanoi and Dalat City to keep myself updated with both current policy debates and empirical data from the ground. Circulating between the village and other field sites was also useful for me to gain a broader picture of how policies were filtered downwards, as well as how feedback from policy implementation found its way upwards. I will provide

more details on key methods of data collection, positionality and ethical consideration in the following sub-sections.

3.1.2. Ethnographic research at the local level

As a research approach, ethnography 'usually involves the researcher participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking through formal and informal interviews, collecting documents and artefacts – in fact, gathering whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the emerging focus of inquiry' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 3). As such, ethnography serves as a powerful research tool to examine the socio-political and cultural characteristics of a particular community, as it seeks to understand how and why community members perceive and respond to certain actors, situations or interventions both within and outside their community. More importantly, ethnography requires and at the same time, allows the researcher to find out and 'convey how things look to those 'inside'' (Wolcott, 1999: 137).

Given these strengths, ethnography is especially relevant for this research. To capture local struggles and everyday politics regarding the resource access of Kala Tong villagers from the insiders' perspective, I conducted field research at the local level: I made four field trips to the village and stayed there for four months.[6] During this period, I sought to collect data through qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews, life histories, participant observation, and photovoice. The length of my stay was limited by the availability of my host families, as I will explain later. Although four months was short for ethnographic fieldwork, I managed to make the most of it thanks to my language and, to a certain extent, my familiarity with the Central Highlands from various field trips to this area as a member of staff at the Institute of Cultural Studies (ICS) in 2013. The following paragraphs focus on how I gained access to the field site, what sort of challenges arose from working in the field and how I reflected on those challenges during the course of my fieldwork.

Gaining access

My fieldwork research officially began in April-May 2015 after I finished my upgrade exam and obtained ethical clearance to do research from School of International Devel-

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[6] My timetable for field trips at the local level was as follows: first field trip (6 May 2015 to 13 June 2015), second (8-28 August 2015), third (4-30 October 2015) and fourth (6-31 January 2016).

opment (my home institution). Since I was still affiliated to the Institute of Cultural Studies (ICS) in Hanoi, it was more practical to request ICS to be my host institution. Upon my arrival in Vietnam, ICS issued me a letter of recommendation to facilitate my field trips at the local level. It was especially important for me to demonstrate a clear connection with a reliable host institution since I chose to work with ethnic minority communities in the Central Highlands, which is seen as politically sensitive in Vietnam and Southeast Asia generally (Badenoch 2016). Having obtained the letter, I had to report to the People's Committee at the provincial, district and commune levels and meet with local authorities to ask permission to conduct research. I was then accompanied by a staff member from Bao Thuan Commune People's Committee to the village head's house. There, I introduced myself and my research to the village head and asked for permission to stay in the village. On our first meeting, I informed the village head that I was a doctoral student who would like to collect data about forest-related culture and the livelihoods of K'ho people (the ethnic minority group in Vietnam generally).

My intention was to find a host family during my stay in the village, so I asked the village head to recommend a household. I also explained that I was used to staying with local people when I did field research and it would be ideal if I could stay with one family during the whole course of my fieldwork. However, the process of settling myself in the village took longer than expected, as I could not find a host family who could host me for four months consecutively. I ended up staying with the village head's sister and the indigenous chief during the first trip, and with the chairwoman of the Women's Union during the rest of my fieldwork. The challenges of finding a host family in the village, to me, reflected the specific contexts of this ethnic community and to a certain extent, local experiences with 'outside' members like me. It was quite unusual for villagers to have a Kinh woman from Hanoi stay in their house for several weeks or months. Other 'outside' members, my hosts told me, were male students or staff who worked for local companies and government and only stayed a few days. I heard frequently from my potential hosts and other villagers that I would not be able to adapt to their lifestyle or food, and some of their family members did not feel comfortable with a stranger in their house. I will return to this point in the positionality and ethical considerations section.

The challenges of finding a host family, ultimately, changed my fieldwork strategies. Firstly, instead of interviewing local authorities to gain a broad picture of the village history and current practices of resource access and gender relations, I decided to focus on talking to the villagers first. During my first week in the village, I spent most of my time talking to family members of my first host family and their neighbours. Through

their recommendations, I prepared a list of older people in the village whom they thought would be able to tell me about the history of the village and the traditional culture of K'ho people. I conducted interviews with those on the list, as a first point of entry into the community. I normally used my host family and the village head's verbal approval as references when I entered their houses. After I moved in with my third host family during the second field trip, I began to conduct walk-in interviews with other households in the village. I also, identified, contacted and made appointments to interview government officers and authorities in the village and at Bao Thuan Commune People's Committee. Secondly, instead of using a mixture of household survey, in-depth interviews, field observation, life histories and photovoice to collect data, I found that some methods would not work well in the village and would need to be modified. For example, before going to the Central Highlands, I had planned to conduct a household survey using random household sample selection, as the village was not large. In fact, after several introductory meetings with the villagers, I realised that they were not comfortable answering survey questionnaires. Instead, they preferred informal conversation. Therefore, I only prepared semi-structured questionnaires to guide the interview and identify with whom I should conduct further in-depth and life history interview.[7] As a researcher, I had to make the decision to use in-depth interview or life history methods with my informants during those specific interviews, and this decision-making was dependent upon the flow of interview, my own experiences in working with ethnic minority groups in the Central Highlands, and my assessment of where the interviews were heading while they were in progress. In exceptional cases, my informants expressed a strong interest in the politico-historical contexts of the village, how it has changed and how their life events were embedded within these changes. These kinds of data needed life history interview to collect. Therefore, for those informants, I could shift the methods of data collection accordingly.

Apart from individual interviews with household members, I also conducted interviews with several groups of villagers. I began the conversation by asking about their household's details and looked for differentiating or similar opinions about certain topics, such as groom price, illegal logging or land transactions in the village. These groups tended to be made up of siblings, relatives or neighbours – groups that were formed naturally before I entered the village. This, for me, made it easier to throw in topics likely to attract diverse opinions and views as mentioned above. I decided to use 'group interviews' instead of 'focus group discussion' as a method of collecting data, partly because

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[7] See Annex C for a detailed questionnaire.

I found it challenging to bring in a research assistant to help me coordinate these discussions. Moreover, I assumed that in order to understand how gender is manifested in the human-nature relationship, I had to try various ways to incorporate gendered concerns into questions about the everyday lives of my respondents, then reviewing the individual opinions expressed in in-depth interviews and observing their actual practices, rather than sitting them down in a 'focus group discussion' with structured and technical questions about 'gender', REDD+ or resource governance, which undoubtedly had been applied by other NGO practitioners and UN-REDD in this village.

In terms of quantity, I had eighty-eight interviews at the local level, in which seven interviews were not tape-recorded and eighty-one were recorded. There were fourteen respondents who were interviewed more than one time thanks to their willingness to take part in my research, their availability and the richness of data obtained from the first interviews. I also interviewed the village head and members of the village-based Community Forest Management Board, all of whom were K'ho and male. Apart from local villagers, the respondents list included two Kinh priests, one of them whose had served for almost fifty years in the region, and the other having just transferred from a neighbouring district; two forest officers from the Bao Thuan Forest Company; and three from the Di Linh District Forest Administration Bureau who were male Kinh. The only female official was the chairwoman of Women's Union at commune level. The breakdown of ethnicity composition, age group and gender is provided in the below table.

Ethnicity		Gender		Age group		
Kinh	K'ho	Men	Women	20 to 35	36 to 50	Above 50
7	53	28	32	13	27	20

Table 1. Respondents at the local level (by ethnicity, gender and age group)

Pros and cons of in-depth interviews and life histories

In-depth interviews and life histories, as shown, have both pros and cons. The advantage of incorporating an introductory meeting with an in-depth interview or life history is that I did not have to 'chase' my respondents between interviews. In such an agriculture-based community, the villagers start work at 7am in the morning and finish at 4pm. During the harvest seasons (May and August for rice and November for coffee), several households

in the village exchange labour with each other and the host organises a feast (food and rice wine) for the group of labourers. Therefore, when I was in the village, I normally had to make an appointment in advance with my respondents if I wanted to meet them during the day, or arrive at their houses before they went to the fields. The evenings, especially during the harvest seasons, were inconvenient for both of us, as some male respondents would have started eating and drinking by the time they got home and were fairly drunk by 4 or 5 pm. I initially tried to stay on in their house to observe the gendered dynamics within the household when the men were drunk and the women talked to me, but I quickly realised that the women did not feel comfortable having someone around in such situations. They were either busy tidying up after the meal or too embarrassed by their husbands/siblings' attitudes to let me stay. Therefore, in those cases, I could not interview or observe them. Moreover, as evening was the time for family members to get together, my respondents were either too tired to be interviewed, or the house became too crowded and noisy for us to concentrate on the conversation. I also learnt that some respondents were really helpful during the first meeting, but less receptive during subsequent meetings. As such, being able to conclude the interview in one meeting with respondents who spent more time working on the field or coffee plantation was ideal for me.

However, the downside of this interview strategy should also be accounted for. The first challenge was that I had to make a quick assessment as to whether I could use in-depth interviews or life history interviews with my respondents. The decision to pursue a longer discussion with my respondents seemed to be contingent and subjective, as it was mostly (but not always) based on the researcher's perception. To mitigate this sample selection bias, I developed my own 'coping mechanisms' as I moved along with fieldwork in the village. For example, I sometimes discussed about the main topics I would like to explore in my interviews with my hosts and asked for personal recommendations of whom I could talk to and how his/her household was doing. I also asked for personal recommendation from previous respondents who were comfortable enough to give me a (or some) name(s). My decision, therefore, was based on these references and my actual interaction with the respondents, which renders it informed, rather than random. Asking for personal recommendations also allowed me to build up trust with potential respondents and to understand the socio-economic networks and sometimes political alliances among my respondents. This observation was then recorded in my field diary and used to analyse the supporting networks and conflicts of interest in the village, directly or indirectly linked to resource use and management.

Another crucial point in the interview was the decision to shift from general interviews to life history interviews. It is perhaps useful to look at how life histories might play out as a qualitative research method first. Personal life stories are believed to encapsulate the key events of one's life and furthermore, reflect certain dimensions of actual cultural or historical themes. Research about forest resources allocation and management might involve complex scenarios of land settlement, customary and legal forms of resource governance and conflicts of interest and therefore benefits greatly from personal narratives and accounts. I am aware that life histories do not necessarily mirror current political and historical circumstances, as they happened in the past. However, I argue that it is not the accuracy of dates or events that determines the value of these life stories. Following Li's reflection in her studies of land frontier in Indonesia that 'selective forgetting and remembering was integral to how the new relations were experienced and how they were shaped' (2014: 5), I seek to explore how selective forgetting and remembering of my respondents reveals the dynamics and nuances of gender relations, access to and control of resources and the intertwining of old and new forms of resource governance in the village.

I relied mostly on my interaction with potential respondents during the first interview and the way they structured their responses to decide whether to return to life history interviews. All respondents selected for life history interviews met the same criteria: they were or have been active in the village or commune management committee; they were happy to be interviewed more than once; and they were recommended by my hosts.[8] The gender ratio of respondents, however, is not balanced. I had more female respondents for life history interviews as I experienced difficulties in approaching and following up with male respondents. I explained earlier that the men (and the main labours) only stayed at home in the early mornings and late evening. Hence, I tended to talk to the women most of the time. I made up for my lack of access to male respondents by relying on key male respondents who trusted me and whom I could trust, by engaging in more informal conversation with them and by constructing narratives about men and masculinity from women's perspectives.

Participant observation
Field observation plays an important part in bridging the gaps in data collected via other research methods. As I sought to explore gendered norms, it was crucial not only to listen

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[8] The details of my respondents in life history interviews are provided in Annex A.

to what villagers told me, but also observe what they actually did, such as how they organised among themselves on special occasions such as weddings, funerals, labour exchange or non-timber forest products (NTFPs) collection trips. Although they tended to talk amongst themselves in the local language when they attended these ceremonies and when working in the fields and forests, observation helped to understand the routines as well as the irregularities, which could be clarified or discussed during our subsequent interviews or through the photos taken by photovoice participants. Staying with three different families from different backgrounds and social status (two male-headed households and one female-headed household; and two households with government officers/staff and one living mostly on agricultural income) also helped me gain a broader understanding of how gender dynamics varied across households and how these dynamics influenced their interactions with me as a researcher. I used my field journal to record my observations, especially after a meeting, interview or village event. These observations served as a guide for me to (re)structure my interviews and adjust my conduct in the village, and at the same time suggested new assumptions to reflect upon during and after my fieldwork.

Photo voice

As well as in-depth interviews, life histories and participant observation, a photovoice project was conducted with Kala Tongu villagers. It is noted that I seek to use photovoice as a research tool rather than a form of advocacy. As photovoice is expected to provide villagers with a platform to articulate their personal opinions and responses regarding existing structures of resource access and governance in the village, so it also helps me, as a researcher, to collect information on topics that might not be easily verbalised due to sensitivity or language barriers. Box 1 provides a summary of how photovoice is used in qualitative research.

The photovoice project was officially launched in October 2015, with six participants. I met with them at the group leader's house and gave a brief explanation of my project, instructed them to use the cameras and proposed some topics for them to consider when taking photos. We also set a temporary timeframe for photo-taking and interviewing so they could arrange their time accordingly. As such, I was scheduled to collect the cameras and interview them after three months. However, during the first two weeks after giving out the cameras, I visited every participant to check on their progress and to give them a mini-tutorial on topics and techniques of taking photos. These visits helped me get to know my participants, understand their perceptions of the relevant topics and bond

with them. Also, during these visits, I discussed topics of interest, narrowing them down to land- and forest-related issues. The photovoice project lasted until the end of January 2016 when all participants returned the cameras to me. The completed list of photovoice participants is in Annex A.

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Box 1. Photovoice in qualitative research

Photovoice was initiated by Wang and Burris (1997) as a qualitative method utilised in community-based participatory research since the 1990s. Technically, it refers to the methodology of combining narratives with visualised exercises such as photography to 'express needs, history, culture, problems and desires' (cited by Nykiforuk et al., 2011: 104). A typical photovoice project involves several crucial steps. Participants in photovoice projects are first invited to take pictures of their everyday life and/or certain topics. They are then encouraged to share their photos in a group and discuss the contexts in which the photos are taken as well as how they make sense of their photos. Outputs from photovoice project might be an open exhibition or a published pictorial book to showcase the best photos taken by its participants.

Thanks to its participatory nature, originally, photovoice was often used to engage local communities in dialogue with policy-makers. Since the early 2000s, this method has gained popularity among Vietnamese anthropologists and social activists who conduct research about and advocate for socially disadvantaged groups such as women and ethnic minorities. However, the main challenges for conducting photovoice research are securing funding to buy digital cameras for the participants during the first stage of project; selecting committed and passionate participants to participate in the project; and monitoring the overall process from distributing cameras to participants, teaching them to take photos, conducting interview about the chosen photos to writing up the 'captions' of those photos to convey the participants' messages accurately. As a result, in Vietnam, photovoice was only used by certain individual researchers or NGOs with generous support from international funders.

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Reflecting on why and how I conducted the photovoice project in the village is useful to understand the value this research tool adds to my existing sets of methods. Since I hoped to understand the 'gendered' voices of participants through photos and associated stories, I chose three men and three women. I interviewed three members before inviting them to participate as I found their stories interesting and relevant for the project. The rest were introduced by the village head and other respondents. The selection process offered me some insights about how villagers perceived men's and women's involvement in social activities. For example, the village head and other male participants agreed that it was easier to pick the female participants, because women stayed at home and would attend to the job assigned (i.e. taking photos), while men would not. I ended up choosing mostly middle-aged and elderly male respondents since they were seen (and widely known) as being more responsible and would finish their assignments on time. The chosen female participants were slightly younger, as they were seen as quick learners and therefore able to handle the camera and master the techniques of photography better than older women. Moreover, as I interviewed two of them and stayed next-door to the third participant, I

could visit them to talk through the photos or ask their opinions on issues considered sensitive or less public in the village, such as who benefited the most from REDD+ and other forestry projects, or why the projects were conducted in a certain way. The photovoice project, overall, gave me a chance to explore the perspectives of the villagers on their livelihoods, everyday activities, land and forest use and management through photos and stories and at the same time, to build up a core group of close and reliable respondents.

Language and local assistant

Prior to going to the village, I had planned to hire a local assistant to assist with interviews. For me, the idea of having a local assistant (ideally a male) was that I felt local men would feel more comfortable talking with a male assistant. However, the practicalities of arranging my stay and the gendered dynamics in the village made me change this plan. Firstly, I could not find a place for myself and an assistant. Secondly, even if I could have arranged a place to stay for both of us, there was no suitable candidate. As I was interested in doing ethnographical research and did not favour one-off household surveys or closed questionnaires, I would have to spend time training the assistant before I could actually work with him/her. In fact, a few candidates were suggested to me by the local authorities, but none of them met the criteria. Thirdly, I was concerned that getting a local male assistant from another village or ethnic background would not make my interview process easier, as they were likely to be regarded as either 'outsiders' by villagers or too comfortable with my potential male respondents to do any interviews or translations for me. Last but not least, after I settled myself in the village and conducted the first round of introductory meetings, I found that the village was small and easy enough to get around and villagers could speak Vietnamese (national language) fluently; therefore, I did not experience any issues interviewing them alone. There were only two cases in which older participants could not speak Vietnamese but their children were nearby and acted as alternative informants or translators. I was aware, however, that I had some constraints in recruiting and following up with male respondents as explained earlier. Having no local assistant or language barrier, nevertheless, had little to do with this limitation.

3.1.3. Research at the national and provincial levels

This research is not only concerned with a single forest community. Rather, I seek to explore how this particular forest community is situated within a complex network of

environmental projects. To do so, I extended my fieldwork activities to provincial and national institutions.

Interview and field observation

I conducted in-depth interview and field observation with national and provincial officers and NGO practitioners and participated in key policy fora around REDD+ in Hanoi. Interviews with government officials at the provincial level were undertaken between my field trips to the village. Meanwhile, at the national level, I started contacting my respondents and interviewing them during the last two months of my fieldwork in Vietnam (February and March 2015).[9]

Among my respondents, most government officers interviewed were working for REDD+-related institutions at either national or provincial levels. Some NGO respondents or their organisations had not been directly involved with REDD+ from the beginning. However, during the interview period, all NGO respondents were actively involved in REDD+ projects. The social demographics of my respondents at the national and provincial levels resulted from the channels through which I recruited them, mainly through informal meetings at policy fora and a 'snowball' sampling method. Prior to my fieldwork, I signed up to the REDD+ mailing list to receive information about new projects, policies and meetings related to REDD+ in Vietnam. When I went back to Hanoi in March 2015, I participate in several meetings to build up my networks with REDD+ actors at the national and provincial levels and identify potential interviewees. I then followed up with these people via emails or informal conversation when attending meetings in Hanoi, and made interview appointments with them. Some respondents then referred me to their colleagues or personal contacts, whom I subsequently interviewed. In total, I conducted seven (7) interviews with officers and practitioners at the national level and three (3) interviews with officers at the provincial level. The interviews were focused on their work experiences with REDD+ pilot projects and their perceptions of the main challenges of working on gender mainstreaming agendas in forestry sector across various levels.

While collecting data and interviewing government officials at the national and provincial levels, I encountered certain challenges. Firstly, of five interviews with government officers, only two (with REDD+ officers in Hanoi) allowed me to record them on tape. In contrast, NGO practitioners were happy to have their interviews recorded. This showed a key difference between government and non-government respondents.

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[9] The list of my respondents at the national and provincial levels can be found in Annex A.

Moreover, as our interviews focused on on-going REDD+ pilot projects, government officials, especially those at the provincial level, might be cautious when commenting on the challenges of project implementation or related policies. Secondly, since I could not tape-record and had to take notes during the meeting, it was harder to maintain the conversation flow and to strategically frame the questions to get the required data. In most cases, respondents tended to provide me with factual data, statistics and information that had been published on the website or read aloud the policy texts. I was, however, more interested in their personal and 'off-stage' perceptions and views. In some cases, I chose to shift our discussion to technical aspects of REDD+ (such as gender mainstreaming components), their personal and professional experiences in working with forestry sectors, and REDD+ in particular. On the one hand, I was convinced that talking about issues considered 'technical' made my government respondents feel more comfortable, as these issues are not politically sensitive and therefore did not run the risk of jeopardising their current positions or careers. On the other hand, this also allowed me to better understand how they differentiate between what was considered within the scope of their job and personal interests and how they acted accordingly. For example, at the provincial level, my respondents found my questions about gendered forest knowledge and particular gender-sensitive activities carried out in the REDD+ pilot sites in Lam Dong Province not particularly relevant to their job. This showed that the main approach to gender considerations in forestry sector was still very technical and project-oriented. I did not, however, experience these problems with NGO practitioners. This might be because I was referred to them by other colleagues or already had prior face-to-face interaction with them before the interviews.

In addition, I attended nine relevant policy and research fora to (1) keep me updated about the on-going REDD+ projects in other provinces; (2) observe how the debates on REDD+ implementation package evolved at the national level; and (3) network with relevant stakeholders involved in REDD+ projects to identify potential interviewees. I chose the meetings based on their relevance to my topic and my availability. However, as the information about these meetings was circulated on the REDD+ networks mailing list, I was able to schedule my work to attend most of the meetings of sub-technical working group involved in the local implementation of REDD, REDD Governance and Safeguards. Gender considerations were mostly discussed in the meetings of sub-technical working group on Safeguards as they covered issues related to potential impacts on REDD on environment and society of forest dwellers. However, as further analysed in

Chapter 4, I found that gender discussion was often extended and covered in other meetings of sub-technical working groups as well.[10].

Apart from the meetings with REDD Sub-Technical Working Groups, I also attended research seminars and project workshops organised by NGOs and international donors in charge of implementing REDD+ pilot projects in Vietnam.[11] All of these meetings were open to members of REDD+ Networks, so participants included both government and non-government actors such as NGO practitioners, project partners/donors and researchers. Local communities were not present in these meetings since they were held in Hanoi and the contents of these meetings were considered technical. Data collected from participant observation at policy and research fora were used to guide my subsequent interviews with national and provincial actors and to analyse their differentiating roles and influences in REDD+ processes.

Library and archival research

Archival data was collected at various national and provincial decision-making bodies as and when possible. I gained access to these data through visiting the National REDD+ Committee in Hanoi and the Provincial Management Unit of REDD+ in Dalat City, Lam Dong Province. The most accessible secondary data at the local level was the socio-economic surveys conducted by RECOFTC (the implementing agencies for UN-REDD Vietnam Programme Phase 1 and 2), the annual reports of the Bao Thuan Forest Company and Bao Thuan Commune People's Committee. Other reports related to different forestry projects in Lam Dong Province and Di Linh District were not obtainable because I had difficulties approaching the relevant staff. Gaps in secondary data were bridged by field data from interviewing forest officers and other NGO practitioners with experience of Di Linh District and Bao Thuan Commune.

3.2. Positionality and ethical considerations

3.2.1. Positionality

My position as a female Vietnamese researcher working with a minority group in Vietnam enabled me to approach the community being studied as both an insider and outsider. To a certain extent, I considered myself as working at 'home', where I could connect (and reconnect) with my own political regime, society and culture. This brought me

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[10] Annex D provides more details of what roles and topics are covered by each Sub-Technical Working group.

[11] The specific details of meetings I attended are listed in Annex B.

opportunities to engage with the specific contexts of my chosen research site, which subsequently facilitated my data collection. However, as a female researcher from a majority group studying the society of ethnic minorities, I was regarded as an outsider by local people. As I did not speak the same language or experience the same natural and cultural landscapes, I entered the village as a Kon Yoan (Kinh) interested in learning about their cultures, livelihoods and connections with the forest. Although most of them could speak Vietnamese fluently enough to discuss their everyday lives in detail, the fact that I spoke little K'ho and had to travel back and forth between the village and Hanoi reminded them of my Kinh origin. It is, however, not just the practical aspects of being an outsider that matter the most in my case. On a more theoretical and methodological note, I am aware that the data collection and final products of writing is shaped by such power relations and social identities as my own and my respondents' gender, ethnicity and social status (see for example Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

Therefore, for me, it is critical to constantly reflect on my positionality prior to, during and after my fieldwork. As briefly mentioned in 3.1.2, prior to my official fieldwork, I obtained a recommendation letter from my host institution (ICS), and sent it to Lam Dong Provincial People's Committee. Technically, I was still affiliated with ICS as a researcher. However, since I was on study leave to undertake my PhD at the University of East Anglia, and I also worked for two collaborative projects between ICS and foreign institutions, I was treated as a foreign researcher doing fieldwork in Vietnam and thus needed to go through a host institution to access to the field site. The host institution would help me handle all the paperwork required by the local government to facilitate my entry to the field site and technically, they would have to 'monitor' my fieldwork activities and report back to central government if and when needed. Those are standardised administrative procedures that every foreign researcher has to follow to conduct research at the sub-national level and stay long-term in the village in a socialist country like Vietnam, and I was not an exceptional case. The practical and methodological challenges of undertaking fieldwork in socialist countries where states control every aspect of socio-political processes and everyday life are well documented by Turner (2013).

When I first arrived in the village and during subsequent field trips, I introduced myself to the village head and my potential respondents as a postgraduate student collecting data for my PhD dissertation. As I did not speak the language and knew little about K'ho culture at that point, I sought to establish my position as a learner rather than an experienced member of staff from a national research institution. As a result, I could present myself more neutrally and blur the distinction between expert and layperson, which

then helped to create a more inclusive and receptive environment for my respondents to interact with me. Moreover, I invested a great deal of time to build rapport with my potential respondents through simply hanging out with local people, especially women. Every time I moved to a new house, I spent my first few days talking to the host and his/her family members and visiting their neighbours and relatives. In the evening, I did not go out for interviews and would help my host with his/her household chores around the house or join a group of women for an informal chat. I also made use of the photovoice project to make friends with my project participants and their families. I sometimes consulted my hosts to check I had not done anything insulting or disrespectful. However, since some of my respondents shared personal stories or expressed resentment of my host(s) and the village head, I tried to keep their identities confidential and avoid taking sides with anyone when cross-referencing other respondents or when recording my activities in the field diary.

As a female Kinh researcher working in a K'ho society, I encountered various challenges during my fieldwork. Specifically, I felt uneasy dealing with the politics among the local elite and the historical ethnic tensions between K'ho and Kinh people. The local elite, in this research, refers to the old and senior men or women who used to work or are currently working as civil servants or involved in the village-based management board. The term is used to differentiate between ordinary K'ho villagers and the K'ho people who are better connected politically. The local elite, however, are still considered as 'subordinate' to Kinh authorities or forest officers.[12]

The politics among the local elite and the inter-ethnic relations sometimes kept me at bay when I tried to approach senior men to ask for help with my research. A typical example was a senior man who used to be the village head. During my first visit, he was approachable and engaging when we talked about the village history as well as forest-related issues. I then came back to his house to interview him a second time. He surprised me by refusing to talk to me. I sensed that he had been told by the indigenous chief that he was not knowledgeable enough to talk to me about the traditional culture and customs of K'ho people.[13] Also, it seemed that he himself realised that he would not benefit from sharing his knowledge with me as an outsider. The 'benefit', as I have come to realise, resulted from being interviewed by reporters from the local newspaper and TV station for a cultural show/articles and then being paid cash by the media. In this case, the senior

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[12] I will discuss the relationship between local elite, ordinary villagers and Kinh people in Chapter 7 (7.1.1).
[13] Nowadays, in every ethnic village, there are still two separate positions: the village head is in charge of the administrative management and the indigenous chief takes care of socio-cultural issues. Normally, the indigenous chief is an old man and possesses knowledge about the history and culture of his village.

man expected me to act like one of those reporters. Meanwhile, as a researcher and a PhD student, I found it uncomfortable to pay cash and so I normally only gave them a small token of appreciation (a packet of cigarettes or sweets for their children). That might have disappointed this senior man. Apparently, local perceptions of who could be seen as a legitimate spokesman of their community and what kind of knowledge about traditional culture could be shared with outsiders played a role in shaping my respondents' attitudes towards me. Another example comes from my encounter with a senior man from a neighbouring village. He was introduced to me by my host and her son-in-law took me to his house to visit. He was very helpful during the first meeting. When I turned up the second time to ask if I could have access to a document I believed he had in his house, he openly suggested I should pay money in exchange for that.[14] I had a short conversation with him and politely made my way out, as I could feel the tension of that conversation.

When I reflected upon that encounter, I realised that there were certain tensions as he was talking about the bad things Kinh people did when they first came to the area and the terms and conditions I would have to accept to get the documents. I was convinced that, since I was on my own instead of being with a team and a male colleague, he might have found it easier to vent his frustration (of Kinh people) onto me. Also, since I always presented myself as a junior researcher, I might not have fitted their perception of a professional researcher and was not taken seriously. The tendency to 'underestimate' female researchers by local men is not unusual, as it has reported by other female authors (see Turner 2013 and Scott et al. 2006). The gender dynamics were further complicated as my respondents grew up in a matrilineal but not matriarchal society where men generally held more power than women, and I came from a patriarchal society, but was educated in a relatively gender equal environment. The conflicting backgrounds and perceptions might have come out during that conversation without us realising. Being aware of it, however, required me to go back to the data I obtained from the first interview with him and reflect critically on it. Subsequently, I found myself treating these data with extra care and sought alternative sources of data to cross-check them.

It seemed that the 'demanding' attitudes of local elite towards me might have been rooted in the tension between ethnic groups in the Central Highlands and Kinh people from the lowlands regarding natural resource access and the research culture in Vietnam. For example, they might have witnessed their land and forest being taken away or bought cheaply by the Kinh (be it the Vietnamese government or new migrants). This resentment

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[14] I did not pursue the matter because I managed to find the materials online through an official website of the Catholic Church in Vietnam, rather than because of this uncomfortable encounter with this senior man.

then resulted in the highly transactional attitude to Kinh people, including knowledge-sharing. As a result, I, as a Kinh, was requested to pay to get the information from them. This attitude, as far as my fieldwork is concerned, only came from men or those with power. This is not to say the poorer groups were more receptive or cooperative. As I was always trying to maintain a low profile in the field, it was likely that from the villagers' perspective, I did not in any sense meet their expectations of someone who would benefit them. The challenge of building rapport with my respondents, therefore, involved managing certain expectations from them, while also being honest and upfront with them about what I could and could not do. Local people decided for themselves whether to cooperate with me. As a researcher, it is useful to acknowledge these limitations and critically reflect them in the process of data collection.

Working in the village, for me, was not only about struggles with 'difficult' respondents. Months of fieldwork also taught me that my gender and social background could also be an important asset in the field. Specifically, as a female researcher away from home and trying to learn about a different culture, it was easier for me to blend in with women and poorer groups. They tended to be more sympathetic to my work demands and thus more willing to let me join in their conversations or share their stories with me. At first, some of them were curious about me leaving behind my comfortable lifestyle to travel to their village, as they only knew Kinh officers who would stay for a couple of days on business trips. Others were reluctant to talk to me, especially women and less educated respondents, saying that they were not knowledgeable and articulate enough to discuss sophisticated topics such as 'culture' or 'traditional customs and practices'. In their view, they would embarrass themselves if they could not speak Vietnamese (national language) well or could not express themselves in an interview. After several rounds of introductory visits, I realised that using certain Kinh-originated terms such as *cán bộ* (officer), *nghiên cứu văn hoá* (cultural studies) or even *phỏng vấn* (interview) would discourage potential respondents. I eventually adjusted my language to suit the groups I wanted to target by explaining why I was there and inviting them to chat with me about their family, their agricultural crops and sometimes their everyday life.

To my surprise, I sometimes ended up spending hours with a woman and her relatives who would tell me less-heard and less-known stories about how unfair the implementation of forestry and development projects was in the village or how they struggled with forest officers to reclaim their land for coffee plantations. Feminist-oriented studies have discussed the 'click moments' where the female researcher can immerse herself in

a culture in certain circumstances (Fonow and Cook 1991). During the course of my field-work, I found myself drawing closer to my female respondents through our interviews, informal chats and sometimes, simple greetings as we passed each other in the village. I also began to see their world through their own eyes as I learnt to adopt a more emic approach in the field. One example is that when I first arrived in the village, I had my own perceptions of forest boundaries and I tended to refer to the Community Forest when asking about access to forest. However, as the women explained to me how they found non-timber forest products, I realised that they have been navigating within a much wider space than the Community Forest or UN-REDD forest (as they would say). These every-day interactions also helped to build rapport with my female respondents.

3.2.2. Ethical considerations

Doing research with human beings on a daily basis necessarily raises certain ethical is-sues. In this section, I focus more on the ethical consideration at the local level, as I spent more time doing research in the village (therefore, there were more respondents at the local level involved in my research than at the national or provincial levels). Moreover, I assume that my respondents at the local level, especially K'ho villagers, were more vul-nerable and therefore, I attempted to minimise any potential risks for them when taking part in my research.

Obtaining informed consent from villagers is the most important aspect of ethical research. The process of getting (or ensuring) informed consent from villagers in socialist countries like Vietnam and China, however, might be more complicated and sometimes fail to meet the researcher's expectations and his/her ethical protocols. As previous re-search has pointed out, this is because the approval for research to be conducted in se-lected areas is often granted by authorities at higher levels, and the actual participants such as villagers are merely informed rather than consulted (Cox 2010, Tebboth 2014). In my case, I was aware that having an approval letter from Provincial People's Commit-tee, and verbal approval of the village head was to facilitate my stay in the village in political terms. In ethical terms, however, this does not mean that my respondents have given informed consent. Therefore, I sought to obtain their individual verbal consent be-fore and during my research.

The purpose of seeking verbal consent for interviewing and tape-recoding is also to adapt to the contexts of the community being studied. In rural and upland Vietnam, it is not usual for both foreign and Vietnamese social researchers to obtain written consent from the respondents. While I visited a house in the village, my respondents often thought

that I was a journalist or government official sent to the village to look for 'sensational stories' on land and forest governance. They would feel intimidated and self-censor the information provided if they had to sign the consent forms, despite knowing that their identities would be kept confidential. To avoid this, I often explained to them about my research first and then asked for their permission to record their answers. Their verbal consent was sometimes recorded as my respondents were asking what I would do with the data collected during our interview. I always made sure that I responded to their questions as honestly as I could and gave them time to decide if they would like to continue talking to me even though we were halfway through the interview. For those who did not feel comfortable, I stopped the conversation and moved to the next household. This is especially relevant in my research, as I was aware that my research might touch on sensitive issues, such as forestland disputes among villagers or negative impacts of state policies on local livelihoods. Therefore, all of my respondents were assured that they were free to withdraw from the interview or refuse to answer questions that they found uncomfortable or sensitive.

Apart from the sensitivity of data collection, I could foresee that ethical tension would arise during my fieldwork. For instance, I conducted participant observations, which sometimes involved collecting data outside of the interview situation. This potentially raised issues about how aware they were about being researched at those times. However, as soon as I went to the village, I had established my identity as a postgraduate student collecting data for my PhD and local people were officially informed of my research. Moreover, I sometimes discussed issues I found unclear and took notes in front of them or in public spaces where they could see me.

When I visited a household, I prepared a small packet of candy or cigarettes to give to my respondent as a token of appreciation. Through these small gifts, I wanted to show my gratitude to those who spared their time and energy in helping me with my research. The packets of candy were usually distributed to my respondents' children and the cigarettes were consumed by the male respondents and their company when we were talking, both of which were seen as local exchange between friends and socially accepted in the village. Also, since these gifts were quite insignificant financially, the act of giving gifts was not, in my view, considered as paying my respondents for information or bribing them to get what I needed.

For the photovoice participants, since we had a lot of meetings and follow-up interviews, I gave the participants a small amount of cash as their allowance for three months and bought light refreshments for them when we had our group meetings. Other

than that, I did not pay any of my photovoice participants with cash or expensive items to avoid evoking jealousy between other villagers and the photovoice participants. Moreover, in a typical agriculture-based community like this village, most of my photovoice participants had to spend time working in their own field and coffee plantation as well as collecting NTFPs for instant cash. The allowance I gave them was just enough to compensate their time spent on the meetings or photo interviews with me, so it was not considered by my participants and myself as a form of paid employment.

With my respondents at the national level, I followed the same ethical procedures; however, I did not give them any gifts as I arranged to meet up with them during office hours and both of us considered these meetings part of their job as government officers/officials.

3.3. Data management, coding and analysis

For field research in the village, I used a tape-recorder to record most of the interviews with local people. When I got back to my host family in the village, I took note of the interesting points from the interview and my field observations in my field journal. I also re-listened to the interview and ranked the interview based on its importance, with the most important ones to be fully transcribed. The less important interviews fell into one of three categoriess: (1) a short chat with a respondent; (2) the respondent was not interested in talking to me; or (3) the interview was too similar to previous ones. In these three cases, I would not transcribe the recording files, but relied on my notes taken after the interview. In total, I transcribed sixty-six interviews and took note of seven interviews. For the photovoice project, I took note of my interviews with participants about the photos and at the same time, had them tape-recorded. I relied on my notes of interview with participants about the photos to supplement data from in-depth and life history interviews. Photos taken by photovoice participants were used to guide the interview and some are included in the thesis (Chapter 7). For field research at the national and provincial level, I used three different sources: tape-recording files (for recorded interviews), field notes (for non-recorded interviews and policy fora observation) as well as any extra documents (reports, meeting minute, or correspondences with respondents).

The next step was to digitally archive my data. The data from the field journal was typed and transferred to my computer as .doc files. Interview transcriptions of tape-recorded interviews and notes taken from interviews without recording files were also typed and transferred to my computer as .doc files. With the photovoice project, the photos were transferred to a separate folder together with the typed notes on the photos, all

stored in my computer. All of my interviews and field notes were in Vietnamese. Having completed my fieldwork, I compiled an Excel file with information about the name of respondents, date of interview, interesting points from the interviews and the main themes that emerged from the interviews. I categorised my list of respondents by level of analysis, and I came up with three Excel sheets. The summarised version of respondents' profiles was done in English, but each interview then was linked to the detailed files (either interview transcription or interview notes) in Vietnamese. Respondents were anonymised, coded and numbered in different categories, such as GO1 (government officers), NGO2 (non-government organisations practitioners), LH3 (life history respondents), PV4 (photovoice participants), or ID5 (in-depth interview respondents).

When coding my empirical data, I employed a coding process comprising two steps. At first, I read the Vietnamese interview transcription or interview note files, identified common themes/sub-themes, underlined the texts and grouped the texts with the same themes/sub-themes together. The themes/sub-themes were recorded in English since it was easier for me to refer back to them during the writing process. Having completed the first round of coding with all the interview, I imported the common themes/sub-themes in the Excel file (in English). The theme codes are often generic and short, while the sub-theme codes can be more specific and longer. After that, I compared the sub-themes codes across gender, age group and between lay people and local authorities. This was especially crucial in this research since I worked with a nested case study encompassing multiple levels of governance. It was useful for me to compare individual or household perspectives within a level (mostly at the local level) since it gave me an idea of how each social identity such as gender, age group, social class (including economic status and political influence) contributes to differentiating my respondents' access to land and forest and to what extent gender plays a role in this process. I then compared individual perspectives across different levels (mostly between national and provincial levels, and national and local levels) to address connections and how far the view from above tallied with my understanding of what was going on below. For example, a useful thing I discovered was the invisibility of REDD+ as it was understood by policy-makers at the village level. Comparing individual perspectives also enabled me to capture the dynamics and nuances of claims made by various social actors regarding resource access and governance, such as who should have rights to access to what and why. One, for example, might claim that s/he had rights to access a certain plot of forested land because

it had been abandoned by the Forest Company for a while and they invested labour converting it into a coffee plantation, while others might argue that the same plot was reserved for afforestation and not to be encroached on in any way.

It is worth acknowledging the analytical framework that informed my data collection. In this research, I was interested in two frameworks: a discourse analysis and a narrative analysis. As part of this proposed research involves collecting data on gender-related debates at the national, provincial and local levels, I found discourse analysis useful to understand how and why different social actors talked differently and where these discursive terms came from. Narrative analysis, meanwhile, helped to make sense of the way ordinary people in the village crafted their 'selves' (Kondo 1990) and organised their life course through the stories they told as well as the multiple layers of meaning revealed within my interviews with them.

During data coding, I employed mostly thematic analysis to identify the themes that emerged from, or were silent in, the data. Discourse analysis and narrative analysis, in my data analysis process, came at a later stage. In most cases, thematic and narrative analysis were overlapping, but the latter was more useful in dealing with life history interviews and the former more suitable for in-depth interviews. When comparing individual perspectives across levels, discourse analysis was most efficient as it helped to contextualise and conceptualise these individual experiences within my research inquiry. Apparently, certain discourses were translated from global policy texts of REDD+ into the context of Vietnam, such as the universal call for women's participation in REDD+, but it was also down to the grassroots actors to decide how and to what extent these discourses would be adopted in policy and in practice.

There were several challenges for me to operationalise my theoretical interests in gender, for example, to come up with questions that might allow me to analyse or see gender in the data collected. Initially, during the first few interviews, I found it hard to see how gender elements manifested in my respondents' perceptions. For them, women's and men's rights and responsibilities in relation to land and forest were not distinct. This, then, contradicted my presumption about clear-cut gender divisions of labour in forest communities in Asia and the Central Highlands of Vietnam in particular. At the end of my field trip, especially after my photovoice project with both male and female participants was over, I had the chance to compare individual perspectives and started to trace the gendered relations in and across all the areas of my enquiry. Apparently, gender was not as easily captured by thematic analysis as everything else. Instead, I found that I needed to make a gender-sensitive analysis of local narratives of land and forest claims

as well as national discourses of gender considerations in REDD+. More importantly, it was not gender *per se* that led my data analysis or my final presentation of this research. Rather, my analysis and interpretation were led by critical concern over how and to what extent accounts of resource access and governance were gendered and socially differentiated and how these in turn related to contemporary political processes and historical experiences of the relations between the community and the state in this specific area.

3.4. Research contexts

In this section, I will introduce my research location, especially its involvement in REDD+ and its political, socio-economic and cultural conditions. I spend more time discussing the national and provincial levels in this section; the local level is briefly mentioned and will be returned to in Chapters 5 and 6.

3.4.1. Vietnam (National level)

According to the Vietnam Forestry Development Strategy 2006-2020, the total forest area of Vietnam was 12.61 million ha (forest cover of 37%), including 10.28 million ha of natural forest and 2.33 million ha of plantation forest. This area of forest was divided into three categories: Special-use forest (1.93 million ha, making up 15%), Protection forest (6.20 million ha, 49%) and Production forest (4.48 million ha, 36%). When forest cover is expanded, its quality tends to decline, especially with natural forest. The report compiled by Vietnam REDD+ Office shows that 'over two-thirds of Viet Nam's natural forests are considered poor quality or recovering quality, while rich and closed-canopy forest constitutes only 4.6 percent (in 2004) of the total and mostly located in the remote mountainous areas. Also, as stated in the report by the National Forest Inventory, Monitoring and Assessment Program (NFIMAP), between 1999 and 2005 the area of natural forest classified as rich decreased by 10.2% and medium forest reduced by 13.4%'.[15]

Vietnam has been supported by the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme and the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility project to build capacities for REDD+ implementation since 2008. Apart from these two multilateral initiatives, international donors also funded various REDD+ pilot projects in chosen provinces in Vietnam. According to the Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP), the National REDD+ Steering Committee and Vietnam REDD+ Office were established in January 2011 under the authorisation of the Prime

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[15] See Vietnam REDD Office, REDD+ Strategy and REDD+ Readiness, Sub-section on Role of Ethnic Minorities, available online at http://vietnamredd.org/Upload/CMS/Content/Introduction/REDD%20strategy%20and%20REDD%20readiness-final.pdf.

Minister and were responsible for coordinating and supporting all REDD+ related activities. In October 2010, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) decided to integrate REDD+ into the National Forest Development and Protection Plan for the period 2011-2020 (FCPF, 2011:36).

Prior to the arrival of REDD+, resource access in the Vietnamese uplands was shaped by a long history of colonisation, war, poor inter-ethnic relations and various efforts of the Vietnamese state to allocate land and forestland to individual households and communities in the uplands. Previous research shows that struggles over forest and forested land are visible in various scales of governance, from the household to the national level (for example, Zingerli 2003, 2005). As such, they have been as much about nation-building and territorialisation as much as resources *per se*. Locating these multi-scale struggles within the policy frameworks of REDD+ and other global and national environment projects, hopefully, helps to advance our knowledge of how Vietnam, as a member of REDD+, is gearing up into the Implementation Stage as well as how it has coped with environmental issues and natural resource governance.

3.4.2. Lam Dong Province (provincial level) and Kala Tongu village (local level)

According to the official website of REDD+ Vietnam, the major areas of loss of natural forest during the period from 1991-2001 were in the Central Highlands and the northwest. This loss is likely to become more severe as the main drivers of deforestation and forest degradation are still visible in these areas. For instance, the R-PP states that 'with relatively high forest cover remaining and good soils, such areas will come under further pressure from agricultural expansion and therefore are highly relevant for REDD+' (FCPF, 2011: 38).

Lam Dong Province is the only province selected to participate in both phases of UN-REDD Vietnam Programme. The first phase was implemented in both Hanoi and Lam Dong Province from 9/2009 to 6/2012, while the second phase (which was extended to six pilot provinces including Lam Dong) started in 7/2013 and lasts for five years. The UN-REDD Vietnam Programme in Lam Dong Province was led by MARD and supported by the Norwegian government. The main implementing agencies include the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the United Nation Development Program (UNDP), the United Nation Environment Program (UNEP) and Lam Dong Provincial People's Committee.

Apart from the importance of Lam Dong Province in Vietnam's REDD+ map, I specifically attend to the historical and social background of this particular province. Socio-culturally speaking, Lam Dong Province still houses a number of local ethnic groups that practise both matrilineal and patrilineal-based systems of resource management and use. Understanding the contexts of Lam Dong Province is useful to make sense of what is happening in gendered access to resources in Lam Dong and what kind of issues REDD+ may face.

In Lam Dong Province, the local (or indigenous) ethnic groups are the main forest-dependent communities and the oldest owners and users of natural forests. The dominance of matrilineal groups and gendered patterns of land inheritance and post-marriage residence is an interesting demographic characteristic of various ethnic groups originated from Lam Dong Province, such as Jarai and K'ho people. Moreover, Lam Dong Province used to be the destination for many resettlement programs funded by the State, aiming to foster economic growth in the Central Highlands during the 1970s. Statistics show that the total population of the Central Highlands doubled to three million over the two decades after 1975, of which one million were migrants (Hardy, 2000: 24). In Lam Dong Province alone, the population doubled to 488,000, and the proportion of Kinh people grew from 65 to 76 percent between 1976 and 1989 (Déry, 2000: 56). The coming together of different communities in the resettlement areas facilitated a greater degree of socio-cultural integration between indigenous ethnic minorities, migrants and state companies on the one hand; and on the other, created a new set of conflicts around forest and forestland. For example, To et al.'s (2013) research shows that there is an overlap in forestland claims among various stakeholders, especially between the indigenous ethnic community and State Forest Enterprises (now known as State Forest Companies).

The political context of Lam Dong Province and the Central Highlands of Vietnam is further complicated by the historical connection between uplanders and indigenous political movements after the American war, especially FULRO. FULRO stands for *Front Unifié de Lutte des Race Opprimées* (or the United Struggle Front for the Oppressed Races), an ethnic-nationalist group with a strong connection to Christianity and active in the Central Highlands since 1964. FULRO used to be a real security threat for the Vietnamese Communist government and any political movement or actions taken by uplanders in the Central Highlands was easily associated with FULRO, especially after 1975.[16]

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[16] For more details, refer to Human Rights Watch (2002).

During the early 2000s, there was a number of riots in the Central Highlands led by separatist groups seeking to reclaim the land of indigenous people from the Communist government and establish an independent state for indigenous people called Dega (or Degar). Although Lam Dong Province was not the main base of these uprisings and their leaders, it created a serious tension between the state and indigenous people in Lam Dong as well as in other provinces in the Central Highlands. Since then, indigenous land rights and conflics between indigenous people and the state over territory and natural resources in the Central Highlands and in Lam Dong Province in general have always been identified by the Vietnamese state as national security concerns. As such, resource access in these areas has been over-shadowed by the conflicts of forestland claims and, as a result, other interesting aspects of resource access, including gender, are seldom acknowledged.

Kala Tongu village, meanwhile, is one of two villages which has been prepared for REDD+ site-based action plans by the UN-REDD Vietnam Program since 2009. As explained earlier, the second phase of the UN-REDD Program is expected to conclude the Readiness Stage of REDD+ in the pilot provinces, so REDD+ activities will be extended to other provinces from 2018 onwards.[17] The timeframe of the UN-REDD Program fitted nicely with my fieldwork duration and partially motivated me to choose this village. Moreover, I had planned to choose a village with more experience of REDD+ and REDD+-like activities. According to RECOFTC (2014), Kala Tongu villagers have been involved in three forest schemes: (1) all households in the village have been protecting 500 ha of natural forest (Community Forest) allocated to them since 2011 and receiving payment from PFES through the provincial government; (2) a number of selected households have signed leasing contracts with the Bao Thuan Forest Company to protect both the grown and natural forests under the Forest Company's management; and (3) on top of the previous Community Forest schemes, the whole village has received extra technical and financial support thanks to their involvement in the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme Phase 2, also known as the REDD+ pilot project. Choosing this community as a case study and linking it to the national contexts of forestry and environmental policies and projects in Vietnam, I expect to gain a deeper understanding of how gender plays out in resource access at various levels, from the individual to the national.

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[17] Refer to Annex F for more details about UN-REDD Vietnam Programme activities in Lam Dong Province.

3.5. Summary

This chapter introduces my case study and the research strategies to collect data from a nested case study. As this research aims to examine gender in resource access in one particular forest community and link these gendered accounts to the national and sub-national contexts of forestry policies in Vietnam, it is crucial to employ a qualitative-based methodology. Moreover, a focus on gender requires more daily-based interaction and observation with my local informants. My research design, therefore, was oriented around in-depth interviews, participant observation and life histories, which offered a close-up take on the communities being studied. I also conducted a photovoice project to better understand local perceptions of land and forest access, as well as how it was embedded within their everyday practices and illustrated through photos and accompanying stories. There are many several challenges that need to be addressed and constantly reflected upon while doing qualitative research, especially positionality and ethical considerations. Being a female researcher from outside this ethnic community, I found it more difficult to recruit and conduct in-depth interviews with male respondents due to the gender and ethnic bias as well as culture differences. However, being a female researcher also facilitated my entry into this community in a more intimate manner, through my female respondents. In the next chapters, the main characteristics of this case study will unfold in relation to issues of gender and resource access. Particularly, Chapter 4 will present the global, national and local structures of gender and REDD+; while Chapters 5 and 6 will introduce the basic sociological characteristics of the village and the gendered accounts of resource access at the local level.

Chapter 4. Global, national and local structures of REDD+: from a gender perspective

This chapter provides a brief overview of how gender in REDD+ is framed and developed in global and national fora. This sets the context for discussion of how gender plays a role in resource access at the local level. The first section of this chapter aims to document how gender considerations have emerged in the process of designing and piloting specific action plans with countries involved in REDD+. It also reviews criticism that has a tendency to essentialise gender considerations and emphasise women's participation in forestry and development projects as a one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) requirements on gender considerations. The second section introduces the current situation of safeguard compliance in Vietnam. The third and longest section seeks to contextualise gender in REDD+ from three viewpoints: the politics of decision-making around REDD+ at the national level, the local structures of forest governance, and the legal frameworks of gender and forestry in Vietnam. These three aspects of gender in REDD+ are situated within a broader debate on gender, women's participation and state perceptions of modernity and development in Vietnam. I make the link between the attempt to address gender in policy and in practice of both governmental and non-governmental stakeholders in REDD+ on the one hand, and the actual situation of gender mainstreaming in other sectors prior to REDD+ on the other. The chapter concludes with a summary of Chapter 4 and a short introduction to Chapters 5 and 6.

4.1. Gender and REDD+: a global perspective

This section seeks to review how global documents related to REDD+ address gender issues. The purpose of this section, however, is not to provide an exhaustive list of international laws, agreements, international REDD+ safeguards and standards being developed by relevant international donors and funding programs and how they engage with gender equality. Rather, I limit my discussion to the official documents published and endorsed by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that might implicitly or explicitly address gender issues, and any outputs produced by two international multilateral initiatives, namely the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme (a collaborative project between UNDP, UNEP and FAO) and the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF, a project funded by the World Bank), both of which were actively involved in the Readiness Stage in REDD+ countries.

It is noticeable that gender has been acknowledged by both the literature and global conventions and agreements on climate change, environmental conservation and sustainable development prior to REDD+, and the Cancun Agreements 2010 on Environmental and Social Safeguards (including gender). A review of discourses on gender, women and climate change (Arora-Jonson 2011) shows that while there are certain differences in perceptions about how women and men in developed and developing countries contribute to climate change, women often find themselves to be more vulnerable and lacking in decision-making power within governance structures. Accordingly, the need for gender equity and full participation of both men and women is subsequently included in most relevant multilateral conventions and agreements. For instance, in one of the early multilateral agreements on environment conservation, the Convention of Biological Diversity (1992: 2) recognises,

> the vital role that women play in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and affirms the need for the full participation of women at all levels of policy-making and implementation for biological diversity conservation.

Article 1 (p.3) mentions that one of the objectives of this Convention is to conserve fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilisation of genetic resources. Although 'fair and equitable sharing' stands out as the main principle, there is no further mention of gender equality in this Convention. It seems that the recognition of women's full participation is the strongest and the most explicit manifestation of mechanisms to address gender equity.

REDD+, with its focus on environmental conservation, sustainable management and livelihood development, is effectively built upon previous conventions and agreements. However, gender considerations were not officially mentioned until 2010 during the Conference of the Parties (CoP 16) of UNFCCC resulting in the Cancun Agreements. Since this section centres on gender considerations in REDD+ at the global level, I will focus on how language on gender considerations has evolved from the time of the Cancun Agreements to today. The Cancun Agreements, signed at the UNFCCC CoP 16 in 2010 in Cancun, Mexico, is the first and most important document pertaining to REDD+ Safeguards and gender considerations. Among various documents produced at CoP 16, the texts directly relevant to safeguards and gender considerations are included in the Outcome of the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on long-term Cooperative Action under

the Convention (AWG-LCA). It specifically acknowledges seven key principles to 'promote and support' social and environmental safeguards in REDD+ (hereafter Cancun Safeguards):

> When undertaking [REDD+] activities, the following safeguards should be promoted and supported:
> a)   That action complements or is consistent with the objectives of national forest programmes and relevant international conventions and agreements;
> b)   Transparent and effective national forest governance structures, taking into account national legislation and sovereignty;
> c)   Respect for the knowledge and rights of indigenous peoples and members of local communities, by taking into account relevant international obligations, national circumstances and laws, and noting that the United Nations General Assembly has adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP);
> d)   The full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, in particular indigenous peoples and local communities;
> e)   That actions are consistent with the conservation of natural forests and biological diversity, ensuring that the [REDD+] actions are not used for the conversion of natural forests, but are instead used to incentivise the protection and conservation of natural forests and their ecosystem services, and to enhance other social and environmental benefits;
> f)   Actions to address the risks of reversals;
> g)   Actions to reduce displacement of emissions.
> *Source: UNFCCC Decision 1/CP.16, Appendix I, p.26*

There are several references to gender as part of REDD+ social safeguards in the AWG-LCA. Specifically, Paragraph 72 (FCCC/CP/2010/7/Add.1, p.13) requests that,

> developing country Parties, when developing and implementing their national strategies or action plans, to address, inter alia, the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, land tenure issues, forest governance issues, **gender considerations** and the safeguards identified in paragraph 2 of appendix I to this decision, ensuring the full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, inter alia indigenous peoples and local communities. [my emphasis]

Meanwhile, Paragraph 130 (page 22) on Capacity Building further explains that:

> capacity-building support to developing country Parties should be enhanced with a view to strengthening endogenous capacities at the subnational, national or regional levels, as appropriate, taking into account **gender aspects**, to contribute to the achievement of the full, effective and sustained implementation of the Convention. [my emphasis]

These quotations are two of eight references to women and gender in Cancun Agreements, which were seen as the most positive signs for feminist observers. For example,

in their press release, the Women's Environment and Development Organisation (WEDO) expressed that the Cancun Agreements marked a significant step in UNFCCC history, as there was no language on gender issues in the climate debate two years ago.[18] The fact that CoP 16 was led by two women (UNFCCC Executive Secretary Christiana Figueres of Costa Rica and CoP President Patricia Espinosa of Mexico) might have contributed to this crucial change (Campense 2011: 6).

A closer look at Cancun Safeguards, however, reveals a less optimistic vision regarding the potential of this multilateral agreement on addressing gender. The Cancun Safeguards make explicit reference to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and gender aspects to ensure the 'full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders'. What remains implicit is how these principles can be operationalised on the ground. For example, there is no explicit definition of what 'full and effective participation' means for those concerned and no guidance on how to interpret or bring these gender considerations into practice, or how to 'take into account gender aspects' in building capacity in developing countries.

The lack of clarity in the Cancun safeguards, however, must be situated within the global criticisms over REDD+. As Bee and Sijapati-Basnett (2016: 1) note, the Cancun Safeguards were adopted in response to the emerging concern of international researchers and social activists that the 'infusion of financial capital through global environmental projects would exacerbate inequalities among already vulnerable groups'. The Cancun Safeguards, despite the weak language and vague instructions, formed the basic foundation for further efforts to strengthen gender-related initiatives in the following meetings of the Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC. The next meeting in Durban in 2011, for example, included 'gender considerations' and 'gender-sensitive' approaches in most of the crucial decisions on capacity building, selection of board members, governance and management structures, operation of the Green Fund as well as the development of national action plans.

Meanwhile, UNDP, UNEP and FAO, together with the World Bank, have been leading two multilateral initiatives, namely the United Nations-REDD Programme (UN-REDD Program) and FCPF, to support developing countries, including Vietnam, to design REDD+ action plans at the national level and implement REDD+ pilot projects or REDD+ demonstration activities at the sub-national and local levels. These two multilat-

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[18] See http://wedo.org/cancun-climate-agreements-taking-great-strides-for-womens-rights-and-gender-equality/.

eral initiatives have commissioned and published a number of documents related to gender analysis in REDD+. The UN-REDD Vietnam Programme, thanks to its role in supporting safeguards compliance and SIS development of REDD+ countries, has paid a great deal of attention to social safeguards in the last few years (SNV 2016: 13). Since 2012, UN-REDD's Social and Environmental Principles and Criteria (SEPC) were published and subsequently adopted by the UN-REDD Global Program's Policy Board as a guiding framework for REDD+ safeguards, which specifically emphasised the need to promote and enhance gender equity and women's empowerment. The following year (2013), UN-REDD issued guidance on the gender-sensitive approach in REDD+ (see Box 2), whose objective they saw as being 'to **promote** gender sensitive REDD+ processes and support UN-REDD Vietnam Programme partner countries and stakeholders in the preparation, development and implementation of gender sensitive national REDD+ strategies' (my emphasis; UN-REDD Vietnam Programme, 2013: 1).

Box 2. Key steps to achieve gender sensitive approach (UN-REDD Vietnam Programme, 2013: 1)

Step 1: Establish a Baseline through a Gender Analysis

Step 2: Mobilise Gender Expertise and Create Partnerships

Step 3: Ensure the Effective Participation of Women

Step 4: Ensure a Gender Sensitive REDD+ Strategy

Step 5: Monitor and Report on Gender Mainstreaming

This document, despite its extensive discussion of the rationale of a gender-sensitive approach and the key steps to achieve it, does not offer much to 'support countries in the monitoring and reporting of REDD+ safeguards and to attend to issues such as women's rights, livelihoods and participation in REDD+' (Bee and Sijapati-Basnett, 2016: 2). Guidance on gender-sensitive REDD+ has not fully developed.

Similar to the Cancun Agreement, the language used in most of UN-REDD's documents (i.e. 'promote') shows a weak commitment to prioritise gender, gender equity and equality in REDD+. Furthermore, these documents are dominated by general and technical recommendations. On the one hand, this makes it more difficult for countries involved in REDD+ to adopt and develop their own strategies and action plans. On the other, it gives them space to improvise, encouraging a country approach to safeguards (CAS), which is seen as favourable by REDD+ countries. The general framework for

reporting on REDD+ environmental and social safeguards, however, is not completely absent. Specifically, in addition to the Cancun Safeguards in 2010, developing countries are required to develop and update a national-level Safeguards Information System (SIS) to provide information on how safeguards (including gender considerations) have been addressed and respected throughout the implementation of activities. It was not until the meeting of UNFCCC in Warsaw in 2013 (COP 20) that it was decided that the summary of information (SOI) on safeguards[19] had to be submitted before the results-based payments for REDD+ countries could be officially triggered (Decision 9/CP19 Paragraph 4). During the latest meeting in France in 2015 (COP 21), further instructions as to what developing countries should provide in their SOI were agreed. These include:

> -Information on national circumstances relevant to addressing and respecting the safeguards;
> -A description of each safeguard in accordance with national circumstances;
> -A description of existing systems and processes relevant to addressing and respecting safeguards, including the SIS;
> -Information on how each of the safeguards has been addressed and respected
> -Any other relevant information on the safeguards
> *Source: UNFCCC, Decision 17/CP.21 Paragraph 5*

Overall, we can see the ambiguity of safeguards and gender particularly in REDD+ from a global perspective. There was a clear interest in promoting and enhancing gender considerations as REDD+ safeguards from the conference of parties of UNFCCC, starting with the Cancun Safeguards in 2010. This interest then developed into a more systematic framework where ensuring gender equality was addressed in the subsequent decisions of UNFCCC and the publications of UN-REDD Program. However, this interest has not resulted in an official commitment from either international agencies or countries to respect gender equity and equality. It is evident that no specific guidance for gender considerations in REDD+ was properly developed by either the UNFCCC or the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme in the period 2011 to 2016. Meanwhile, the results-based finance of REDD+ required countries to report on how REDD+ safeguards (including gender considerations) were addressed and respected through SIS. In other words, countries have been struggling with REDD+ safeguarding compliance: they were not told what they should do, but were required to report on what they have done so as to get the payments.

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[19] The document required to access results-based finance is a summary of information (SOI) on safeguards, not the fully-developed safeguards information system (SIS). However, without specific guidance, it is up to each country to decide what they would like to include in both the safeguards information system and the summary of information on safeguards.

This leaves room for countries to manoeuvre, but also creates gaps and confusion while they attempt to mainstream gender in REDD+ on top of their existing policies on gender equity and resource governance. The following section will deal with these issues from a national perspective, taking Vietnam as a case study.

4.2. Safeguards and gender in REDD+: A country approach

This section aims to provide an overview of the REDD+ process in Vietnam through its institutional structures and current pilot activities. Second, it offers a brief look at how Vietnam, as a REDD+ country, approaches safeguards and develops its own mechanisms to meet the UNFCCC requirements. In doing so, it also points out the potential implications of a country approach to safeguards on gender-related activities within REDD+. Thus this section lays out the context for further discussion of how attention to gender is manifested in policy and actual forestry projects of REDD+ in Vietnam.

4.2.1. Overview of REDD+ in Vietnam

The involvement of Vietnam in REDD+ dates back to February 2008 after it expressed its strong commitment to join REDD+ to the UNFCCC Secretariat. Since then, Vietnam has developed the National REDD+ Program through its participation in the World Bank FCPF and the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme. In addition, there have been various REDD+ pilot projects funded by international donor agencies, such as the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV), the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) in different provinces of Vietnam to prepare for REDD+'s actual implementation. As a global initiative, REDD+ design and implementation involves various stakeholders, both governmental and non-governmental ones. Figure 1 further explains how the current institutional arrangement of REDD+ works in Vietnam.[20]

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[20] For more details on the stakeholders of REDD+, see Annex D.
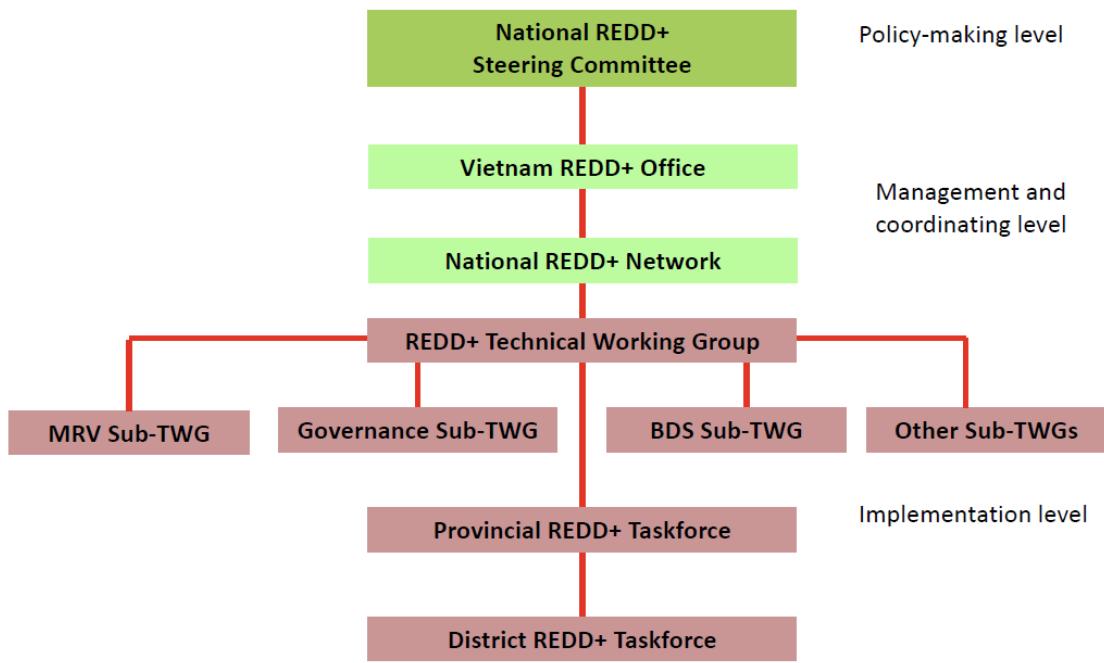
Figure 1. Institutional arrangement of REDD+ in Vietnam
(Source: www.vietnam-redd.org)

In terms of funding, a review conducted by Forest Trends (2015) shows that total committed funds for REDD+ during 2009-2014 were US$84.31M. 24 projects were completed with total committed funds of US$18.65M; 20 projects are on-going with total funds of US$65.66M; and 6 large projects including UN-REDD Vietnam Programme Phase I and Phase II (US$4.38M and US$30.23M respectively), Vietnam Forest and Delta Program (VFD) (US$9.42M), World Wide Fund (WWF) Carbi project (US$5.14M), FCPF-REDD+ project (US$3.8M), and REDD+ potential area identifying projects (US$6.4M). The main donors for REDD+ Readiness 2009-2014 in Vietnam are listed below.

Donors	Nations	Committed finance (Mil.	Number of projects
AUSAID	Australia	0.08	1
BMUB	Germany	9.02	4
BMZ	Germany	1.48	1
Danida	Denmark	0.35	1
DEFRA	United Kingdom	0.36	2
FORMIN	Poland	0.67	3
JICA	Japan	10.52	2
NORAD	Norway	3.49	12
SDC	Sweden	0.15	1
USAID	America	11.97	4
Total	10	38.07	31

Table 2. International donors involved in REDD+ Readiness Stage in Vietnam
*(Source: REDD+ Finance Flow in Vietnam in 2009-2014, Forest Trends (2015),
cited in MARD (2016: 14))*

4.2.2. Safeguards and gender considerations in REDD+

As pointed out in Section 4.1, UNFCCC requirements for safeguards emphasise developing Safeguards Information System (SIS) at the national level to report on how REDD+ countries have addressed and respected Cancun Safeguards. In Vietnam, there has been discussion of safeguards and safeguards compliance centres on how to establish and develop SIS nationally. Following Cancun Safeguards and in consultation with relevant stakeholders, Vietnam has been working towards a nationwide approach to safeguards and SIS. The commitment is evident in most of the related outputs such the meetings of Sub-Technical Working Groups of Safeguards, face-to-face interview with REDD+ officers and publications (i.e. reports and training manuals) about safeguards compliance in Vietnam. It is agreed that necessary mechanisms to identify, collect data and report on

REDD+ Safeguards activities have not been properly set up at the national level or through the sub-national level pilot projects in Vietnam. Among the key results of the Readiness Stage in Vietnam until 2016, the current status of safeguards compliance and SIS development is not mentioned. More specifically, 'the Safeguards Information System and National REDD+ Information System are being developed, but have not been institutionalised yet' (MARD 2016: 62). The delay in establishing a functional system to implement and monitor safeguards compliance is partially attributed to the lack of guidance by the UNFCCC, as noted in the previous section. This, meanwhile, makes it less straightforward to trace how gender considerations are being addressed and respected in the REDD+ Readiness Stage in Vietnam. The main purpose of this research is not to evaluate how gender considerations have been integrated into the REDD+ processes in Vietnam. It looks instead at how different stakeholders (at various levels) perceive gender, where the mismatch is and why it is the case. The section now turns to how a nation-wide approach to safeguards is adopted by the government of Vietnam, followed by a discussion of what the government understands as the implications of safeguards for REDD+ Readiness in Vietnam.

In responding to the need to address safeguards in REDD+ implementation during the Readiness Stage, a training manual on a country approach to safeguard and SIS development was published by Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV), with input from other organisations and consultative groups (REDD+ Vietnam and Climate Change Law and Policy). According to this document,

> a 'country approach to safeguards' (CAS) is a general term that describes the elements and processes undertaken, by countries to meet safeguard requirements for REDD+ under the UNFCCC, and other relevant initiatives and institutions. Country approaches are characterised by identification, application and improvement of existing governance arrangements for REDD+ – such as policies, laws, regulations (PLRs); institutional arrangements and information systems and sources – to meet the different safeguards requirements a country may choose to adopt. (SNV, 2016: 15-16)

Building upon the existing governance arrangements for REDD+, a country approach to safeguards is believed to effectively deal with safeguards requirements set by UNFCCC and other donors, and at the same time, help countries to retain national sovereignty and customise other domestic development goals (SNV, 2016: 17).

The current situation of REDD+ safeguards and SIS development in Vietnam can be found in the newly-published report by SNV and Pan Nature (Rastall and Nguyen 2016). Accordingly, the decision to adopt a country approach to safeguards and how it

should be done was the result of various negotiations at the national level, mostly through open meetings of the Sub-Technical Working Group on Safeguards and close discussion with a consultative team hired by the Vietnam REDD+ Office. This sub-technical working group was established in 2012 to tackle issues related to safeguards on the national level and to share information about pilot projects on the ground. It also aimed to support the development of a Safeguard Roadmap (2014), which presents a preliminary analysis of potential choices, prioritising areas and recommendations for addressing REDD+ safeguards in accordance with national circumstances in Vietnam. Prior to this, the first round of assessing Vietnam's policies, laws and regulations (PLRs) was conducted. This exercise aimed to evaluate whether Vietnam's existing PLRs were compatible with and capable of meeting the requirements of the Cancun Safeguards, as well as to identify any legislation and institutional gaps. Until the end of 2015, through several meetings of the working group, a second round of PLRs assessment and initial work on the design of the SIS began.

Currently, neither the country-led approach to safeguards nor the actual SIS has been fully developed in Vietnam. Specifically, the responsible institutions, legal frameworks and actions to address and respect Cancun Safeguards at the national level are not available to relevant stakeholders of REDD+ in Vietnam and international donors. It is also noted that since the National REDD+ Action Plans of Vietnam (NRAP) are currently under revision, the future shape of safeguards measures is likely to change depending on the new NRAP.[21] In other words, while the major steps for a country-led approach to safeguards have been taken, it is anticipated that the finalised SIS and safeguards measures might look different towards the end of the Readiness Stage (Rastall and Nguyen 2016: 36).

The current situation of safeguards compliance and SIS development helps to inform us as to how the government situates gender considerations in the REDD+ national action plans and other pilot projects carried out by multilateral initiatives or international donors. In other words, global and national contexts of safeguards might affect how stakeholders perceive gender considerations in REDD+. At the global level, UNFCCC expects countries to translate the Cancun safeguards in accordance with their national circum-

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[21] The new PRAP (2017-2030) has been approved by the Prime Minister on April 5 2017, also known as Decision 419/QĐ -TTg (refer to Vietnam REDD+ Office (2017) New climate change commitment: Approval of National REDD+ Action Programme (2017-2030), available online at http://www.vietnam-redd.org/Desktop.aspx/News/157/1274/).

stances. As pointed out in section 4.1, criticisms are around the absence of specific guidance on the scope, means and processes to meet the requirement of UNFCCC, both in safeguards compliance and gender considerations. However, it seems that this lack of guidance is intentional, to give space for countries to decide how to approach this task.

Since there is not (so far) a clear process for translating safeguards in national contexts and mapping out possible pathways to achieve them, it is likely that these will not be prioritised in national action plans. At sub-national and local levels, this might result in a lack of attention to gender by policy-makers and REDD+ officers. However, gender considerations are seen as a weak point in institutional structures of Vietnam and therefore are more likely addressed by separate projects of international donors and UN-REDD Vietnam Programme during the Readiness Stage. As will be discussed later, this has been the case in Vietnam.

4.3. Contextualising gender in forestry and REDD+ in Vietnam

The dynamics amongst relevant stakeholders regarding safeguards and gender considerations reflect the fuzziness of the REDD+ process in Vietnam, in which non-carbon components, such as social safeguards and gender considerations, are often put aside. It also reveals the institutional gaps in gender and forestry governance in Vietnam. In the following sub-sections, I will explore how negotiations on safeguards and SIS uncover the politics of decision-making related to REDD+ in Vietnam, as well as the mismatch between gender policies and actual progress in gender mainstreaming in REDD+ and development initiatives in Vietnam. The last section explores possible ways through which gender considerations and REDD+ safeguards compliance can be linked to broader debates of governance and development in Vietnam.

4.3.1. Politics of decision-making around REDD+ at the national level

It is believed that having a functional institutional arrangement for REDD+ is seen as one of the desired outcomes during the Readiness stage, as shown in the latest self-assessment report of the Readiness Package by Vietnam Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD 2016). While the necessary institutional arrangement for REDD+ has been in place since 2009 (with the establishment of the National REDD+ Steering Committee and Sub-Technical Working Groups), the politics of decision-making regarding REDD+ at the national level are likely to influence REDD+ outcomes. This can be observed

through how different stakeholders (governmental and non-governmental ones) are involved in shaping REDD+-related policies, and more specifically, in negotiating how and to what extent safeguards should be taken into consideration in policy and in practice.

As shown in Figure 1, only the National REDD+ Steering Committee (with administrative support from Vietnam REDD+ Office (VRO)) can serve as the policy-making body. The National REDD+ Network by nature is more inclusive, but members in the network can only participate in management and coordination. This is where conflicts of interest arise, as feedback from actors/stakeholders involved in National REDD+ Network about gender and other social safeguards might not be translated into existing policies. My observations from policy fora that have taken place at the national level help to identify what sorts of problems emerge between various stakeholders of REDD+. For example, during one of the first meetings of the Sub-Technical Working Groups on Safeguards which I attended in March 2015, the representative from an international research and advocacy organisation on forestry issues, asked VRO to explain in detail the process of collecting feedback from non-government actors on the Safeguards Roadmap in 2014. They received the response that VRO held a meeting on 27th March 2014 to ask for feedback, and also emailed participants. Therefore, VNFOREST (the decision-making body of the forestry sectors) had to ratify the document to meet the timeframe. In the following meeting in September 2015 to discuss the forming of REDD+ core groups to support National REDD+ Steering Committee and VRO in policy-making, the same questions were asked. Various participants, mostly representatives from NGOs, posed the most crucial questions. Firstly, they wanted to know which institutions would be in charge of how feedback was received, integrated and translated into outputs for discussions during the process of implementing REDD+ at national and local levels. Secondly, how was this information relayed to people at higher levels of governance. However, no adequate response from VRO representatives was offered at that meeting.

The frustration of NGO practitioners with government bodies could also be observed in my subsequent interviews with them. According to one NGO representative, mechanisms to address and integrate feedback from NGO to national and sub-national REDD+ policy texts are far from clear and transparent. As he said:

> Previously we participated in the meetings very frequently ... After the ratification of current REDD+ documents, we could see that our feedback was not reflected in those, and we were a bit disappointed with that … We do not mind contributing our ideas, but the crucial thing is whether these discussions are go-

ing anywhere, or [whether the government] just does this to meet the requirement regarding stakeholders' participation, and the final decision still lies within VNFOREST.

Having our feedback recorded in the meeting's minutes might not mean anything, if the results of discussion [between the government and NGOs] are not integrated into actual policies. For example, now we are adjusting NRAP and SIS of Vietnam, I wonder if the results of discussion during the last meeting will be in there. (Interview with NGO4, 2016)

Another NGO representative, meanwhile, further explained what an effective feedback mechanism might look like to mobilise civil society's participation. According to her, stakeholders would be more active if there was a transparent mechanism for feedback in which the government had to be accountable. At the moment, the sub-technical working groups, for her, are more like seminars or workshops, not real working groups. This is because feedback from stakeholders is collected and recorded within these government-led meetings, but might not be addressed or taken into consideration.

Government officers from VRO, however, seemed to have different views and procedures in handling feedback from these meetings. While they did not manage to respond adequately to NGO practitioners during the meetings of Sub-Technical Working Group on Safeguards, in another meeting of Sub-Technical Working Group on Governance in April 2015, VRO made a short presentation about the function of REDD+ networks and sub-technical working groups as well as the role of VRO. The network is to remain open and serve as a platform to share information and feedback for managers (MARD Management Board and donors). VRO's stated objective is to collect information from sub-technical working group meetings and report to managers through National REDD+ Steering Committee meetings.

My interview with a governmental officer revealed their challenges as a 'broker' between non-state agencies and policy-making agencies such as VNFOREST and MARD. According to her, the first challenge comes from the nature of the sub-technical working groups being too open and diverse. In her view, since the participants are quite diverse and not all of them are knowledgeable on technical aspects of REDD+, these groups merely serve as a platform to share information. Therefore, VRO plans to form a core group to discuss technical issues before bringing them to the sub-technical working group. Another challenge lies within the institutional function of VRO and mechanisms of reporting and supporting between VRO and the higher level of governance. VRO is in charge of collecting, processing and reporting feedback to VNFOREST, but everything must come under a 'package', which means that they can only report to their Management Board after they finish discussing with other stakeholders and synthesise their feedback.

In terms of safeguards and Safeguards Information System (SIS), VRO aims to build up the framework for SIS, but they need to go through necessary steps from identifying info needed, assessing current forms of reporting safeguards to proposing the tentative framework for SIS. As such, for VRO, it is the timeframe that matters most in feedback mechanisms. Also, VRO find it challenging, as a managing and coordinating body, to select the feedback to be integrated in policies as well as to achieve a balance amidst diverse ideas, feedback and criticisms from stakeholders:

> I am sure you know this [reporting to the higher level of governance] is a sensitive issue, and the important thing is who should report and how we should report. In other words, it's not about what we have done, but how we did it so our 'bosses' could approve … I do not know which REDD+ documents other NGO people have mentioned about when they said their feedback was not reflected. We recorded all ideas contributed by the participants. You might know that it's very difficult to deal with safeguards, because any stakeholders could participate and there are diverse and multi-dimensional opinions concerning safeguards. For us, the information receiver, we need to filter the information. For example, some NGOs are very interested in the issue of gender, ethnic minorities, rights, customary laws, indigenous knowledge, etc. We know that. But, when it comes to national policies, we have to be balanced. That is why we are willing to listen to their opinions. However, it is difficult for us to integrate these issues at the national level.
> (Interview with GO2, 2016)

The politics of decision-making in REDD+ with the dominance of state actors and the focus on cooperation between state and non-state actors in implementation rather than in policy formation have been discussed in previous studies. For example, Huynh and Keenan (2017: 4-5) point out that 'Vietnam's political decision-making process is often described as either consensus-based or simply confusing and inexplicable' and this was conditioned by 'the long history of 'democratic centralism' under Marxist-Leninist philosophy'. Due to this 'decision-making culture,' it is always challenging for non-state actors to influence policies, especially concerning politically sensitive issues such as ethnic minorities, natural resources and indigenous rights. REDD+ safeguards inevitably cut across all politically sensitive issues and therefore, decision-making regarding REDD+ is still very much under the surveillance of the state. It might be argued that there have been certain positive signs, as REDD+ and REDD+-related policy fora (meetings of sub-technical workings groups, for example) have facilitated a dialogue between state and non-state actors, especially NGO practitioners, on politically sensitive issues under the umbrella of 'REDD+ safeguards'.

Most NGO practitioners, however, expressed pessimism on the potential influence of non-state actors in the process. This situation is not specific to REDD+. In Vietnam, giving feedback to the government simply does not exist. Often, NGO practitioners only give an opinion if they are specifically asked because the role of NGOs is to support the government to implement development projects, not to challenge or criticise it (Pham et al. 2014). In my case study, NGOs' reflection on their role and voice in REDD+ shows that although many NGOs working on environment and development in Vietnam have strong motivations and are able to mobilise the right discourses and resources to engage in the REDD+ process, they struggle to influence policy making. On the other hand, it shows that the state seeks to demonstrate their efforts in bringing civil society and local communities to the table and allowing them to participate. However, whether this participation is 'full and effective' is still questionable.

4.3.2. Local structures of forest governance and gendered implications

While the institutional arrangement of REDD+ reflects legitimate structures and procedures that influence the politics of decision-making between state and non-state actors in Vietnam regarding social safeguards and gender considerations in REDD+, it does not reflect how and where local communities, as REDD+ stakeholders, fit into the picture. As evident from my own case study, the actual institutional arrangement of certain REDD+ pilot projects does not necessarily follow standardised structures. In other words, the collaboration between different governmental bodies in implementing REDD+ varies across projects and pilot sites. This is because REDD+ is often piloted in areas where other forestry projects have been implemented or are still going on, and therefore, the stakeholders and organisational/monitoring mechanisms of those different projects are often overlapping, or sometimes identical.

In the case of Kala Tongu village, as pointed out in Chapter 3, there are three different forestry or forestry-related schemes going on in the village: UN-REDD Vietnam Programme Phase 1 and 2 (2009 to 2015), Community Forest (2011-now) and a forest leasing contract between local villagers and the Bao Thuan Forest Company.[22] It is worth noting the politics of site selection here, as there might have been pressure from the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme for Kala Tongu village to be involved in various forest protection and development schemes. This community was involved in UN-REDD Vietnam Programme Phase 1 in 2010. During that time, some households in Kala Tongu village

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[22] The three forestry schemes will be further discussed in Chapter 5.

were already contracted by Bao Thuan Company to protect the forest owned and managed by the Forest Company. Along the way, Bao Thuan Company agreed to allocate 500 ha of natural forest to Kala Tongu community to protect (also known as Community Forest). The Decision on allocating the forest to local community was signed in 2011, and the villagers protected it on a voluntary basis for more than a year, until the PFES funding came in 2012. Although both forest officers in the Forestry Bureau (Di Linh District) and the Bao Thuan Forest Company referred to the site selection as a mutual agreement, it seems that early involvement with UN-REDD Vietnam Programme and close alliance between the village headman, the male leaders of forest patrolling group, and local forest officers from 2010 onwards could be factors too. The politics of site selection are likely to be gendered as it is decided and facilitated through a male alliance, although on the surface it appears to be a gender-neutral process. Community Forest and the forest leasing contract scheme are organised through patrolling teams made up from a group of households. Most of the team leaders and patrolling members are male, and hence the decision-making and managing roles lie within a group of male villagers.

A Community Forest Management Board (CFMB) was established through village meetings, and the positions were standardised by MARD, including chair/vice chair, secretary-cum-accountant and leaders of Community Forest patrolling teams through Decision 106/2006/QĐ-BNN dated 29 November 2006.[23] In the case of Kala Tongu, the only position filled by a woman is the secretary/accountant. It does not seem common for women to be involved in actual decision-making regarding forestry projects at the local level. This CFMB was initially established to manage the Community Forest. Since a number of households in Kala Tongu village were contracted by the Bao Thuan Forest Company to protect the forest owned and managed by this Forest Company, the CFMB is also in charge of selecting and nominating households who supply (male) labour for patrolling the Bao Thuan Forest Company's forests. Forest Company officers normally accept the nominations of the CFMB and sign a contract with the village head to employ these nominated households as forest guards. In terms of forest tenure, Kala Tongu community owns the 500 ha Community Forest and the Bao Thuan Forest Company own the surrounding forest (see Figure 2).

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[23] Refer to Linh Chi (2014) *Phát triển rừng bền vững: dựa vào cộng đồng sẽ thành công*, Dan Viet online, 23 July 2014, available online at http://danviet.vn/nha-nong/phat-trien-rung-ben-vung-dua-vao-cong-dong-se-thanh-cong-461670.html.
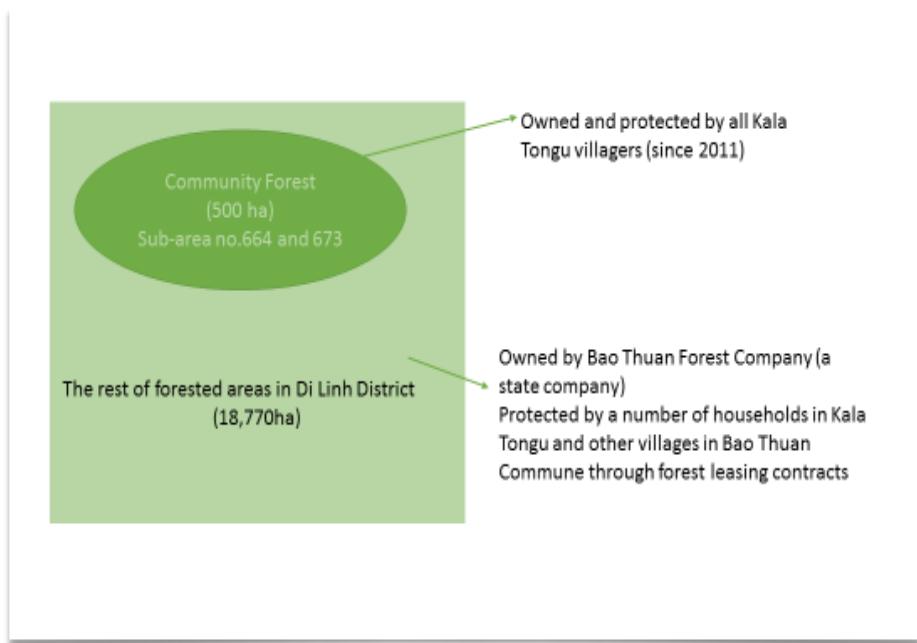
Figure 2. Mapping forest tenure in Kala Tongu village

Wherever Community Forests are allocated, the state requires a village Management Board to be formed. However, the Management Board is not a part of the government and cannot hold funds. It operates under the Commune People's Committee to manage forestry-related activities in the village. It is not an autonomous institution with official or legal powers and needs to work with and be supported by other forestry stakeholders. The Management Board receives technical and legal support from the Di Linh District Forestry Bureau and Bao Thuan Commune Forestry Board (belonging to Bao Thuan People's Committee). The Forestry Bureau represents the central government and oversees both forestry activities and forest owners' performance in the region. The Bao Thuan Commune Forestry Board, meanwhile, monitors the activities of patrolling groups and payments to individual households.

When UN-REDD Vietnam Programme first conducted its pilot projects in Lam Dong Province and Kala Tongu village, it relied on existing governance structures in the village. However, the scope and mechanisms of collaboration between UN-REDD Vietnam Programme and other local forestry stakeholders varied depending on the nature of activities conducted. During Phase 1, as UN-REDD Vietnam Programme focused on FPIC, the benefit distribution system and training workshops for village facilitators, a top-down approach was employed in which UN-REDD officers and experts went into the village and conducted the training themselves, or villagers and local authorities were invited to workshops in Lam Dong Province. At that stage, the REDD+ Taskforce at Lam

Dong Province (Lam Dong Provincial Programme Management Unit) was the main contact and coordination point. When the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme moved into Phase 2, since its aim was to support local villagers to propose and develop their own site-based REDD+ action plans, there was a need for a governing body in the village to coordinate and follow up on the implementation of action plans. In the final draft of Kala Tongu Village site-based REDD+ action plans, the institutional arrangement was also identified, as seen in the below diagram (see Figure 3).
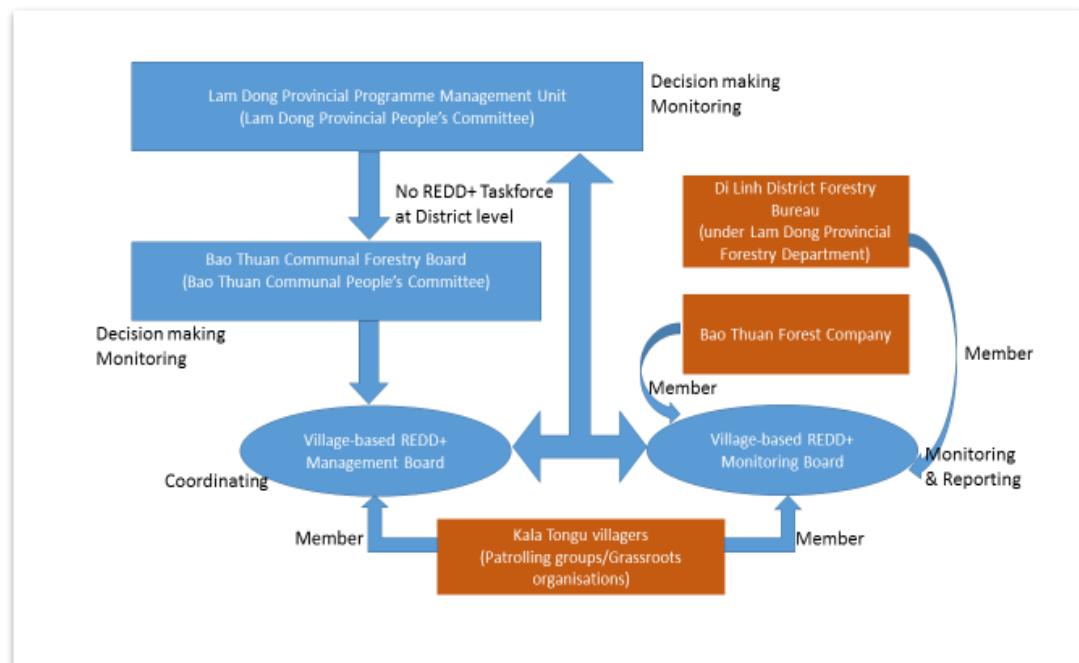
Figure 3. Local structures of REDD+ in Kala Tongu case (in theory)

From Figure 3, the role of the District People's Committee is not visible, as the village REDD+ Management Board is under the Monitoring Board and the Monitoring Board is supposed to report directly to the Lam Dong Provincial Programme Management Board.

While there is no restriction on who should be in the Management Board and Monitoring Board, the initial six members of the action plan designing board might have formed the main part of this new Management Board. The members of the Monitoring Board, meanwhile, are not known. When I was in the village, I did not get any information about this Monitoring Board and who were the members of it. In theory, the Monitoring Board in Vietnam (for forestry and/or development projects) is chaired by the chairperson

of Fatherland Front and comprised of representatives from other organisations. In practice, many villages (including Kala Tongu) might take different positions in various grassroots organisations due to the personnel shortage and limited capacity. It is likely that one might be involved in the initial action plan designing board (established to design the first draft of site-based action plans), the Management Board (established to coordinate the action plans) and/or the Monitoring Board (established to monitor the operation of Management Board, collect feedback and report the progress of project activities). Moreover, the involvement of the Bao Thuan Forest Company and Di Linh District Forestry Bureau forest officers as members of the Monitoring Board (as suggested by Figure 4) might not reflect reality. From my interview with these forest officers, they were mostly involved with facilitating the entry of UN-REDD officers to the village. As such, there is still a lack of an independent body to monitor the project activities in the village. It is noted that this independent body would not necessarily be formed in every village with REDD+ project activities, but might instead help to monitor a number of pilot projects. Figure 4 illustrates the local structures of REDD+ governance in Kala Tongu.
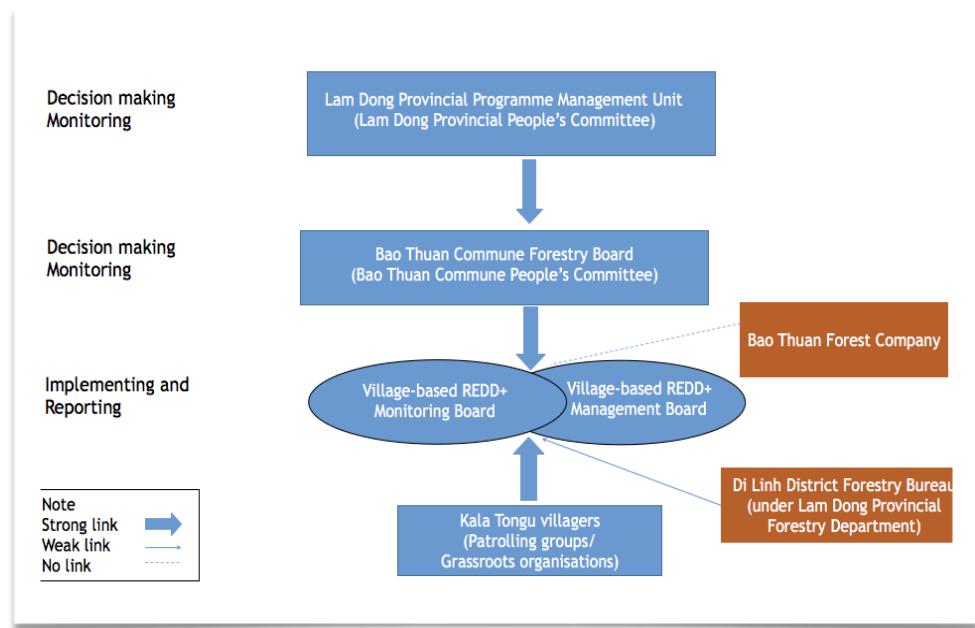
Figure 4. Local structures of REDD+ in Kala Tongu (in practice)

Since the site-based action plans include three different components (forest protection, forest development and livelihood development), and with the influence of UN-REDD Vietnam Programme, the members of Management Board (and Monitoring Board) might

include women (representatives of Women's Union). In Kala Tongu, there were two representatives of the Women's Union involved in the Action Plan Designing Board from the beginning. They were invited to represent the community and ethnic minority women in political and project meetings to report about how their community and particularly how ethnic minority women have been actively participating in forest protection. The involvement of two women in the village-based forestry governance body, in my view, was partially due to the requirements set by UN-REDD Vietnam Programme about women's participation during REDD+ pilot activities. This was especially in workshops with villagers for FPIC and site-based REDD+ action plans. In most of these meetings, it was stated that a certain percentage of participants should be women. According to my empirical data, this varied from 25 to 30 percent depending on the size and purpose of each meeting. While women in Kala Tongu village have been participating in both forestry governance body and project meetings, the day-to-day administration and decision-making about who could access the forest (including participating in PFES and borrowing from the village development fund), as mentioned earlier, stayed within a group of male villagers led by the village head and his subordinates (the indigenous leader, the chairman of farmers' union and leaders of patrolling teams). When asked about their own experiences in attending these meetings, one of the two women who was in the Action Plan Designing Board did not even remember what it was. It seems that their involvement was only highlighted in the meetings where REDD+ national officers and local authorities attended so as to illustrate the achievement of REDD+ pilot projects in engaging women.

This is not to say that women are intentionally or totally excluded from forestry schemes and REDD+ pilot projects in Kala Tongu village. In fact, the reluctance of women to participate in managing (and making decision on) forestry projects, as I will show in Chapter 5, is influenced by a number of factors including their cultural interpretation of gendered forest rights, responsibilities and knowledge. What is more important is that, while at the national level, negotiation about safeguards and gender considerations between governmental and non-governmental bodies is on-going and efforts to mainstream gender to REDD+ pilot sites have been made, these efforts do not necessarily reflect or align with the actual socio-political and cultural situation on the ground.

4.3.3. Policies, Laws and Regulations (PLRs) for gender, forestry and REDD+

The institutional arrangement of REDD+ design and implementation helps to identify decision-making bodies where gender considerations should be brought in. It can also be used to trace the actions committed and/or taken by each of these decision-making bodies,

and highlight the mismatch between existing legal structures and national and local realities as REDD+ comes in. In the following section, I will re-visit existing policies, laws and regulations pertaining to gender and forestry in Vietnam to provide some background on why it is not operationalising.

My observation shows that while the laws on gender equality in Vietnam are quite advanced, forest policies and other policy areas rarely make reference to gender considerations and even pull against gender equality aims. The arrival of REDD+ and its associated frameworks, including Cancun Safeguards on gender and Safeguards Information System, imposes a gender mainstream challenge for forest policies in Vietnam. Interestingly, REDD+ also creates a lively platform for relevant stakeholders to 'rediscover' the advancement of PLR(s) in Vietnam concerning gender equality and the gaps between the overall laws on gender equality and policies on forest protection and development. Although the laws on gender equality in Vietnam are meant to cover all sectors, they seem to be applied weakly to forestry sector prior to REDD+ pilot projects in Vietnam.

To begin, the Vietnamese National Assembly passed the Law on Gender Equality in 2006 to ensure equal rights to women and require the adoption of gender strategies by each ministry. Following the Law on Gender Equality, the National Strategy on Gender Equality for the period 2011-2020 was issued as a legal tool to promote and enhance gender equality and women's empowerment. The Law on Gender Equality was also channelled down to the provincial level through Resolution 11-NG-TW 'Policy for women in the period of industrialisation and modernisation'. The Resolution specifically called upon the Women's Union as the focal point in providing support, promoting and monitoring the implementation of activities pertaining to gender equality (UN-REDD Programme Vietnam, 2013).

As mentioned earlier, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) has been acting as the key decision-making and implementing agency of REDD+ in Vietnam. After the Law on Gender Equality 2006 were implemented, the ministry also established its own gender strategy for the period 2011-2015 (UN-REDD Programme Vietnam 2013). This strategy identified the necessary measures to address gender equality and assigned the specific roles for each unit and department to achieve the ministry's target in gender equality. Together with the national effort to integrate the Law on Gender Equality into the relevant ministry (mostly MARD), the passing of the Vietnam Forestry Development Strategy (2006-2020) (together with Decision 18/2007/QĐ-TTg, dated 5 February 2007) also brought about exciting opportunities to mainstream gender in forestry sector as it also recognised the needs for capacity building within the

forestry sectors. The Vietnam Forestry Development Strategy (2006-2020) is the most fundamental policy document through which the National REDD+ Action Program (NRAP) could be developed and implemented. Since the Vietnam Forestry Development Strategy (2006-2020) recognised the need to institutionalise gender mainstreaming, technically, it would make it easier for Vietnam to propose a feasible National REDD+ Action Plan that meets the Cancun Safeguards on gender considerations.

In reality, despite its strong foundation, the early version of Vietnam NRAP (dated June 2012) did not include the need to mainstream gender in REDD+. Given the lack of specific guidance on what 'gender considerations' might mean for REDD+ process, it was not surprising that the official document of REDD+ at the national level missed out this crucial point. Seemingly, the Vietnam NRAP failed to acknowledge the advancement in gender equality of the Vietnam Forestry Development Strategy (2006-2020). In other words, ensuring safeguards was not the priority in this document.

The NRAP focuses on the countries' role in preparing for REDD+ implementation and is considered the guiding document for developing each Provincial REDD+ Action Plan (PRAP). PRAPs are expected to correspond to the specific ecological, socio-economic and cultural contexts of each province as well as its potential contribution to the success of REDD+. As the NRAP did not arrive at a clear action plan on gender mainstreaming at the national level, that might have affected other PRAPs, including Lam Dong PRAP. According to the Gender Analysis of Lam Dong's PRAP (2015), gender equality and women's empowerment considerations have been neglected in the PRAP formulation and all six components of PRAP.[24] Furthermore, women's role in addressing drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, conservation, sustainable use and management of forests and forest development have not been acknowledged. However, the Lam Dong PRAP occasionally refers to safeguards and gender equality in its main content. For example, in Article II (p.23) on the key tasks for the period 2014-2015, the PRAP calls attention to capacity building of local communities, ethnic minorities and women for strengthening their active participation in forestry and REDD+ activities (UN-REDD Vietnam Programme 2015). In this case, the PRAP might find itself aligned with Cancun Safeguards and the priority of paying specific attention to local communities and vulnerable groups such as women and ethnic minorities.

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[24] The six components in PRAP include legal and practical framework; objectives, scope, stakeholders and key activities; policies and measures; budget; implementation arrangement; and monitoring and evaluation.

Seemingly, the existing PLR(s) of gender equality and forest governance and the current institutional set-up and operations are adequate to support the promotion of gender equality in forestry sector and in REDD+. Here the dilemma of mainstreaming gender into REDD+ related policy documents are twofold. On the one hand, the existing PLR(s) are too ambitious to be realised within REDD+ alone. On the other hand, the progressive gender elements in the existing PLR(s) cannot find their way into relevant policy documents of REDD+ including NRAP and PRAP. This is despite the fact that gender considerations were already recognised in Cancun Agreement in 2010, a year before the first draft of NRAP.

4.3.4. Gendered implications of UN-REDD Vietnam Programme and other REDD+ pilot projects

As shown above, with the existing legislative foundations, especially the Laws on Gender Equality, there are possibilities for gender considerations to be integrated in the REDD+ related policy documents. At the moment, however, gender considerations are still not institutionalised in the Vietnam NRAP. This is partially due to the fact that the national frameworks of REDD+ are still under negotiation to better align with other forestry protection and development plans as well as development goals in Vietnam. However, it is noted that this is not limited to the forestry sector. In fact, gender considerations are yet to be institutionalised in national policies in other sectors. Furthermore, I argue that since governmental and decision-making bodies of REDD+ are mostly concerned with other technical issues of REDD+ to meet the requirement for result-based payments, safeguards and gender considerations are often more of interest to the NGOs and international donors. In a way, it can be a mutually beneficial deal for involved institutions in REDD+. For the governmental bodies, giving space for NGOs and international donors in other non-prioritised areas such as safeguards and gender considerations shows an effort of GoV in creating and nurturing an inclusive process of REDD+ design and implementation. For the NGOs and international donors, they can utilise their expertise and capacity to conduct certain gender-related components in their pilot sites and generate lessons and recommendations, which might or might not be taken into consideration by governmental bodies in formulating REDD+ related policies.

UN-REDD Vietnam Programme

In this sub-section, I focus on REDD+ related activities of the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme, which has been working with various ethnic minorities in Lam Dong Province

to support building capacity related to safeguards. Among the expected outcomes of UN-REDD Vietnam Programme Phase 2, Outcomes 3 and 5 mention safeguard activities. The six outcomes of UN-REDD Vietnam Phase 2 Programme, according to UNDP website, are summarised as follows:

> • Outcome 1: Capacities for an operational National REDD+ Action Programme (NRAP) are in place
> • Outcome 2: The six pilot provinces enabled to plan and implement REDD+ actions
> • Outcome 3: National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS) for Monitoring and Measurement, Reporting and Verification and National REDD+ Information System (NRIS) on Safeguards are operational
> • Outcome 4: Stakeholders at different levels are able to receive positive incentives
> • Outcome 5: Mechanisms to address the social and environmental safeguards under the Cancun Agreement, established
> • Outcome 6: Regional cooperation enhances progress on REDD+ implementation in the Lower Mekong Sub-Region.[25]

In reality, from 2009 to 2015, UN-REDD Vietnam Programme Phase 1 and 2 has implemented various demonstration activities in Lam Dong Province and Kala Tongu village. By the end of 2015, due to some delay in meeting its objectives, Phase 2 was extended for three more years, and it expects to finish by the end of 2018.[26]

One of the main channels to mainstream gender in REDD+, as envisaged by UN-REDD, is through consultation with local communities or conducting FPIC (Free, Prior and Informed Consent) at the local level. The manual on FPIC (Edwards et al., 2012: 4) provides an overview of FPIC and why it is important to conduct FPIC with local communities in REDD+ countries:

> FPIC can be described as the establishment of conditions under which people exercise their fundamental right to negotiate the terms of externally imposed policies and programs that directly affect their livelihoods or wellbeing, to which they may give or withhold their consent... REDD+ has provided an opportunity to highlight the importance of the right to and need for people's consent to externally designed projects and their implementation: both in terms of ensuring the success and sustainability of the REDD+ initiative itself and respecting local peoples' right to say "yes" or "no" to any proposed development.

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[25] Refer to UN-REDD Vietnam Programme (United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries) Phase II, available online at http://www.vn.undp.org/content/vietnam/en/home/operations/projects/environment_climatechange/un-redd_vietnam_programme_phase_2.html
[26] Refer to the Annex F for a summary of UN-REDD Vietnam Programme activities in Lam Dong Province.

As shown above, UN-REDD Vietnam Programme expected that encouraging local participation (particularly women's) in REDD+ implementation would help to address gender considerations. Commenting on FPIC and gender considerations, a government officer mentioned that when working with stakeholders at the local level on FPIC, they aimed to invite as many local people involved in forest protection as possible. They specifically paid attention to gender ratios and age groups to acknowledge both gender issues and participation of vulnerable groups. She also noted that in the monitoring and evaluating frameworks and indicators, the percentage of female participants was clearly indicate4d (Interview with GO2, 2016). These monitoring and evaluating indicators, as I subsequently found out, were recommended by UN-REDD Vietnam Programme based on their Gender Analysis of Lam Dong Provincial REDD+ Action Plans (2015) and partially applied in their pilot projects in Lam Dong Province. They have not, at the time of data collecting, been made compulsory in a national policy document.

There were a number of contrasting opinions about the actual implementation of FPIC in Vietnam and its effectiveness in addressing and respecting social safeguards. NGO practitioners, especially those who worked extensively with ethnic minorities groups, did not seem to agree with how FPIC process was conducted in Vietnam. To quote one NGO practitioner, "FPIC in Vietnam is not real FPIC that I would imagine and expect" (Interview with NGO3, 2016). When she joined a team to evaluate FPIC process in Lam Dong Province in 2010, she learnt that the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme made a lot of adjustments to the standardised procedures of FPIC. As a result, local communities were informed, but not consulted. Although her comments are mostly concerned with ethnic minorities/indigenous rights not being respected, it poses the questions of whether FPIC in Vietnam could have actually served as a platform to mainstream gender when it was not properly conducted.

Another NGO representative offered a broader context of FPIC process in Vietnam, its challenges and reasons it was criticised by NGO practitioners in Vietnam. According to him, UN-REDD Program Vietnam was the first agency to implement FPIC in REDD+ without any specific guidance. In his view, the problem was that they conducted FPIC in too many pilot sites and within a very short timeframe. Moreover, he also claimed that when the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme conducted FPIC, they only chose communities that fitted the label of 'vulnerable or marginalised groups' such as ethnic minorities, and intentionally ignored the Kinh migrant communities. These targeted communities were then treated as a homogenous group. For example, men and women were invited to the same meeting, or the poor and less educated households were put together in the same

meeting. According to him, this approach does not correspond to specific needs and contexts of participants and thus affects the final result of FPIC (Interview with NGO4, 2016).

My empirical data show that villagers in FPIC pilot sites were not well informed of what FPIC was. Kala Tongu village was among the 78 villages in Lam Dong Province where UN-REDD Vietnam Programme Phase 1 conducted FPIC between January and June 2010. By early June 2010, an evaluation and verification team was formed to evaluate the FPIC process. The team only visited four villages to interview villagers about the FPIC process, and Kala Tongu village was not included. Thus Kala Tongu villagers were only involved in one two-hour-meeting with UN-REDD Vietnam Programme Phase 1 officers. When I went to the village, no-one remembered taking part in FPIC process, except for the man selected to be a local facilitator, who received training about REDD+ by UN-REDD Vietnam Programme Phase 1. What Kala Tongu villagers actually remembered was the recent activities of UN-REDD Vietnam Programme Phase 2 during which they were invited to village meetings to discuss site-based REDD+ action plans. It seems unlikely that villagers in other FPIC pilot sites can remember what happened during their two-hour-long engagements with UN-REDD Vietnam Programme officer.

The contexts of FPIC in Vietnam were mentioned again during my meeting with a government officer, who admitted there were many flaws in the implementation of FPIC as her team was under pressure from international donors to pilot FPIC in as many sites as possible. According to her, the initial objective of FPIC in Vietnam was to create a role model for UN-REDD to learn and to produce general guidelines for other REDD+ countries on the FPIC process in REDD+.[27] As a result, the required timeframe for participants to process information and make decisions in FPIC was shortened and so what FPIC is, how to implement it and its main targets of FPIC were not clear to the implementers (i.e. UN-REDD Vietnam Programme Phase 1) (Interview with GO1, 2016). FPIC in Vietnam, as such, was conducted prior to the ratification of Cancun Safeguards and did not function as an effective channel to mainstream gender, as there were many issues about its structure.

There is certainly a lot of politics around the FPIC process in Vietnam, which explains why NGO practitioners are sceptical of FPIC in Vietnam and the possibility of

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[27] Lessons learned from FPIC pilot experiences undertaken by the UN-REDD Programme in Vietnam and Indonesia were shared at the *Second UN-REDD Programme Regional Workshop on FPIC Shared Learning* in Indonesia in April 2012 and subsequently used to draft the Guidelines on FPIC of UN-REDD Programme in January 2013.

addressing gender through FPIC. Both UN-REDD Vietnam Programme and the implementing agency of FPIC were open about the challenges of being the first country to implement FPIC without specific guidance and a lack of clear understanding of FPIC. NGO practitioners, meanwhile, attempted to argue for a more authentic FPIC, grounded on a respectful view of indigenous rights that was closely aligned with the original spirit of FPIC and Cancun Safeguards on full and effective participation of involved stakeholders. Within that context, mainstreaming gender through FPIC were not seen by NGO practitioners as sufficient, since gender tended to be overshadowed by other aspects of social safeguards in Cancun Safeguards, especially indigenous or ethnic minorities' rights over land and socio-political participation.

Other REDD+ pilot projects in Lam Dong and other provinces

Apart from the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme, gender considerations in REDD+ have been integrated in other REDD+ pilot projects in Lam Dong and other provinces. Attention to gender in these projects, however, varies depending on the geographical locations of pilot sites, ethnic composition of local communities and agendas of donors (or implementing agencies). A brief look at their perceptions and approach to gender and REDD+ helps us to understand how gender considerations are taking shape in REDD+ pilot projects in Vietnam. During my fieldwork, there were two REDD+ Readiness initiatives that showed different levels of attention to gender: these were funded and implemented by USAID and JICA respectively. USAID-funded projects aimed at providing gender training workshops for both local authorities and communities in Lam Dong and Nghe An Province (through Lower Emissions in Asia's Forest or LEAF)[28] and Nghe An, Thanh Hoa and Long An Province (through Vietnam Forest and Delta or VFD)[29], while JICA focused on supporting the development of Provincial and Commune REDD+ Action Plans and their implementation to the village level in Dien Bien Province (Northwest Vietnam)[30].

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[28] Refer to USAID-LEAF, Gender leadership and safeguard training, available online at http://www.leafasia.org/events/gender-leadership-and-safeguards-training; and USAID-LEAF Final Report 2011-2016, available online at http://www.leafasia.org/sites/default/files/public/resources/USAID-LEAF-FinalReport-April2016.pdf

[29] Refer to USAID-Vietnam, Performance Evaluation Brief, Vietnam Forests and Deltas, USAID supports Vietnam's transition to climate-resilient, low-emission sustainable development, available online at https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PBAAE656.pdf

[30] Refer to JICA, Two new pilot sites added for REDD+ Pilot Implementation, available online at https://www.jica.go.jp/project/english/vietnam/004/news/general/130305.html; and JICA, Outline of the SUSFORM-NOW Project, available online at https://www.jica.go.jp/project/english/vietnam/004/outline/index.html

The targets of LEAF were mostly provincial decision-makers to strengthen the capacity of forestry institutions in gender and safeguards relating to climate change. This was very much a top-down approach, as according to one project coordinator, the funding was limited and the training workshops were conducted in English; therefore, the participants had to be selective. In the case of Lam Dong, only one female officer participated in a series of training workshops with LEAF gender experts. She claimed that this training helped her to change the conventional way of raising awareness amongst ethnic communities about climate change, for example, using mass media and posters to convey the message to non-Kinh villagers (Interview with GO4, 2015). However, as she (and her institution) did not participate in the REDD+ process in Lam Dong Province, there was no further influence on existing policies observed.

The second and on-going project funded by USAID (in collaborative with Winrock International), Vietnam Forest and Delta (2012-2017), covers three provinces and targets the local communities themselves. One significant difference of this project is that a gender and youth expert was there to support the pilot activities. Moreover, VFD is not only about REDD+ as it also looks at enhancing capacity for upland communities to manage forest through PFES and for delta communities to respond to natural disasters caused by global warming. According to one project officer of VFD, gender considerations are can be tackled in various aspects: PFES and livelihood development. Unlike LEAF, the approach is more bottom-up and community-based, as it aims to integrate gender into everyday life activities of local communities and adjust them depending on the specific contexts of each project site.

Regarding PFES, the payment is seen by forestry authorities as men's income as they are the main labour force involved in forest patrolling and protection. As such, PFES seems to benefit only men. However, in the VFD's approach, PFES has to be seen as household income for both men and women. While conducting training for women about their rights in PFES and how the benefit should be distributed, VFD aims to advocate equal benefit i.e. both husband and wife within a household should have their names on the PFES contract (Interview with NGO1, 2015). The result of this approach is unclear as there is no published follow-up assessment yet. The household contract with both spouses named as beneficiaries is also proposed by a female government officer as a way to mainstream gender into forest protection schemes. However, my observation from Kala Tongu suggests that the forest contract is normally signed between the village head and the forest owner (normally the Forest Company) accompanied by a list of households

and the area of forest allocated. In the list of households, the head of the household is named, as they are also the main patrolling members of the household.

Livelihood-related training and development programs is another channel to look at gender issues in VFD activities. The conventional perspective of project implementers in Vietnam holds that for technology-based and high demand in terms of physical labour, men should be the main target. As a result, livelihood development activities often involve males only, while women are not invited or are not able to attend due to their domestic duties. This is not how VFD designs and promotes livelihood-related activities. According to one project coordinator, after working with both upland and lowland communities, Kinh and ethnic minorities groups, she realised that each community has their own perception of gendered labour contribution; therefore, one model of livelihood promotion might not work in different geographical areas. In order to address the gender and cultural aspects of each pilot sites, she found it useful to hold small meetings with women and men to explore community characteristics, provide sufficient information for the community and bring in suitable project activities (Interview with NGO1, 2015). A female government officer also noted this gendered division of labour in agricultural and forestry economies, and how UN-REDD Vietnam Programme eventually tried to address this in their project design during Phase 1 (Interview with GO1, 2016).

From ensuring gender participation through FPIC to conducting training workshops for decision-makers and working with communities in mainstreaming gender, UN-REDD Vietnam Programme and USAID have taken different steps and targeted different stakeholders in their gender-integrated activities. At the moment, however, two problems emerge that are mainly concerned with the sustainability of these efforts when the pilot projects and international funding end and the possibility of these pilot projects feed into the policy-making process of REDD+. My observations at various open meetings between Vietnam REDD+ Office and other stakeholders show that gender-mainstreaming projects are rarely shared. This might be because these projects are still on-going and therefore the official reports are unavailable; gender implications of the projects are seen (by implementing agencies) as subtle; or international donors that funded the projects are not actively engaging with policy meetings chaired by VRO. USAID-funded projects fall into the last category. The LEAF project was not publicly known, partially because initially USAID was not even included as an international donor in the National REDD+

Networks.[31] On the official website of REDD+ in Vietnam, reports on gender components or lessons from mainstreaming gender of each project are not readily available. It seems that a structure for sharing lessons and informing decision-making regarding how to mainstream gender in REDD+ is not in place. As I have explained earlier, the politics of decision-making add another layer of challenge for transforming lessons and experiences of non-governmental stakeholders and local communities' expectations of safeguards compliance into policy.

In other cases, gender considerations and necessary actions to be taken are interpreted differently. For example, for JICA-funded REDD+ pilot projects in Dien Bien Province, the project managers and local authorities seemed to be more interested in showcasing what they did to encourage local participation in REDD+. While different issues on how to integrate REDD+ with PFES, how to run REDD+ at different levels and how to secure livelihoods of forest dwellers were discussed during the final workshop in 2015, there was no report on how social safeguards (including gender equity) were measured and monitored. According to the project coordinator, gender was not seen as a big issue in the communities because women of ethnic groups in the two villages of Dien Bien's REDD+ pilot project participated in the project.[32] The involvement of women in REDD+ activities seemingly represents success in ensuring gender equality, which is also shared by a government officer. According to her, gender was not the main problem for REDD+ in Vietnam since there have been as many female officers involved in REDD+ as male ones at national and sub-national level. Furthermore, when she conducted field research at the local level (including Lam Dong Province), women in the village were quite vocal and active in meetings and discussions related to REDD+ (Interview with GO2, 2016). Overall, gender considerations in REDD+, from the perspective of government officers and some international donors, are all about 'women's participation' (Bee and Sijapati-Basnett 2016). As I have shown in 4.1, this is the predominant assumption in gender and climate change debates at global level. In this sub-section, it becomes clear that this global discourse has a significant influence on government officers' and international donors' (i.e. JICA) perceptions in Vietnam.

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[31] As I started my fieldwork in Vietnam, I was referred to the coordinator of LEAF and subsequently learnt about it through a personal connection.

[32] Personal communication with one project coordinator, September 2015.

4.4. Rethinking gender, women's participation and development in Vietnam

The above discussion illustrates how governmental and non-governmental stakeholders perceive safeguards and gender considerations in different ways. On one side, the GoV is taking a firm stance on developing a country-approach to safeguards (CAS) and making use of support available from UN-REDD Vietnam Programme and other NGOs to meet UNFCCC requirements of safeguards. As CAS requires multiple steps and is anticipated to be an inclusive and participatory process, in Vietnam, CAS is still not completed. Gender considerations in REDD+, therefore, are not institutionalised yet. Also, as UNFCCC requirements of safeguards cut across a wide range of environmental and social issues, ensuring safeguards in REDD+ are likely to be of interest to non-governmental stakeholders including NGOs and researchers.

Institutionally, the sub-technical working group on safeguards serves as an open and legitimate platform for non-governmental stakeholders to negotiate with government and decision-making bodies for a better recognition of safeguards in REDD+ processes. Non-governmental stakeholders are also more proactive in proposing and executing safeguard-related activities, to attract (and realise) their targeted sources of funding, to generate lessons for wider application and ultimately to feed into policy-making. While they might focus on safeguards in REDD+, different non-governmental stakeholders might have their own approach to gender. My observations at different meetings of sub-technical working groups and interviews with representatives of involved organisations in REDD+ and safeguards in particular reveal that gender-related activities are dependent on the implementing agencies, agenda of donors and limited timeframes of pilot projects. Among a total of forty-four projects of REDD+ Readiness from 2009 to 2014, there were only two projects detailing clear gender outcomes (UN-REDD Vietnam Programme Phase 1 and 2, and USAID-funded LEAF) and one on-going project integrating gender components and hiring a gender expert to mainstream gender in their activities. The poor institutional capacity for gender mainstreaming in terms of personnel, knowledge and interest in tackling gender equality and women empowerment seems to be common in REDD+-related institutions. Recent research conducted by CIFOR shows that 'in 2012, only 2 out of 52 organisations (3.8%) interviewed had appointed a gender expert to join their REDD+ team and by 2016 it had increased to three (5.7%)' (Pham et al., 2016: 7). The lack of gender experts in REDD+ institutions is closely linked to interest in mainstreaming gender within the organisations, as 'two thirds of the organisations working on REDD+ in Vietnam expressed low or moderate concern for gender issues and demonstrated low or medium capacity to address such matters' (Pham et al., 2016: 8). Thus, in

the context of REDD+, it is likely that gender is not one of the main priorities in policy-making, pilot projects and institutional arrangements.

Analysing gender and REDD+ in Vietnam shows that having gender provisions in national and sectional policies itself is not enough to ensure gender equality as long as the Law on Gender Equality has not been addressed and respected in everyday life. This is because laws and policies on gender equality are often constrained by other socio-cultural and political factors in specific localities. As I will show in the next chapter, in Kala Tongu village, due to its matrilineal structures, gender equality and women's empowerment might be perceived differently by local people and therefore the outcome of gender mainstreaming efforts might take a different shape in comparison to other patrilineal-based communities.

Despite the fact that gender attention is seldom translated into actual progress in gender equality and women's empowerment prior to and during REDD+ Readiness Stage, analysing relevant stakeholders' views and responses to the call for gender considerations in REDD+ helps to better understand how gender, in some cases, is shaped by donors' agendas and how politics of decision-making play out in determining which areas are included in or excluded from forestry and other socio-economic development plans in Vietnam. While governmental and decision-making bodies selectively focus on issues that are considered technical, less politically sensitive and macro-based such as designing NRAP or SIS, they also attempt to demonstrate their commitment to combating gender inequality and ensuring full participation of stakeholders especially women, directly through policy fora or indirectly through actions taken to facilitate other gender-related pilot projects. Along the way, non-governmental bodies aided by donors are given space for crafting their agendas and executing their project activities within the permitted pilot sites. The dynamics of engagement between governmental and decision-making bodies with non-governmental bodies and donors in REDD+ resonate well with Tran's (2012) research on how debates on gender equality have been articulated by states as both motivating and representing development, progress and modernity, 'indicators' that have been sought by non-governmental bodies and donors supporting Vietnam's socio-economic development. Specifically, Tran (2012) argues that women's participation outside the domestic sphere reserved for 'traditional women' has been historically envisaged as a symbol of modernity in Vietnam. In the case of REDD+ specifically, as shown above, UN-REDD Vietnam Programme in Lam Dong Province and JICA's Dien Bien project anticipates more women of ethnic communities participating in training workshops, forest fire prevention or forest protection. From their perspective, by stepping out of the

domestic sphere, women in these projects can exercise their equal rights in relation to men, so that the state and REDD+ implementing bodies can claim that gender considerations are partially addressed.

This seems in tune with other debates on gender and women's participation in development at a global level, especially the debates of women in development (WID) and women and development (WAD). Feminist researchers have written about how women in developing countries have been used by development projects to achieve their main goals (Brickell and Chant 2010). For example, as Leach (2007: 72) points out, these programmes run the risk of giving women responsibility for 'saving the environment' without addressing whether they actually have the resources or capacity to do so. Moreover, emphasis on women's participation can actually divert our attention from the unbalanced power relations that work against gender equality, as giving women more space in these projects are seen as an adequate solution for it (Arora-Jonsson, 2016: 745). Extensively focusing on women's participation also leads to an assumption that women are homogenous and that all women should be encouraged and mobilised to participate in forest-related activities. In reality, there are different factors including culture, social status, ethnicity and even geographical location (rural/urban or developed/developing countries) that contribute to whether women or men are able to enjoy gender equality in terms of decision-making or benefit distribution. Approaching women as a homogenous group, therefore, is not likely to be effective. These issues will be revisited in Chapters 5 and 6 in which I attempt to show, through my case study in the village, how the attempt to involve women in REDD+ at the local level might go against their will, as local people might have particular perceptions of how women and men contribute to deforestation and their role in forest protection and afforestation.

4.5. Summary

This chapter summarised the discussion on gender in REDD+ from a global and national perspective. I illustrated how this discussion unfolds at different levels from the meeting rooms of policy-makers to the actual pilot projects. In other words, this chapter seeks to trace back the flow of 'gender considerations' discourse from global documents to national action plans (a country-approach to safeguards) and its pilot projects that might or might not directly aim to realise what has been said in the national action plans. The missing link between the global documents to the national policy texts and the outcomes of actual projects allows for the flexibility of countries in adopting global frameworks while still accommodating the politics of forest governance in each country. This, on the

one hand, results from the lack of specific guidance and the varied interpretations of stakeholders regarding how and to what extent they should tackle the question of gender mainstreaming. On the other hand, it urges REDD+ countries to go back to their existing PLRs and find ways to weave them into the REDD+ action plan. The discussion on gendered workings of REDD+ pilot projects, however, shows that GoV chooses to approach gender in an essentialist and project-based manner mostly because it is in need of funding to build up capacity on more technical and less politically-sensitive components (i.e. carbon-related facilities) during the Readiness Stage. In other words, gender is not a real focus of REDD+ action plans in practice. Also, as the Safeguards Information System, a requirement for result-based payment by UNFCCC, is not yet developed, it is more practical and efficient for GoV to engage non-governmental bodies and international donors to demonstrate gender-related activities on the ground. By allowing non-governmental bodies to fill in the less prioritised areas of REDD+ (safeguards and gender considerations), GoV is able to make use of available support from these stakeholders, render REDD+ processes more inclusive in theory and maintain its ultimate power in decision-making. I have shown that the politics of decision-making and resource governance have certain gendered implications, for example, the formation of the new alliances between elite villagers and REDD+ officers at the local level. Finally, I brought together the three sub-sections and explored the link between gender, women's participation and state's perception of modernity, progress and development in Vietnam.

Chapter 4 focuses on how gender in REDD+ and more generally, gender in resource governance, are understood and embraced by stakeholders at the global and national level. In Chapters 5 and 6, I will extend the discussion on how stakeholders at the local level, especially villagers, local-based forest officers and local authorities, perceive gender in resource governance and how this is translated into their everyday lives.

Chapter 5. Introducing the village: socio-economic and cultural landscapes

This chapter takes the readers on a journey to Kala Tongu village to examine gendered accounts of resource access at local level. It aims first to capture the main characteristics of this village in terms of geo-politics, demography and socio-cultural structures. Specifically, it looks at that history of the village as it was incorporated into the broader socio-economic and political systems of the Central Highlands and Vietnamese state after the Reunification of 1975. From the land of Kahow in the Cham people's eyes, Kala Tongu underwent dramatic transformation with the arrival of French missionaries and Catholicism. Nowadays, the name Kala Tongu is known nationally and globally through its participation in various forest protection and development schemes, including the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme Phase 1 and 2. However, little is known about whether and how the traditional ways of using and managing national resources of this community might influence the outcome of those development initiatives. The second aim of this chapter is to investigate different forms of access to land and forest in the village and the links between these resource access and local livelihood strategies.

5.1. Under the forest's canopy: Locating Kala Tongu village

This section presents the background information on geographical and demographic characteristics of Kala Tongu village as well as previous and current forest-related schemes implemented in the village. I reflect on why the village, isolated, poor and culturally reserved, is an interesting case to investigate issues related to resource access in the uplands of Vietnam.

5.1.1. Touching down in the village

Kala Tongu village, administratively, belongs to Bao Thuan Commune, Di Linh district which is a crucial part of Lang Biang (or Lâm Viên) Plateau in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. Historically, during the nineteenth century, Dilinh (or Djiring) still maintained its marginal role in the economic and social development of this highland province. As early as 1889, the French colonial authorities established Djiring as an administrative unit to support the development plans of Lang Biang Resort Centre (presently Dalat). Djiring was then renamed Dilinh by the Southern Vietnamese Republic government in 1958.
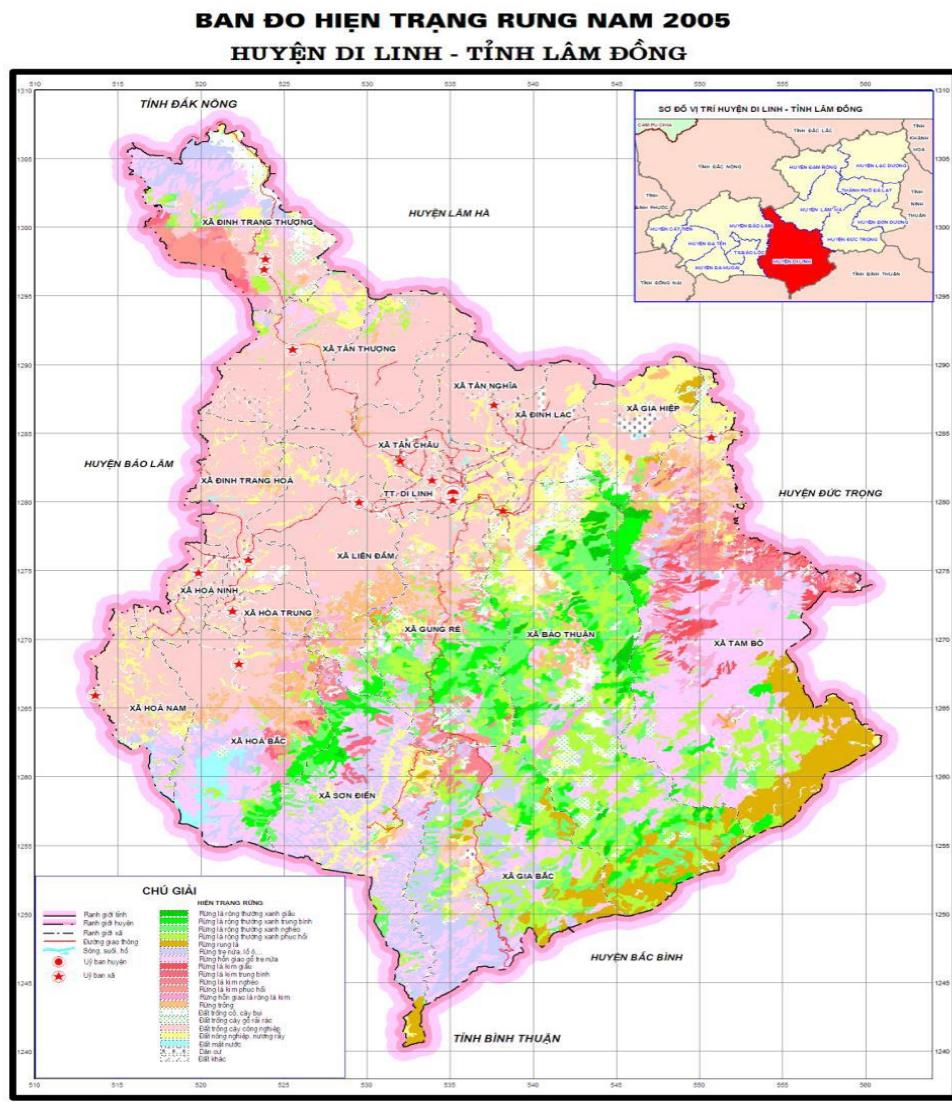
Figure 5. Map of forest landscapes in Di Linh District

Note: The green colour indicates the forest cover in the region, and Bao Thuan District
is among one of the greenest areas in Lam Dong Province

Source: http://theforestsdialogue.org/sites/default/files/governmentfieldtripprep1.pdf

Figure 6. Map of surrounding landscapes

Note: The black lines indicate the boundary of Community Forest (two sub-zones) and the area in dark blue is Kala Lake

Source: http://theforestsdialogue.org/sites/default/files/governmentfieldtripprep1.pdf

Dilinh was a densely forested area in the past and contained a rich source of underground water. However, by 1973, due to war, weak management of forest products and shifting cultivation, it was deforested and thus lost most of its biodiversity. Coupled with the construction of the National Highway 20 in July 1932[33] connecting Saigon (presently Ho Chi Minh City) and Dalat (central city of Lam Dong Province) and with roads cutting through Djiring Plateau, this area was set to change for good.

Looking at the map, the village does not seem very far from the main city and as such, my first trip down to the main city was smoother than expected. After a three-hour

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[33] Refer to Phung T. Q. (1973b) Lạc quan trên miền Thượng, Part 2, Chapter 4, available online at http://simonhoadalat.com/diaphan/truyengiao/lacquanmienthuong/Phan2Chuong4.htm

bus ride from Dalat, I reached the main town of Di Linh district. Another 25-min trip by motor taxi along a couple of zig-zagging hill passes and through the majestic view of green paddy fields, I soon reached Kala Tongu on a summer day in May. For newcomers, the journey to the village might be confusing, especially when taking the shortcut via the local villagers' coffee plantation. Once you are in the village, it feels like yet another village of the Red River Delta. That was exactly what I felt during my first trip to the village. Modernised houses, or Thai-style roofed houses as the local people call them, can be seen in every corner of the village. Ploughing and rice processing machines sit idly at the back gardens of wealthy households. Every now and then, a young man hops on to his fancy motorbike and drives away; probably to Dilinh Township to hang out. The main road to the village and to the irrigation systems is beautifully tarred, seemingly to hide within it various dusty and bumpy roads. It is not difficult to spot a signpost stating that the tarred road was funded by the FLITCH (or Forests for Livelihood Improvement in the Central Highlands) project. When I arrived in the village, the project had already finished, which probably explains why the tarred road did not run beyond its planned location. It was only when I walked down that road to the field that the blurring curves of Brah Yang Mountain and the remaining natural forests in the distance reminded me of its high altitude.

Below is a picture of the Kala Tongu village gate taken on one of my field trips (Figure 7). The picture captures nicely the three layers of agro-forestry landscape here. The lowest level, also the least green area, is the coffee plantation of villagers. Moving up is the middle level covered by pine trees. These trees were planted during the reforestation programs during the 1990s. Back then, many local villagers were hired by the Forest Company to do seeding and planting. Nowadays, this area is included in the forest protection programs of the Bao Thuan Forest Company. At the highest level sits the 500 ha Community Forest, which is classified as protected and currently owned and protected by all the households in Kala Tongu village. The unequal distribution of the three layers shows the struggles between local villagers and state Forest Company in terms of access to land and forest, and state efforts to set a boundary between what is considered natural (forest) and socio-cultural (coffee plantations and hill gardens) landscapes. The three layers of landscape illustrate the strategic location of this village *vis-à-vis* the natural forests, justifying its involvement in the 'Community Forest' scheme and the later REDD+ pilot projects.

Figure 7. Gate to Kala Tongu village

What is particularly interesting to me is the information written on the gate: it says that Kala Tongu is recognised as a 'Cultural Village'. This is a title granted by the Vietnamese Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism to urban wards and rural villages that meet certain requirements of economic conditions, cultural lifestyle and politico-social stability following the Circular 12/2011/TT-BVHTTDL. Kala Tongu village is not qualified to be a Cultural Village due to its lack of infrastructures such as standardised toilets in individual households, drinking water pipes, or a village community hall. However, its active involvement in various forest protection schemes may have helped this upland community to gain the title. The title itself does not lead to any improvement of basic amenities in the village, as I will discuss in what follows.

5.1.2. History of resettlement after *Định canh định cư* (Sedentarisation Policies)

Kala Tongu is a newly established village as a result of fixed farming and settlement policies of the Vietnamese state. The village name carries a certain meaning that reminds local people of this resettlement process. Kala is the name of the biggest sub-group/clan of the K'ho people (the indigenous population in Bao Thuan Commune and Lam Dong Province in general). One possible explanation for this label is that *kala*, in local language, means *bamboo.*[34] Most hills in the area once were covered by different types of bamboo, so local people named the main K'ho clan settling here after it. To distinguish between different K'ho clans and villages, *Kala* was followed by sub-names such as Kala Tokreng,

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[34] Refer to Giáo phận Kala, available online at http://giaoxugiaohovietnam.com/DaLat/01-Giao-Phan-Da-Lat-KaLa.htm

Kala Mbel, Kala Tongkle, Kala Soko, Kala Kwil-bum, etc. Tongu, meanwhile, refers to the stump of a tree after it has been cut down. According to local people, this stems from the fact that when they first moved here, they had to clear a big area of forest to build their houses.

On the way to Kala Tongu, one has to pass Kala church, the oldest church for K'ho and other ethnic communities in the area. It is located at the end of the main road dividing Kala Tongu into two parts (upper and lower village). According to the official church document, Kala church was built on the Kwil-bum hill by a French missionary, Father Jean Cassaigne, in 1940, together with a school for Catholic teachings, in order to convert the local ethnic minorities to Catholicism and to educate for them. Old people in the village have fond memories of those days when they used to attend (elementary) classes with French and Vietnamese priests in the church during the 1940s. Until the 1960s, both the church and the school were still shadowed by forests and the K'ho villages were mostly scattered around the nearby forests and hills. The nearest ethnic village, according to a religious leader, was around one kilometre away from the church and the furthest one could be up to 40 kilometres to Phan Thiet province (down to the coastal area). The church is still in the same location, and still serves as a cherished place for local people emotionally and spiritually, though other buildings where the priests used to stay were destroyed by 1993.[35]

From my fieldwork data, the current Kala Tongu village is formed from three different old villages: Kala Soko, part of Kala Tokreng, and a few households from Lo Yaoh clan who used to live in the forest. Local people repeatedly refer to the Sedentarisation Policies of the Vietnamese government (*định canh định cư*). Although each household might have their own trajectories of resettlement, most moved to a new house at least twice. First, some of them moved from their original villages to Kala Tokreng village while others moved further to the administrative areas belonging to Bao Tuan village presently. After that, during 1982-1983, all of them resettled again to Kala Tongu village. Those who had to move to Kala Tongu were allocated a 20-meter-wide plot of land to build houses. The policies aimed to bring ethnic communities from remote villages nearer to the main road, so they could access state-sponsored infrastructures such as electricity, tarred road, education and health care structures (Institute of Ethnic Minorities 2006).

It is indeed not easy for me to visualise the space within which they were navigating before the Sedentarisation Policies. Kala Tongu and its nearby villages were once

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[35] Refer to Giáo phận Kala, available online at http://giaoxugiaohovietnam.com/DaLat/01-Giao-Phan-Da-Lat-KaLa.htm

covered by trees, while nowadays most of the forested areas are replaced by roads, cement houses and coffee plantations. I did not come across many villagers who really understand the rationales underlying the fixed farming and settlement schemes. For the local Catholic priests, having these ethnic communities nearer to the church makes it easier for them to take care of local people spiritually and for local children to attend the Catholic classes (Interview with ID18 and ID19, 2015). For the villagers, some mention that they prefer this new village to their original ones since they have more space to build here. Others think it makes more sense for them to live close to their field/coffee land because these resources are located nearer to this new village. Thus, the resettlement is motivated by both state policies and the supposedly positive impacts of the new village on the local population, especially in terms of resource access.

5.1.3. Ethnic composition in Kala Tongu village

The ethnicity composition of Kala Tongu is relatively homogenous. Out of 217 households (as statistics showed in 2015), there are only 7 Kinh households. The rest is K'ho people. K'ho is the biggest ethnic minority group in Lam Dong Province, under which there are several sub-groups such as Lat, Noup, Cil, Dala, Sre and sometimes Ma. The word K'ho is said to come from 'Kahow' used by Cham people to address indigenous people speaking the Mon-Khmer language and living in the forest, similar to *Montagnard* in French or *Mọi* in Vietnamese.[36] The historical relationship between ethnic groups in Lam Dong Province and Cham people in the coastal areas of Central Vietnam might be useful in understanding the meaning of K'ho. Vuong (2005: 110) states that the name Koho might date back to 1471 when the Cham people only occupied a limited territory in Southern Central Vietnam. He also argues that K'ho originates from the name of Mon-Khmer-speaking groups in the southern Central Highlands, which usually starts with 'K' and spelt Ko for women and Ha for men. The combination of Ko and Ha creates Koha, also pronounced Koho or K'ho.

The Kala Tongu villagers belong to the Sre sub-group, which literally means people working in wet rice fields. They are organised under different matrilineal clans/kin (or *kon* in the K'ho language). According to the village head, before the Reunification of 1975, one clan typically consisted of 3-5 households, but this has been expanded. Currently, there are around 80 to 82 clans in the village. Traditionally, they did not have 'surnames', but distinguished themselves by clans. Since 1964, they adopted a gender-

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[36] Refer to Phung T. Q. (1973a) Lạc quan trên miền Thượng, Part 2, Chapter 1, available online at http://simonhoadalat.com/diaphan/truyengiao/lacquanmienthuong/Phan2Chuong1.htm

based system of surname which adds K' in front of a male name and Ka in front of a female name. This explanation, however, contradicts Vuong's (2005) research. In fact, I have not come across any written reference regarding the changing of the surname of K'ho people except for the village head's narrative.

Apart from the K'ho households, there are 7 Kinh households (including 100% Kinh and mixed Kinh/K'ho) in the village. Kala Tongu might be an exceptional case as the proportion of Kinh people seems to be more significant in other villages closer to the main road. According to my field data, two households are half Kinh/K'ho, in which the Kinh woman in one household migrated to the village from the Red River Delta to work with her relative and married a K'ho husband, and the Kinh man in another household moved here from the Mekong Delta to follow his K'ho wife. Except for these two households, the rest of the Kinh households are not registered permanently and do not rely on agricultural or forestry activities for their livelihoods. According to the village head and the two Kinh households interviewed, Kinh people in the Kala Tongu village mostly have small businesses, such as running provision shops, buying and selling coffee beans or other agro-forestry products and giving loans to local villagers.

A religious leader claimed that Kinh people first came to Bao Thuan Commune to manage the irrigation system, with a small number of 250-300 people. The exact date is not mentioned but it should be after the Reunification of 1975. Up to now, the total number of Kinh people in the Kala region has increased to 6,700 people, of which 4,700 are Catholic (Interview with ID19). I did not manage to obtain the statistics of Kinh people in each village as they are not readily available. However, from my conversations with local people, it seems that most of the Kinh people migrated here from several provinces in Central Vietnam and Red River Delta to look for land. For the Catholic Kinh, many of them resettled here and in the Central Highlands after the Indochina War in 1954 when the Communist government took over northern Vietnam (Hanoi and Red River Delta area).

From the perspective of the Kala Tongu villagers, there are key differences between them and the Kinh people. Culturally, while they follow matrilineal systems, Kinh people practise patrilineal systems in which women do not have to pay a groom price or wedding expenses. This cultural difference is often cited by women regardless of age, as they refer to cases where K'ho women married Kinh men. Women also tend to take special notice of the economic discrepancies between Kinh and ethnic minority households. Kinh people are believed to be better off because they know how to earn and spend money effectively. This is often related to the specific contexts within which the two groups

interact with one another. The Kinh people are represented by the money lenders, the owners of coffee plantations who hire them as waged labour during harvest season, and the buyers who visit to collect forest products. Other villagers claimed that Kinh people make better officials in contrast to ethnic minority officials, who they said use power for personal gain. In the forestry sector and forest-related projects particularly, the Kinh forest officers are believed to be more lenient, and local K'ho villagers can seek their pardon if caught illegally encroaching forestland or harvesting timber in the protected forests.

5.1.4. Kala Tongu's involvement in forest protection schemes

There are two forest protection schemes mentioned frequently in the village. The first is the 'Community Forest', which is meant to be owned and protected by the whole village. The village head is in charge of handling the paperwork and allocating patrolling duties to villagers. The 'Community Forest' is referred to by Kala Tongu villagers as 'REDD/UN-REDD forest', and no-one thinks of themselves as forest owners of this forest, because the official paperwork is always kept by the village head. Their ownership of the Community Forest, in fact, is acknowledged by Di Linh District People's Committee Decision No. 2477/QĐ-UBND dated 29/8/2011. A map showing the area of forest allocated to the Kala Tongu villagers is enclosed with this decision. The ownership of Community Forest is endorsed by the District's decision to reallocate the 500 ha of natural forest (previously owned by the Bao Thuan State Forest Company) to Kala Tongu community. The second scheme is the forest leasing contract scheme between the Bao Thuan Forest Company and local villagers in Bao Thuan Commune. This involves a small number of households in Kala Tongu village selected to join the Bao Thuan Forest Company officers to patrol the forest areas owned by the company. These selected households receive extra payments, since they normally have to travel to forested areas near Binh Thuan Province (neighbouring Lam Dong Province to the south) and sleep in the forest overnight to perform their tasks. Locals calls this the 'sleeping-in-the-forest scheme'.

It is important to discuss the Forest Land Allocation policy to better understand the existing forest tenure in Kala Tongu village and Bao Thuan Commune. According to one forest officer, in Di Linh district, forestland (and forest) cannot be allocated to households. Households, as he explained, can sign a contract with the forest agencies to protect the forests. The actual owners of these forests are state forest agencies. Forestland (and forest), however, can be allocated to villages through the Forest Land Allocation policy. For example, Kala Tongu village is allocated 500 ha of natural forest (Interview with ID28, 2015). From the interview with this forest officer, I learnt that there are currently

two forest tenure regimes in Bao Thuan Commune: (1) the Community Forest belongs to Kala Tongu village; and (2) other forests belong to the Bao Thuan Forest Company. Individual households, accordingly, are not considered a forest tenure group here. I later found out that the Community Forest scheme or forestland allocation to villages are based on the Land Law 2003 and the Forest Protection and Development Law 2004, which recognises the legal status of villages in land tenure and forest management (Nguyen and Sikor 2011). It is noted that the Community Forest scheme was only implemented in Kala Tongu in 2011, while the legal status of Community Forest Management has been recognised since 2004. This, in my view, shows the strong hold of the state over forestland in this area, which affects negotiations between the local villagers and the Bao Thuan Forest Company over forestland. I will return to this discussion in Chapter 7 (7.2.2).

Apart from the above-mentioned forest schemes, in 2015, UN-REDD Vietnam Programme Phase 2 invested 300 million VND to develop a site-based REDD+ action plan in Kala Tongu village, also known as the REDD+ pilot project. According to the official website of REDD+ in Vietnam[37], this pilot project includes three main components, with the allocated budget (for 2015) as follows:

(1) Forest management and protection: 34,170,000 VND
(2) Forest development: 46,125,000 VND
(3) Establishment of the Village Production Fund: 219,705,000 VND

Kala Tongu villagers are also active in other forestry projects. Currently, this village is funded by a Provincial Forestry Project aiming to promote planting of macadamia and rattan for sale in the coffee plantation. The Lam Dong Province Centre for Agriculture Extension, the main project implementer, also plans to grow a number of agro-forestry trees in the deforested areas in the Community Forest (around 4.4 ha).

In addition, when I started my fieldwork, the FLITCH project (Forests for Livelihood Development in the Central Highlands, funded by Asian Development Bank and Trust Fund for Forest) had just finished after three years of implementation (2011-2014). Under this project, a 400m tarred road was built to connect the village with its main agricultural field (total funding of 1.4 billion VND or $70,000) (Figure 8). The project also invested in 10 ha of fruit trees (avocado and durian) and gave community development loans to support household production development and afforestation.

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[37] Refer to Vietnam REDD+ Programme, 2015, UN-REDD II implements its first site-based REDD+ action plans, available online at http://www.vietnam-redd.org/Desktop.aspx/News/157/860/

Figure 8. The concrete road sponsored by the FLITCH project in Kala Tongu

As a result, Kala Tongu villagers have been asked to participate in various forestry activities in addition to their daily farming. The overlapping of these forestry activities also creates many issues in resource access at the village level, which will be further discussed in Chapter 7.

5.1.5. Other development projects in Kala Tongu village

As I first arrived at the village, I was often asked if I had been to Kala Lake, a special tourist attraction and landmark in the region (Figure 9). My curiosity escalated as I came across Kala Tongu villagers whose wet rice fields and/or coffee plantations has been taken away to prepare for the dam project.

Figure 9. Kala Tongu Hydrodam

On the surface, the establishment of Kala hydro dam was received positively by both local authorities and locals as it helped to boost local agricultural production. According

to a press release[38] the hydro dam construction project started in 2004 and finished by end of 2007. The main function of this complex is to provide water for 2,206 ha of wet rice fields and coffee plantations located in Bao Thuan, Gung Re, Dinh Lac, Tan Nghia and Di Linh Township and drinking water for 24,000 people. In future, the reservoir can be used for eco-tourism and fishing farms. In return, 400 ha of production land of 872 households in Bao Thuan, Gung Re, Dinh Lac, Tan Nghia and Di Linh township was confiscated. The total compensation cost given to local people back then was as high as 37 billion VND ($180,500) and some households even received hundreds of millions VND in compensation. It is interesting that cash compensation was preferred by local people. According to a former government officer, when the hydro dam project started, the Project Management Board and local government proposed to allocate certain areas of productive land as a form of compensation; however, local people chose cash instead. Although my field data shows that there are not many Kala Tongu villagers who had lost land for the hydro dam construction, the project certainly affects local livelihoods and land access.[39] In this case, it dominates discursively as some refer to it as an important event in the region, and others actually talk about how they were cut off from their land access after the area was flooded.

The new hydro dam's construction did not necessarily bring about crucial changes as anticipated. In terms of basic necessities, Kala Tongu villagers still experience short-ages of water, especially clean drinking-water, and there is still no drinking water station in the village. The most popular water supply comes from the private-owned well in the village, which is used by sixty households in Kala Tongu.[40] The well was built and is currently maintained by a relatively well-off K'ho family who run a provision shop in the village. The arrangement for a household to get access to water from this family is rela-tively simple as the household has to buy water pipes and a water pump themselves and pay a monthly fee to this family according to their consumption levels.

As we can see, despite being the target of various development projects, Kala Tongu villagers lack basic necessities reliable drinking-water. This is not to say that the villagers have not benefitted from those global and national intervention programs. With their experiences in extracting natural resources, working the land and navigating within

[38] Refer to Uong, T. B. (2007) Chuyện ghi bên hồ Kala, Nhan Dan online, 22 January 2007, available online at http://nhandan.org.vn/chinhtri/tin-tuc-su-kien/item/2414202-.html
[39] See Chapter 5 (5.3) for more details.
[40] Refer to Nguyen, D. and Dang, T. (2016) Lâm Đồng cao điểm khát, BNews 24 March 2016, available online at http://bnews.vn/lam-dong-cao-diem-khat-/12225.html

a densely forested area, Kala Tongu villagers are more than ready to move into the direction of state-funded development schemes designed specifically for upland communities. The extent to which each household can benefit from these schemes, however, is conditioned upon various factors. This will be explored in sub-section 5.3 and the following chapters.

5.2. Social structures of a matrilineal society

In the previous section, I introduced the historical contexts of the village and its geopolitical position in terms of environmental and forestry projects in Vietnam. In this section, I will describe the socio-cultural structures of Kala Tongu village as a matrilineal-based community. Understanding how this community is organised socially and culturally is important to make sense of how access to resources is divided along the lines of gender, kinship and conjugal relationships, as well as how gendered power relations are operationalised among individuals in this community and between this community and outsiders. Moreover, understanding socio-cultural dynamics of this community is useful in identifying and explaining the mismatches between the state's expectations of how environmental and forestry projects should be implemented and the actual outcomes of these projects at the village level.

In the following sub-sections, I first provide a brief overview of the traditional institutions of K'ho society in Lam Dong Province, mostly based on previous research. I then present the situation in the village from my field research. Specifically, I focus on the distinctive characteristics of conjugal relationship and kinship in a matrilineal-based society such as post-marriage residential patterns, the practice of paying groom price and women's roles in maintaining family lineage and child-rearing. I also attempt to weave together what has changed and what remains intact in the gendered structures of the village from the perspective of Kala Tongu villagers themselves.

5.2.1. Matrilineal systems at a glance: previous research on the Central Highlands

The matrilineal societies of ethnic groups in the southern Central Highlands have been well documented in previous research by French and Vietnamese researchers. Dournes's (1978) note on the oral tradition and representation of women and femininity in Jarai culture is the most prominent work on this area, exploring different aspects of gender relations in forest access and women's relationship with forest in Jarai's matriarchal society. He specifically attends to the clear gender divisions of labour and gendered spaces reserved for Jarai women and men. To a certain extent, Dournes's work appears to be

greatly influenced by eco-feminism, which highlights the universal link between women and nature, especially plants. His analysis of Jarai legendary narratives and ethnographic observations suggests that Jarai women are regarded as the guardians of traditional knowledge on medicinal and herbal plants. In that sense, Jarai women are also the guardians of Jarai culture *per se* as they play a key role in the enculturation process for future generations through symbolic rituals performed for newborn babies.

Another classic work on matrilineal groups in the Central Highlands is by De Hauteclocque-Howe (1985). In her PhD manuscript, she uncovers the structures and institutions of the Rhade (Ede) matrilineal group from Dak Lak Province. Accordingly, Rhade men, by virtue of being husbands in their wives' clan and 'male characters' (brothers/uncles) in their own natal household, are able to maintain a relatively equal status *vis-à-vis* Rhade women. De Hauteclocque-Howe also notes that traditionally Rhade wives can inherit land and assets, but it is their husbands who manage these resources and they can become *mdrong* (big men) through extravagant feasts. Moreover, in their own clan, these men play an important role in decision-making regarding financial matters.

With the French colonial intervention in the Central Highlands, as De Hauteclocque-Howe points out, Rhade men began to take up their new economic roles as civil servants or plantation workers. This situation contributed to improving men's status as Rhade society experienced a social transformation and a shift in traditional notions of ownership and inheritance patterns. Rhade and other matrilineal societies in the Central Highlands during De Hauteclocque-Howe's generation changed dramatically, as Bui (2005) notes, due to land regulation, the need for productive land of nuclear households and mixed marriage with Kinh.

De Hauteclocque-Howe's and Dournes's observation of matrilineal groups in the Central Highlands are further discussed in Salemink's (2003) accounts of gender transformation among matrilineal groups in the Central Highlands. Through focusing on the interplay between colonial regimes, local matrilineal groups and access to land, Salemink's (2003) research sees a decline of women's social status underpinning women's loss of control over land, assets and supporting structures from their immediate and extended families, resulting from the French war and expansion of colonial administrative systems.

5.2.2. Matrilineal systems at work: the case of Kala Tongu village

As shown earlier, previous research suggests that matrilineal-based structures and women's status underwent a crucial change as the Central Highlands and its inhabitants

were integrated into the Vietnamese state, led by French colonial and then Kinh authorities. The case of Kala Tongu village, therefore, becomes even more interesting as it is only 7km from the main central town of Dilinh District and nested within other patrilineal-based Kinh communities; and yet local villagers still practise and respect matrilineal systems.

Matrilineal systems and women's high status among indigenous groups in the Central Highlands were once seen in a negative light, resulting in nationwide efforts to encourage and even force these groups to abandon their traditions in the 1980s. However, the situation seems to have changed gradually. A government officer from Di Linh District People's Committee commented that K'ho people are indeed very keen to keep this tradition alive, although they also adopt certain aspects of Kinh culture in their everyday lifestyle, New Year celebrations and rituals related to the life-cycle. According to him, the matrilineal and associated traditional customs such as land inheritance, groom prices and post-marriage residence arrangements are socially accepted as a way of life for local people (Interview with ID21, 2015). When I first visited the village, the status of men and women and gender relations in matrilineal society was unclear to me. I did not foresee that it might be challenging to approach K'ho men. At first, I assumed that K'ho married men felt less confident than their wives because of their traditionally perceived status within their own household. I was at that point aware that in matrilineal societies, men did not necessarily have lower status than women, especially in their own clans and at community level. During my subsequent fieldtrips, I learnt from my female informants that the men were not interested in talking to me because many of them could not speak Vietnamese fluently. Meanwhile, my main research interests are culture, customs, rituals and livelihood – topics which they might have found abstract and difficult to express in a second language. As mentioned in Chapter 3, after several failures in recruiting my male respondents, I realised that there are certain social norms and gender codes of conduct underpinning this matrilineal community. First, it is the women who handle issues perceived as women's responsibilities such as collecting payments from forest protection schemes, attending village meetings, dealing with the money-lenders or talking to an 'uninvited' guest like me. The men, meanwhile, work in the field or drink/socialise with other men. Many Kinh villagers and officers regard male K'ho as intellectually inferior and socially awkward while female K'ho are more socialised and outspoken. These were also my initial impressions of K'ho men and women. However, being a researcher, I need to critically question these stereotypes. In what follows, I will explain the patterns of residence, groom price and the dynamics of kinship relations related to gender relations

from local perceptions. The 'thick description' (Geetz 1973) of K'ho social structures from past to present shows that there are fundamental differences in outsiders' views and K'ho ways of seeing and living within their traditional culture.

5.2.3. Patterns of residence

As mentioned in 5.1, it does not make sense for an outsider to differentiate local villagers based on their 'surnames' because there are apparently only two 'surnames' in the Sre group in Kala Tongu. Their names start with 'K' for men and 'Ka' for women, and both are pronounced 'Ka'. However, within the village/community, they distinguish each other by their clans. The clan names are often associated with their original villages following the mothers' line (not the fathers', as in Kinh people). According to a senior man, it is especially important for Kala Tongu villagers to know their clans, so that they do not marry someone from the same clan. In the past, those who accidentally married close relatives were requested to perform a ritual and pay a fine to prevent the village from encountering natural disaster (Bui, 2005: 86). Exogamy is still considered an important principle of marriage among K'ho people in Kala Tongu.

The history of resettlement and the post-marriage residence patterns contribute to shaping the map of household and clan in Kala Tongu as it is today. My field observation suggests that for the older generation (aged 50 and above), since they were relocated from their original villages and given new pieces of land in Kala Tongu as new households, nowadays, sisters from the same mother do not live next to each other. However, for groups of women aged 30 to 50, most live next to their sisters from the same mother and on the same premises. These sisters received a piece of residential land (with or without the houses) from their mothers when they marry and move out to form their own nuclear household. When it comes to the young generation (aged under 30), due to the lack of residential land, there are more cases where several female siblings from the same mother (and their families) live far away from each other, as it is normally too crowded for them to live on the same piece of land passed down from their grandmother and mother. As a result, some of them have to buy land from other clans/households and move away from their mother's clan residential land.

5.2.4. Groom price in a matrilineal society

Groom price and the ideas of groom price are crucial to differentiate matriliny from other forms of social organisations. The groom price should be seen from both economic and socio-cultural aspects, as it helps to establish the gender relations between men and

women in matrilineal societies. However, groom price was completely different in the past. Several decades ago, according to old people in the village, groom price consisted of basic items such as clothes, scarves, and perhaps an expensive item such as a buffalo. The groom price was supposed to be paid by the bride's clan, not the bride or the bride's family alone, to show the relationship between the two clans and therefore it would never go beyond the actual affordability of the bride's clan. Moreover, the groom price could be paid in 'instalments' during the course of a marriage. Groom price was not high as it was not meant to create a financial burden for the bride's family. Instead, it was considered a contract between lineages of the couple and represented some elements of respect and compensation for the groom's lineage and certain obligations of being bound to and respecting the wife's lineage.

Nowadays groom price is high and to a certain extent is losing its original meaning. Meanwhile, the loosening of traditional institutions makes it easier for both parties to get divorced. Previously, divorce was rare and if it happened, normally the groom and his clan were blamed and had to pay a 'fine' to ask for forgiveness from the bride's clan (Interview with ID18, 2015). The traditional institutions, therefore, aimed to protect women's well-being. The current system, however, seems to give men more advantages in terms of bargaining power. The woman and her family have to worry about groom price when they reach marriageable age. Although the groom price is negotiable between the two families, most brides (and her family) end up paying only a little less than the amount originally asked for by the groom's family. In case the marriage breaks down, the men are free to leave without a fine or responsibility for any children. In similar research about dowry and gender relations in India, Srinivas (1984) and Rao (1993) show that a dowry received by a son normally makes up 68% of his household's assets and as such, it can cause considerable hardship to families with daughters to be married. In my case study, some K'ho mothers told me that the groom price in Kala Tongu village is increasingly high and they prefer their daughters to marry Kinh men, because Kinh men marry without groom price. From the perspective of K'ho men, there is no observed pressure for them to marry so their families and clans can benefit from potentially high groom prices. It seems to me that nowadays local people tend to conflate the groom price and wedding costs, and they come to realise that the brides and brides' families have more financial pressures than the grooms and their families.

As groom price is the main responsibility of women, those who cannot afford the groom price feel socially embarrassed and humiliated. In exceptional cases, the couples might still move in together without a wedding to reduce the financial burden for the

brides and their clans. When I was staying with my third host family, I came across a case of an old couple who had to organise a big feast to celebrate their wedding although they have been married for more than 30 years. They were too poor to pay for the wedding at the time, so they decided to live together without a customary wedding. Therefore, they had a socio-cultural debt to pay. After they invited villagers to enjoy a wedding feast, they were officially considered a married couple in the eyes of the local people.

Since the women and their clans pay for the wedding and the men simply move in to live with their wives' clans, the men are obligated to work for the bride's family and their own family. According to a religious leader, local men tell him that they have to enjoy their freedom before marriage, because once they get married, they will become 'modern slaves' for their wives' families. K'ho men, in this sense, still depend greatly on the women in their households (Interview with ID19). It is noted that these views might be one-sided as they reflect the perspective of a Kinh priest. Also, since some K'ho men still maintain their connection with their natal clans where they have a higher status, the dependence of K'ho men on their wives is limited within their nuclear families, but not in the extended families or in the community. In other words, it is a symbolic dependence. The groom price narrative seems to be an endless story for other villagers in Kala Tongu. Talking about their everyday struggles, most of my informants go back to groom price and wedding costs at some point. There are different opinions around groom price, which shows the ambivalence of K'ho society in transition. The increases in groom price are also related to local people's preference for sons or daughters.

A Women's Union representative, also a local K'ho, expressed her frustration after various attempts of Women's Union to encourage local people to modify the list of items required for groom price, reduce the groom price and accompanying wedding expenses:

> I myself try to talk to them [about groom price] several times, but no one listens to me [...] Everyone wants to have a big and expensive wedding and then they have to borrow money [to pay back the wedding costs] [...] Mostly women disagree with reducing the groom price. Why? Because they have sons. They say they had to carry their sons in their womb for more than nine months so they want to set the high groom price [when their sons get married]. (Interview with LH4, 2015)

Interestingly, while high groom prices might have left many women and their natal families in a difficult financial situation, it is also considered a social norm that every member in that community agrees to follow. In other words, it is part and parcel of K'ho culture.

A middle-aged woman with two daughters and considered as having good knowledge of K'ho traditionculture by her neighbours provided me with a long list of groom price items. She calculated that it can take up to 100 million VND ($5,000) for a woman to get married (Box 3).

Box 3. List of most popular items needed for groom price (field work in 2015-2016)

+Cash (from 30 million to 50 million VND) to pay for the wedding feast

+Gold rings (for the parent and relatives of the groom)

+Scarves (from 8-10 pieces)

+Cloth to make dresses (from 8-10 pieces)

+Black umbrellas (4 pieces) (optional)

+Necklaces made by Cham people (optional)

+A buffalo (optional, can convert to cash, approximately 25 million VND)

The groom, according to her, will not return any of those items to the bride's family should the couple divorce. This is not fair for the women, as she commented. However, when asked if she would rather have daughters or sons, she seemed to go back to their tradition, maintaining that "our people still like to have daughters because daughters will stay with us, keep our house and our land [within our matrilineal clans]. Our sons will just go to live in other houses [their wives']" (Interview with PV5, 2015).

The economic aspects of groom price are specifically emphasised by women/mothers with more than one daughter. Another woman presents an interesting case of groom price negotiation between her and her future son-in-law's family. According to her, the groom's family asked for 40 million VND ($2,000), but she can only afford 30 million VND ($1,500). They then came up with a solution that might benefit both sides. She will give them 40 million VND ($2,000), and the groom's family will not take it for themselves but give back to the newly-weds after marriage. This also reflects the new trend in K'ho society as the flow of resources seems to move towards the new couple instead of being kept in the groom's family. The reason the groom's family insists on asking for 40 million VND is because they are considered well-off, and thus they need to find a relatively well-off family who can afford the 40 million VND groom price to marry their son into. In order to spare her in-laws embarrassment, she has decided to give them the proposed amount, although they both understand that the real amount is negotiable upon the bride's economic conditions. This woman also shared stories about her own

marriage. Surprisingly for someone of her generation, she also had to pay 30 million VND in addition to a buffalo and gold jewellery. Her husband, as other men during that time, moved in her house with no dowry or valuable property and therefore had to depend on her. She proudly told me that:

> If my husband talks back to me or quarrels with me, I will beat him or chase him out of my house. Because this is my land, this is my house, I have my daughters and I even have a son-in-law here with me. If he wants to leave, he can leave. But he's scared of me. (Interview with LH7, 2015)

Seemingly, the groom price is a two-sided coin. On the one hand, it creates a financial responsibility for the woman and her natal family before marriage as the groom price tends to be high. As a woman put it, the groom price increases in tandem with the coffee bean price (Interview with ID14, 2015). On the other hand, for the older generation, the groom price helps women to gain a higher status in the household due to the fact that her family pays to buy him and then allows him to live in her house.

In a group interview with men, they admit that the high groom price sometimes can cause financial problems to women and families with daughters. However, they note that it is up to the bride's family to decide whether they want to pay the amount asked. Moreover, the bride's family might pay this over several years (Group interview with men, 2015). Another man, whose family ran a shop at the centre of the village, told me that nowadays the groom and his family also have to make sure the new groom brings some valuable property such as motorbikes or coffee land to his wife's family (Short chat, ID20, 2015).

In short, we can observe how local perceptions vary across social status and gender. From the perspective of local authorities, asking a high groom price is a backward practice that should be better regulated by the local government. Lay people, including women, mostly complain about the expenses incurred with groom price and wedding ceremonies. However, they also feel that they have to comply with it because it is part of their tradition and they still manage to do so either through using their own savings or borrowing from Kinh and K'ho money lenders. Meanwhile, men tend not to be very opinionated about groom price. One possible reason is that the men do not directly handle financial issues, so they are not attentive to the high groom price. Men also do not go to see Kinh merchants/money-lenders to borrow money. Women, while portraying themselves as the groom buyers and later the household treasurers, are more vocal and specific when it comes to discussing the groom price.

5.2.5. Control over children and kinship support in a matrilineal society

The high groom price might not seem to favour women in matrilineal systems. However, the practice of buying the men through marriage, the requirement for the men to move in with their wives' families and the ultimate control of women over their children, in fact, work to protect women and provide the necessary support for them, economically and emotionally. K'ho women in Kala Tongu themselves take a firm stance on this. As a woman told me:

> Here the [customary] law is that the children will follow the mother [and the mother's family]. The mother has to raise her children. When they grow up they can work for others to earn for their living, but [when they are small] the mother's family definitely will not let the father take away the children. (Interview with ID14, 2015)

Children following the mother and her family is the core principle of matrilineal society and among K'ho people in Kala Tongu. This partially results from their perception, or more precisely, social stereotype, of men's (in)capacity to raise their children. Women in the village occasionally refer to divorce cases where the custody of children remains with the mother. In a group interview with women, I learnt that:

> if the children are to be divided between the mother and the father, the men will not stay in the house [or stay unmarried] to raise the children. They will wander around [seeking other women] and drink wine. How can they take care of their children? We [women] will feel worried about our children. We'd rather they live with us… (Group interview with women, 2015)

It is noted that in cases of separation and divorce, the burden of child-rearing, seemingly, is shouldered by women and their natal families; therefore, they prefer to live near to their sisters and natal families. Since the men are not allowed to bring any valuable property (except the shared properties between husband and wife after marriage), women do not expect their husbands to pay maintenance cost for their children; and this is seen as fair for both husband and wife. A young woman married to a man from a different province and different ethnic group and currently separated from her husband for several months, told me her bad experiences with her own inter-ethnic marriage and articulated the importance of kinship support to her:

> My husband wanted me to follow him there [Dak Nong Province]. I thought we would just stay there for 2 or 3 years, so I agreed. But after marriage, he became

lecherous and I did not like that, so I moved back here and stayed in my mother's house. That's us, K'ho people, if we quarrel with our husband, then we go back home with our mother. Here if there's anything needed in the house, I supply [it]. My siblings are not jealous [of me being given a piece of land to work], we share the same house so they have to sympathise with my situation. I bring back my two older daughters [out of three] and work to feed them. My husband does not bother to care or give me maintenance [...] Here, I live nearer to my siblings and relatives, [so] he dare not beat me, because I have a lot of family members here; there I am on my own, and he can live the way he wants, no-one says anything. (Interview with ID15, 2015)

Interesting aspects of matrilineal systems can be teased out from the story above. For a woman who is separated from her husband, it is indeed essential to have her family to provide support and protection. That's partially why she decided to go back to her village after her relationship broke down. Currently, the kinship support comes from sharing the house, child-rearing, productive land and farming work between her siblings and herself, even though it sometimes affects their own share of property. For men, having their in-laws around might pose certain restrictions, as they often feel insecure and less comfortable in a matrilineal village due to their dependent status. Kinship support is even more important in divorces. For a middle-aged divorcee, this kind of support was provided to herself and her six children since she left her husband in 1993. When I first talked to her, I thought getting divorced was social stigmatised for K'ho women. It was, and it still is, for local villagers. However, in her case, everyone in the family supported her to divorce her husband because he was seen as irresponsible, lazy and indecent. Divorce was not common at the time, but since she had a legitimate reason to leave her husband, she received full support from her natal family. At court, the judge decided to divide the care of the six children between both father and mother, but she ended up keeping all of them and did not receive any money from him. Beneath her calm attitude as she responded to my questions about how she managed to raise her six children, I could see the stability and reliability of the kinship support networks that might not be available to the women in patrilineal societies. During my interviews with her, she told me the same things, simply but in a determined manner:

I worked myself to feed my kids. I collected bamboo shoots during rainy seasons and cow dung[41] during dry seasons and sold them to buy rice. My [unmarried] brother came to live with me and helped me raise the kids, but they worked to feed themselves too. (Interview with LH8, 2015).

[41] Dried cow dung was collected by villagers and sold to Kinh people as a source of organic fertiliser.

Kinship support for women in matrilineal society, I argue, requires certain responsibilities. Specifically, these women have to keep the ancestral land within their clans. In some cases, the youngest daughters or those who get the bigger share of family land are committed to take care of their ageing parents. Although in K'ho people, the surname is not to be passed on to different generations, women also have to play a role in carrying the family lineage forward. It is, however, seen slightly different from patrilineal/patriarchal societies of Kinh people. This was pointed out to me by one of the male participants of a photovoice group as we discussed the preference for sons or daughters in K'ho society. He explained to me:

> If there are no daughters in the house, male siblings like me will only live in our wives' families. That makes us grow apart. We male siblings belong to the same clan, but we know it's just [a] word slipping out of [a] mouth. I have to follow my wife's family and my children, and so do my other brothers. If we have sisters, then the sisters will keep the land and stay with parents. When we male siblings quarrel with our wives, we can still go back to the main pillar [i.e. the natal family]. Then our natal family will assign someone to take me back to my wife's family and act as the mediator between me and my wife. Otherwise, I will have nowhere to run to but my wife and her family. (Interview with PV1, 2016)

The importance of female siblings as the main 'pillar' on which their brothers can rely to maintain contact with each other, illustrates the gendered divisions of roles between male and female K'ho. In matrilineal societies of K'ho people, the children belong to the women and her families/clans regardless of their parents' marital status. From the perspective of K'ho women, men are not involved in the process and in some cases, are not expected to be, while women are fully aware of their responsibility for their children's well-being. From the perspective of K'ho men, they learn to accept their marginalised role in child rearing and their wives' control over their children during their marriage, and also become more attached to their natal families and their female siblings. This is because they still have significant voices in decision-making back in their natal families even after they marry and have moved out. Once there is no female sibling in the family, there will be no 'base' for them to exercise their 'power' anymore.

Having no daughter, therefore, is seen as bad luck for K'ho people as it affects the caregiving for ageing parents and the continuity of family lineage. That is why in Kala Tongu, everyone prefers to have both sons and daughters. This, as a matter of fact, also results from the need of labour to work the land, especially in coffee lands. Kala Tongu people indeed still preserve a lot of their traditions despite their geo-political location at

a crossroads between the ethnic communities and Kinh newcomers. As long as the traditional ideas of groom price, control of children by women and family lineage are circulated and approved by the local people, the matrilineal systems will still function well in this village.

5.3. Livelihood strategies

The socio-cultural structures of Kala Tongu village influence both economic conditions and relations with productive resources such as land and forests. In this section, I describe the main livelihood strategies of local people and the main resources upon which they rely. This includes my field observation of how gender relations are manifested in economic and income-generating activities of men and women in the village. It also lays the foundation for a further analysis of gendered access to land and forest in Chapter 6.

5.3.1. Wet rice

Nowadays, wet rice farming is the main source of food for ethnic groups in the Central Highlands, and Kala Tongu in particular. Wet rice farming and its sophisticated skills, however, are believed to have been brought into the Central Highlands by the Cham people (Vuong 2005). Like other ethnic groups in this area, the Sre people in Kala Tongu used to practise shifting cultivation and relied mainly on hill rice to meet their food security needs before learning to grow wet rice on terraces. At first, Kala Tongu villagers grew the old species of wet rice, which required six months to develop fully and produced only one crop per year. Since 2007, the establishment of the hydro dam and irrigation systems has allowed them to switch to two crops per year and the new species of wet rice can now be harvested within three to four months. All households in Kala Tongu during my fieldwork own some wet rice fields and manage to fully or partially supply rice to their households.

The size of the wet rice field owned by each household, however, varies significantly. Moreover, each household normally owns many small plots of field in different locations, which might be the legacy of traditional shifting cultivation practices in the past. During my fieldwork, I noticed that with the population pressure and the tendency to form nuclear families after marriage, daughters (and their own households) are getting smaller wet rice field areas than their mothers did. Some only own a tiny plot of 5-6 *chuồng* (approx. 0.05-0.06 ha). In contrast, other households own up to two ha of wet rice fields. Local people attribute this to the fact that those whose great-grandparents and grandparents worked hard to find the land were able to inherit more land than others.

Moreover, several households in Kala Tongu village lost their wet rice fields due to the hydro dam construction. Not all of them used the compensation to buy wet rice fields. One old man told me that he spent the money on building houses and buying motorbikes for his daughters (Interview with ID16, 2015). Only a few of them actually bought land to continue their agricultural activities.

I noted that there are several constraints that might prevent them from buying the land after losing their original fields. Firstly, the compensation was calculated on the official price set by the Vietnamese government, while local people had to buy the land at market prices that were much higher. According to an official source, the total area of land confiscated by the government was 400 ha and the total amount of compensation was 37 billion VND. That means on average local people would receive 9,250,000 VND/ha. However, one woman told me that she only received 5,000,000-6,000,000 VND/ha (Interview with ID8, 2015). Therefore, buying an equivalent parcel of land normally incurs additional costs for local people and not all of them can afford to pay this. Secondly, as access to land is mostly gained through inheritance, some of my informants preferred to buy land from their relatives as they consider it cheaper and safer than dealing with outsiders and the fields would be likely to be more accessible. However, only a small number of households with good connections manage to buy back wet rice fields to continue farming. Others choose to rent the wet rice fields and pay a fee rather than buying the land.

In terms of gendered access to land, according to K'ho tradition, wet rice fields belong to women, but the main labourers are men.[42] Men are in charge of hard labour such as ploughing and carrying rice during and after harvesting; and women are in charge of work requiring finer details such as sowing or milling. The gendered division of labour is much clearer for the older generation, while younger couples (under 35 years) tend to get involved in the whole process together. It is noticeable that in the village, young women who attend college and university are normally absent in agricultural activities for several years during their studies. This is more applicable for more well-off or elite households. For example, in the village head and indigenous chief's house, their daughters were studying in Dalat City and Ho Chi Minh City when I was there. These educated women are not expected by their families to participate in farming work, other than during their summer holiday.

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[42] Since there is no hill rice terrace in the village anymore, I did not get much information about how gender division of labour is practised with shifting cultivation.

5.3.2. Coffee plantations

Coffee land and cash crops present a different story altogether. Coffee land (i.e. land planted with coffee) can be part of home gardens or forest being cut down and converted to a coffee plantation. Some coffee land might be converted to wet rice fields if they are flat and near to water sources. However, I did not come across any cases where wet rice fields have been converted to coffee land. According to local people, they started planting coffee in the mid-1980s while maintaining their hill rice crops, and subsequently converted most of their hill rice terraces to coffee by the early 1990s. In the village, all households own one or more pieces of coffee land, as coffee land might belong to either husbands or wives before marriage, or might be established as shared property after marriage. It is widely agreed that coffee, not wet rice farming, is the main source of income for all villagers.

RECOFTC (2014) reports that the total area for the village of coffee plantation is around 226 ha and the income from coffee beans is 1.6 billion VND or $80,000 (in 2013). On average each house owns more than one hectare and can earn approximately 77 million VND ($3,650) per year per household. Like wet rice fields, the amount of coffee land owned by individual households is quite different. Among my respondents, a few own up to three hectares of coffee land and the ones with the least coffee land have 0.2-0.3 ha per household. The importance of coffee beans in the local economy is manifested in the high price of coffee land where one hectare of coffee land in good condition (flat, near sources of water and main roads) can cost up to 70 million VND ($3,000). The Land Use Certificates (LUCs) for coffee land, therefore, are accepted as collateral for K'ho villagers to take out loans from the bank.

It is noted that not all the coffee land can be registered officially. This is because many coffee plantations of local people are located on land classified by the state as forestland. Owners of these coffee plantations cannot get LUCs for them. Others plant coffee in their home gardens that form part of their residential land, or on flat land categorised as agricultural land. In those cases, they can get a LUC. In this research, I discuss two types of LUCs: for agricultural lands; and for forestlands. Specifically, in this chapter and Chapter 6, I use the term LUCs in reference to agricultural lands that are used to plant wet rice, short-term cash crops (bean, maize) or coffee. In Chapter 7, I use LUCs or Forestland Use Certificates in reference to forestlands that have been converted into coffee land. I will explain the Forestland Use Certificate in detail in Chapter 7 (7.2.2). The coffee industry is the main reason for villagers to borrow money to invest in their plantation. Despite various credit schemes offered by the central and provincial government, many

households in Kala Tongu now turn to private money-lenders, mostly Kinh people, as not all of them manage to secure the loans as members of Women's Unions or Farmers' Unions. Moreover, due to the capped amount of money they can borrow from the official credit schemes, some of them have to rely on both official and informal sources of loans.

It is indeed interesting to look at the formation and development of these informal credit schemes in the Central Highlands. After the Reunification of 1975, the coffee boom and migration policies of the Vietnamese government brought various groups of lowlanders from the Red River Delta and central Vietnam to the Central Highlands to build 'new economic zones'. At the same time, it established a network of Kinh merchants who have since served as the brokers between local people and other merchants from outside the Central Highlands. They normally buy coffee from villagers and sell it elsewhere (either within the Central Highlands or Ho Chi Minh City) to make a profit. These merchants also provide loans in the form of cash or fertilisers to villagers, at high interest but flexible terms and conditions. When households are in need of cash, women normally borrow money on behalf of their households; for larger sums of money, these Kinh merchants require both husbands and wives to be present and to acknowledge that the decision to take up the loan is mutually agreed. I was not aware of any cases where men alone can take up loans from Kinh people. It seems that Kinh money-lenders are also well informed of the gendered dynamics between husbands and wives in this matrilineal society and try to make sure that the women/the wives consent to the men borrowing money, rather than dealing solely with the men/husbands.

Borrowing money from Kinh people is so commonplace that most of my conversations with local people start with stories of how much they owe the Kinh money-lenders as well as how unstable and high the interest rates have become lately. In November, when the villagers start harvesting and selling coffee beans, typical statements from my respondents are "I've been to the shop [of Kinh merchants] to pay back my debts" or "they [the Kinh money-lenders] have just been here to ask me to pay back my debts" (Interview with LH4, 2015). Both the local villagers and the Kinh money-lenders, therefore, have been living off income from the coffee beans. The indebtedness of K'ho people will be further discussed in Chapter 7.

Labour contributions of men and women to farming activities within coffee land vary with the type of land where coffee is planted. Apart from coffee land within home gardens or residential land, other types of coffee land are normally converted. Therefore, it takes hard work and physical strength to clear the land, remove rocks and improve the soil quality before planting coffee. Although as I noted earlier, younger couples tend to

work the land together, coffee land is indeed a 'masculinised' resource. This is in line with the new trend where younger men bring coffee lands inherited from their parents or cleared by themselves with them when they marry. This also helps to explain why certain households without male labourers lack access to coffee land. For example, a divorcee with six children has only 0.3 hectares of coffee plantation, which is converted from her home garden. When she left her husband and her children were still young, she did not have the physical strength to seek more coffee land on the hills. With just 0.3 hectares of coffee land, she gave most of this to her sons, who married several years ago, so her daughters mostly access coffee land through their husbands (her sons-in-law) (Interview with LH8, 2015).

As coffee becomes the main source of household income and coffee land is increasingly controlled by men (by means of groom's dowry and household's land titling), it has certain implications for matriliny and women's relation to land in matrilineal societies. Specifically, men are no longer dependent on their wives' clans to access land, since many of them bring coffee land when they marry. Matriliny in Kala Tongu, therefore, is sustained by the idea of keeping and passing on wet rice fields as 'ancestral land'. In modern day K'ho society, wet rice fields are important, but I argue, this is more about symbolic meanings than actual economic value. Socio-culturally speaking, K'ho women still define a household as rich or poor based on how much wet rice land a household owns. Economically, coffee land is becoming increasingly expensive and sought-after thanks to its potential profit, and women seek to expand their coffee plantations through conjugal partnerships with men from different villages where coffee land is still abundant. While women also inherited coffee land from their parents, the amount of coffee land owned by them is normally less (yet of better quality) than the men's (within the home gardens, nearer to the water and on flatter ground). However, as women marry, their own lands are converted into 'household' lands through land titling schemes. Men, as a result, control their own coffee land and that of their wives. Another issue to note is the relationship between coffee land and forestland. As Kala Tongu village has been actively engaging in various forest protection projects, this has slowed down the scope and the speed of land conversion from forestland to coffee plantations. Opening new coffee plantations now requires long distance travel, good connections with other communities, and knowledge of suitable forestland, soil and coffee species, all of which are seen as the men's (rather than women's) competencies. These contribute to pushing coffee land towards men.

The dominance of coffee land in the local agricultural economy and the control of men over coffee land, as such, might subsequently alter matriliny that relies heavily on wet rice fields (women's land). This transition is still yet to be seen in the case of Kala Tongu, but it is likely in the long run, as the income from forestry sectors is still low, the indebtedness of local people has not improved and the reliance on income from coffee persists.

5.3.3. Wage labour

The popularity of coffee plantations in the region (not just this village) also creates opportunities for villagers to engage in short-term waged labour. Villagers usually rely on their own networks (with Kinh households owning big coffee plantations and having insufficient labour) to find part-time work. Men often get jobs that requires travel from their houses or villages, while women tend to remain around their villages and work for neighbours or people they know. The jobs are also diverse, ranging from trimming tree branches and weeding around coffee holes to harvesting coffee beans (early November to January). They can choose to charge by working days or an assigned workload. Normally, they earn 150,000-200,000 VND ($7-10) per day (around eight hours), but this kind of part-time work is also a one-off opportunity and provide cash to buy food for the household or to buy snacks for their children.

Some of them, especially young female villagers, work in factories in nearby cities during peak production season and return home afterwards. These jobs, however, are dependent on the harvest seasons or the factory. I knew of one young woman who used to work in the tea factory in Bao Loc District. She told me that she only worked for three to four months last year and managed to earn 3,000,000 to 4,000,000 ($150-200) per month. However, she quit the job there after she got pregnant and at the moment, she only works at home (Interview with ID17, 2015). There is no case of young men seeking labour in the factories, but one middle-aged man I interviewed used to work as a freelance construction worker and most of the time he was hired by his neighbours to build houses in his own village. However, he stopped doing this two years ago to focus on his coffee plantation (Interview with ID22, 2015).

As my respondents commented, there are not many people relying on waged labour for their livelihood, because they are mostly busy with their own plantations/farming work. During my group interview with a group of women, I learnt that the people prefer working on their own land to working as employees/workers in the factories. My landlady's daughter also told me that in the long run, people will not be able to work for others

when they grow old, so they prefer to keep their land and work on their land (Interview with ID23, 2015).

5.3.4. Logging

If wet rice, coffee plantation and waged labour are performed by both men and women, then logging as a livelihood strategy is more of a 'male business', particularly for young men, mostly because they are more willing to take risks. In the past, men in the village used to travel to nearby old forests to seek valuable types of timber. Logging, for some, provided quick cash for households. While aware that they might have indeed contributed to deforestation or destroying the forest (*phá rừng*), villagers also noted that they were not the major drivers of deforestation because the state (through the state Forest Company) also conducted large-scale logging. One male respondent explained to me:

> We villagers actually did not destroy the forest that much; we only cut down some trees to plant hill rice and coffee. The Forest Company was the one who destroyed the forest. They were the first one to pave the way to deforestation, otherwise how could we dare to go into the forest to cut down the trees? (Interview with PV1, 2016).

The inter-ethnic relations between local loggers and Kinh merchants were also crucial in securing a market for the timber. In fact, most of the local loggers did not start their trip until they received orders from their customers (Kinh merchants). Quite frequently I came across stories of male loggers about their encounters and negotiations with state forest officers. A young man told me that in the first few years after getting married he went for logging trips with his friends. One time he was arrested by the forest officers with several pieces of precious timber and his saw machine. The forest officers finally let him go as he talked politely with them and asked to keep some pieces of timber to cover the expenses of this trip as a favour, which he considered his coping strategy when arrested. Another strategy he used was to buy a cheap motorbike to transfer the timber and when they got arrested, they left their motorbikes, ran through the dense forest and escaped. That time they lost their motorbikes, but they were not arrested and did not have to pay bail to get out of prison (Interview with ID6, 2015).

At present, logging does not seem to be as prevalent as in the past. One reason cited by many respondents is that they cannot find much valuable timber in the nearby forests. Coupled with the implementation and enforcement of forest laws and stricter punishment, logging has become more dangerous for male villagers due to its illegal nature. Also, people with relatively big coffee plantations prioritise their own farming work (a

slow but sustainable source of income) over logging (quick cash but is risky and unsustainable). Lastly, some people refer to their commitment to participate in forest protection schemes as their motivation to give up logging (for men) or to persuade their husbands/family members (for women) to stop 'destroying the forest'. These claims, however, might be questionable. They normally come from respondents whose household are involved in multiple forest protection schemes and managed to access to both state and non-state credit schemes (UN-REDD Program Village Production Fund). Therefore, these respondents are aware that disclosing their illegal activities might affect the performance assessment and the chance of being selected for the next round.

5.3.5. Payments from forestry schemes

The income from forest schemes comes under three main categories. For the first, every household in Kala Tongu is entitled to Payments from the Forest Ecosystem Services[43] (PFES) for protecting 500 ha of Community Forest, with a total income of 1,119,403 VND (about $50) per household per year. The payment is divided into four quarters, so each quarter they receive 250,000-300,000 VND ($12.50-$15). Apart from that, twenty households in the village had forest leasing contracts with the Bao Thuan Forest Company to protect the rest of the forest managed by this company. In fact, the village head signs the contracts with the Forest Company on behalf of the selected households. The payment for these households comes from two different sources of funding: eight are allocated 153.11 ha of forest to protect and receive PFES that is worth 8,612,438 VND (about $430) per household per year; the remaining twelve, however, are allocated 325.24 ha of forest to protect and receive 5,420,667 VND ($170) per household per year from the provincial budget for forest protection. Funding from PFES is higher than funding from the provincial budget as per hectare of forest allocated. Therefore, there is a slight difference in total payment for villagers who participate in different forest schemes. The forest protection and payment schemes are illustrated in the table below.

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[43] See Chapter 1 for more details about PES and PFES.

Type of forest	Number of households	Size	Price unit (VND/ha)	Source of funding	Average income (VND/house-hold/year)
Community Forest	201	500	450,000	PFES (Dong Nai River Bank)	1,119,403
Forest allocated to individual house-holds and paid from Provincial Budget	12	325.24	200,000	Provincial Budget	5,420,667
Forest allocated to individual house-holds and paid from PFES	8	153.11	450.000	PFES (Dong Nai River Bank)	8,612,438

Table 3. Income from forestry activities of Kala Tongu villagers in 2014

(Source: Annual Report of the Bao Thuan Forest Company, 2014)

Note: $1=20,000 VND

Looking at the income from these forest protection schemes, we can see that income from PFES is less than the income from cash crop per household per ha and therefore, it will not provide a livelihood for local people in the long run. A simple calculation of net income from forest protection and cash cropping on one hectare shows that the maximum income from PFES or agroforestry is approximately 7-10 million VND per household per ha ($300-500), while the maximum income from coffee plantation might increase to 70 to 80 million VND/household/hectare ($3000-4000).[44]

Although PFES is aimed at providing forest-dependent communities with income to reduce the need to harm the forest, income from PFES can only be regarded as a supplementary source of income. Most of their household expenditure, especially on important events such as a wedding or a funeral, have to be taken from earnings from the cash crops. As discussed earlier, getting married costs 30 to 50 million VND ($1500-2500), while a funeral is equally expensive as they normally have to kill a buffalo and invite the whole village, which costs 25 million VND ($1250). Local people depend heavily on cash crops to cover household expenditure and therefore, the tendency to grow coffee on their land is likely to continue.

5.3.6. Non-timber forest products

Apart from logging, local women commonly refer to collecting non-timber forest products (NTFPs) from forests in other communes to survive through difficult times and feed their children. They forage for forest products such as wild vegetables, mushroom, bamboo shoots and tree bark (in some cases, thanks to their male counterparts). It is quite common in the village that women depend on men for transport to reach remote areas or areas inaccessible by foot, which also reflects the cooperative aspect of gender relations. As men and women usually travel together to collect NTFPs, they are sometimes treated with suspicion by forest officers who demand to search their bags. Although they collect NTFPs outside the Community Forest, as a local woman explained to me, the forest officers thought that her husband or male family members had just returned from a logging trip and were trying to conceal (illegally) harvested timber (Interview with ID1, 2015). Like timber, collecting NTFPs is seen as a quick way to get instant cash for women and they are promoting NTFPs as organic, fresh and 'clean' food which makes these products more appealing to both Kinh and non-Kinh customers.

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[44] In 2015, an average yield was three tons of coffee bean per hectare per year. If each ton was valued at 33 million VND, one household could get around 99 to 100 million VND. After deducting the initial investment for fertilisers, water and wage labour, the final income ranged from 70 to 80 million VND/household/hectare.

Nowadays, two main products collected by women/men in Kala Tongu village are wild vegetables and bamboo shoots. The peak season for collecting NTFPs is the period between two rice crop harvests and before harvesting coffee (late August to October) when they are free from the usual farming routines and are usually short of cash. Some households can make three trips to the forest per week and earn from 600,000 VND ($30) for bamboo shoots to three million VND ($150) for wild vegetables (Group interview with women, 2015). This extra income, according to my female respondents, is used for daily food and household expenses.

5.4. Summary

This chapter offers a comprehensive look at the formation and development of Kala Tongu village as a forest community. It first gives an overview of the historical context of this village from different clans scattered in the forest to the current settlement area following the Sedentarisation Policies. It then moves on to explore local understanding of different forest protection schemes with which they have been involved. From my field observation, it seems that local people are not fully aware of current forest projects due to their overlapping and confusing nature, which contradict the authorities' expectation of potential impacts of REDD+ on local sustainable resource management and livelihood development. The second and third sections explore in detail where this village stands in terms of socio-cultural practices and economic conditions. Particularly, the second section discusses the main characteristics of matriliny and how it shapes social norms and gender relations in the village. Accordingly, as K'ho women stay near and closely in contact with their natal clans, paying the groom price and controlling the children, they manage to utilise kinship support and enjoy more financial independence than their male counterparts. The traditional structures of matriliny, in turn, have significant influence on local people's access to resources and their livelihood strategies. As shown in the third section, local people still rely heavily on an agricultural economy, especially wet rice farming and coffee plantation. Other sources of income such as wage labour are not preferable, partly because of people's traditional relation to productive land and their knowledge of agricultural production. Coffee, as the main source of income for local people, is closely linked with the relationship between local villagers and Kinh money lenders as local villagers are increasingly investing in cash cropping with limited access to official credit schemes. The indebtedness of local population to Kinh money-lenders reflects the economic conditions of this community. It is also noted throughout section 5.3 that access to land and livelihood strategies are highly gendered. For one, women are

likely to be in possession of wet rice fields while men tend to own more coffee land. For two, as coffee land becomes more valuable in the wake of the coffee boom in the Central Highlands, men's gendered resources are becoming more important in generating household income, which then leads to changing gender relations in modern K'ho society. The masculinisation of coffee land, in which men bring coffee land to their wives' families and play an important role in converting forestland into coffee land, signals their independence from their wives and wives' families economically.

In the next chapter, I will discuss how gender, in connection with other social categories such as ethnicity, age and social status, is played out in differentiating local access to resources. Specifically, the next chapter will focus on gendered accounts of productive land, gendered forest rights and responsibilities between men and women in the village as well as their gendered forest knowledge. I will also discuss the everyday politics around resource access; not only within household and community, but also between the community and outsiders such as the state Forest Company and the local authorities.

Chapter 6. Gendered Access to Resources: a Feminist Political Ecology Approach

This chapter seeks to employ Feminist Political Ecology (FPE) as a theoretical lens to analyse the gendered workings of resource access. In particular, it explores men and women's perceptions of their rights and responsibilities regarding land and forest, the meanings of land and forest, the everyday politics of negotiation and resistance around resource access, and the underlying gendered power relations of these perceptions. The FPE approach does not only inform these themes, but it also suggests the scales of analysis: the individual, the household, the community and beyond. The first three sections of this chapter focus on how human-nature relationships take shape at intimate levels, while the final section makes a link to higher levels of governance involving local authorities at the district and provincial levels. Thus, this chapter reflects on how intersectionality plays out in differentiating local access to resources. It analyses the interconnectedness between gender and ethnicity, age group and social status, in determining who is able to claim what, who is entitled to what, and why it is so from the perspective of local people

6.1. Gendered access to productive land

This section focuses on the current situation of land access in the village including wet rice fields, coffee land and residential land. My data suggests that in Kala Tongu, traditional gendered norms of resource access continue to be respected. Typical scenarios of local access to land are that: (1) women inherit wet rice fields from their mothers; (2) residential land also belongs to women, mostly because in matrilineal societies, men move into the house of their wives and wives' families after marriage; (3) coffee land, as part of home gardens (attached to residential land) or what were previously hill rice fields, is reserved for daughters.

     In the table below, I summarise the different types of resources. I also identify who can customarily access them and under whose names they are to be registered under the state laws. I include some observed variations from actual cases in Kala Tongu village.

Types of resources	Who can claim		Name on LUC(s)	
	Norms	Variations	Norms	Variations
Wet rice field	Daughters (through inheritance)	Female relatives in the same clans (in the past) Sons (who agree to take care of their ageing parents)	Husband (in nuclear family)	Wife (divorcee or widow) Father and Mother of the wife (if the couple already got their land from their parents and has not applied for separate LUCs) The youngest female sibling and her husband (if the parents have transferred the LUCs to the youngest one, but she and her husband have not applied for separate LUCs)
Residential land	Daughters (through inheritance)	Sons (who agree to take care of their ageing parents)	Husband (in nuclear family)	Couple bought land from neighbours because no more inherited land was available

Coffee land (attached to home garden or hill rice terraces)	Daughters (through inheritance)	No variation observed	Husband (in nuclear family)	Wife (divorcee or widow)
Coffee land (converted from forestland legally or illegally)	Son (through inheritance, before marriage) Unmarried men (through converting forestland by themselves before marriage)	No variation observed	Husband (nuclear family)	No variation observed as female-headed households lack men's labour to convert the land

Table 4. Summary of resource claimants and registrees on LUC(s)

As shown in Table 4, apart from traditional norms in land/forest access, I observe some new emerging patterns in the village. For example, many unmarried men are given coffee land by their families and/or look for forestland to convert into a coffee plantation. When men get married, they often bring some coffee land with them and continue to work the land with their wives and sometimes their wives' siblings. For example, one man shared with me:

> In my family, when my sons get married I will give them some [coffee] land, otherwise they will feel embarrassed [with their wives' families] because they have no spending money. Nowadays, it's the groom's family who invests. For example, my brother got married to [a woman from] Ka Ming Village but his wife's family had no land. So he got a share of a wet rice field and coffee land from our family to earn a living. Since the 1990s until the present, most married men brought coffee land to their wives' families. Previously, men just moved in with their wives with their

bare hands. If they found any land, they would give it to their children later. (Interview with PV1, 2016)

This practice, according to him, is to allow them to have some sort of financial independence so they do not rely entirely on their wives' land for income generation. Also, if previously wet rice fields were strictly and exclusively reserved for daughters/women, there are currently some exceptions. For example, if the couple only has sons, their sons can inherit the wet rice fields instead of passing the fields onto other siblings who have daughters within the same extended family. In most cases, the sons get an equal share of their parents' wet rice field, or the son who gets a bigger piece of land will be in charge of taking care of his elderly parents, paying for the healthcare bills and funeral expenses. These new patterns give some interesting insights into K'ho society in transition. Firstly, it shows that within nuclear families, children's rights (regardless of gender) to inherit land are increasingly prioritised over members of the extended family (or traditional clans). Secondly, from my respondents' perspective, there is a trade-off between rights to inherit and the related responsibilities, such as caring for ageing parents-in-law as described, the expense of which sometimes requires a loan from the Kinh money-lenders. A woman whose husband was given a share of a wet rice field by his parents told me:

> Luckily, my parents-in-law have no daughter [to pass on the wet rice field to]; otherwise, the daughters would inherit the fields, and nothing would be left for us to work on. If I only think about myself, I will not bother about getting the wet rice field from my parents-in-law. But if I don't try, then we will not have any wet rice field to work on, and because of that [referring to her having no rice field to pass on to her daughters], my daughters will be poorer than me. (Interview with ID1, 2016)

For wet rice fields and coffee land, land titling also reflects changing gender aspects of access to resources. It is noted that the LUCs[45] and ideas of the husband/man as the head of the household are imposed by the Kinh-dominated state. Therefore, many K'ho households, especially the female members, see these processes as troublesome and bureaucratic, because the rice field traditionally belongs to women but is usually registered under both men's and women's names. Some women prefer to get only their name written down in the family LUCs so they do not have to consult their husband regarding what they can do with their own land. For example, a middle-aged woman commented that:

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[45] See Chapter 5 (5.3.2) for more details on the LUCs for agricultural lands.

We women 'buy' the men [through marriage], but when they enter our house, they become the head of the household and the one who controls everything in the house. That's difficult to cope with. In the case of divorce, they might bring the 'red books' with them. Even the wet rice fields are under their [men's] names. I don't think it is right, it should be the women who head the household. (Interview with LH5, 2015)

According to the recent Marriage and Family Law 2014 and the Land Law 2013, within a household both husband and wife should be officially registered in the LUCs[46]. The joint titling scheme reflects state efforts to improve women's status in relation to resources. This nationwide effort to mainstream gender in resource access illustrates how the patrilineal Vietnamese state sees households as shared interest and cooperative units (Sen 1990) where husband and wife, men and women, are supposed to register their individual lands as shared property. This is applied to all communities, including matrilineal ethnic minority groups such as the K'ho people, and it in fact works against women's well-being. The moment K'ho women's land such as wet rice fields, residential land and coffee land are registered under both women's and men's names, women automatically lose control, even though customarily their husbands are not allowed to lay claims to any of these lands should they separate or divorce.

The relationship between coffee land and forest is more complicated. In Kala Tongu, forests have been converted to coffee plantations, but these plantations are classified as forestland by the Vietnamese government and local people are not allowed to register them. Amidst the increasing tension between local people and the forest companies over coffee land, current forest protection schemes in Kala Tongu might unintentionally contribute to undermining local livelihoods. This can be seen from two angles. For one, participating in forest protection schemes means that stricter regulations over forestland are pushed forward. These are likely to affect new couples as they find themselves with a shortage of coffee land. However, as shown in Chapter 5, income from forest protection schemes (in my view, this is more like a 'compensation' for local people in exchange for their labour) is always less than the potential profit from coffee plantations (and other agricultural products). This makes it less appealing for local people to engage in forestry-related sectors and abandon their agricultural production either partially or entirely.

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[46] This was also mentioned in the Land Law 2003.

Gendered accounts of access to coffee land/forestland can be complicated as well. Traditionally, coffee land is inherited by daughters. However, there is a recent tendency in Kala Tongu villages to give more coffee land to sons. Coffee land is therefore seen as a form of modern-day dowry for K'ho men. Some women shared with me that they are married to men from different villages and their husbands' families give them more coffee land (land with coffee trees, and land without coffee trees or still covered by forest). In those cases, women can gain greater access to coffee land from their husbands' families. Last but not least, residential land is an embedded resource. Local people can normally register residential land and get their LUCs. Therefore, some use residential land LUCs to borrow loans from official credit schemes. Residential land sometimes overlaps with coffee plantations and home gardens. As mentioned in 5.1, prior to the Sedentarisation Policy, most people lived further down towards the church and the centre of Bao Thuan Commune (about 1-3 km away from the current village). Some of them used to live near their wet rice fields (in the direction of the hill and old forest). With the small size and low density of population, residential land was not an issue for local people. After the Sedentarisation Policy was implemented, the current village was formed and households from the old village were given a piece of land on which to build their houses. Therefore, couples who moved out early stood the same chance of getting their own piece of land in the new village as their mother's household. Like wet rice fields, residential land was passed on to daughters. The impacts of the Sedentarisation Policy on local access are visible here as they disrupt traditional forms of access by relocating households into the new village, where mothers and daughters from the same households might not live in the same premises. However, after the village was fully established, the traditional ways of access to residential land found their way back. For example, nowadays, several sisters of the same mother share their mother's residential land. However, one informant told me that her family used to live near the wet rice field (located between the village and the old forest), and she was given a piece of residential land near her mother's land. She and her husband stayed there for several years and decided to move to the new village due to the lack of basic facilities like electricity. Being a late mover, at that time, she had to buy a piece of land from her neighbour because she did not qualify to receive land from the government and her relatives had no spare land (Interview with ID5, 2015).

In addition to land and forest, it is crucial to mention other resources linked to agricultural development, such as water. According to local people, the reservoir and hydro dam bring better access to water. However, they also contribute to suspending and reducing access to land for some households who spent most of the compensation money

on building houses and purchasing expensive assets such as motorbikes. Also, the higher the coffee land is, the more difficult it is for local people to access water and thus more investment is needed to secure a water supply. Water shortages came up in my conversations with my informants, especially women. Interestingly, the way they frame it is very much related to the way they ascribe meaning(s) to the forest. When asked how natural landscapes have changed in the region, they refer to drier weather, infrequent rain and lack of water and attribute these environmental impacts to deforestation. These might have resulted from their own experiences in attending workshops about REDD+. However, this shows how 'access to forest', 'access to forestland' and 'access to water' are intertwined, as all three affect the crop yield and potential profit of their coffee plantation.

Stories about access to water alert us to the changing gender division of labour from the past to present. Women in the village used to be in charge of supplying water for their families and their activities were very much related to water (cooking, planting vegetables in home gardens and washing). Nowadays, women can rely on different sources of water in their home and in the fields/coffee plantation. Since there is still no infrastructure to supply drinking water in the village, the reservoir, shared wells, and natural streams from the forest provide alternative sources of water for household consumption and agricultural crops. Because of the additional physical labour required to set up water pipes to the coffee plantation, the responsibilities to supply water for domestic and agricultural work no longer fall entirely on women. Currently, as observed, they are shared between men/husbands and women/wives.

6.2. Gendered rights and responsibilities of land and forest

Analysis of access to productive land in the village shows that although agricultural production plays a central role in the local economy, there is still a certain level of dependence on the forest. In this section, I will focus on details of gendered rights and responsibilities i.e. gendered divisions of labour for men and women in the village with regard to land and forest.

While Kala Tongu villagers can easily locate certain areas of productive land, the situation is more complicated with forests. My analysis of gendered forest rights and responsibilities, therefore, is situated within a flexible perception of 'forest'. As such, I do not use forest to refer exclusively to the 500 ha of Community Forest that Kala Tongu people are protecting and receiving payments for.[47] Some of my informants, especially

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[47] See Chapter 5 for more details on different forest protection schemes in Kala Tongu village.

the elite ethnic minority people[48], only talked about the Community Forest during my first interview with them. However, as my fieldwork moved forward, I realised that the forests Kala Tongu villagers live in and depend on, in fact, are much larger than the limited boundary of the Community Forest. It is within these forests that Kala Tongu villagers, men and women, name the sacred rock, tree or stream, worship the forest spirits, harvest timber for housing, clear the trees to grow hill rice and collect non-timber forest products for everyday consumption and commercial purposes. Therefore, during subsequent interviews with local villagers, I asked them to clarify the forest boundaries in their own perceptions and avoid focusing solely on the Community Forest.

6.2.1. Gender relations in agricultural activities

Understanding gender relations at the household and community levels necessitates a closer look at local perceptions and attitudes towards what men and women should do in their own societies. In fact, their perceptions and attitudes have changed during the process of integration of Kala Tongu into the broader socio-economic, cultural and political contexts of Vietnam.

Generally, local people in Kala Tongu do not talk about men or women's economic roles in isolation. Their typical response is that in Kala Tongu (and with K'ho people), men and women work together in the field and in the coffee plantations. Although men are expected to perform heavy tasks related to ploughing or carrying heavy tools, women's contribution is always acknowledged by both men and women. Some tasks or procedures requiring new technological knowledge rather than traditional knowledge, such as spraying chemicals for coffee or handling rice cutters, are reserved for men. This is the case both in terms of how women and men represent the situation in Kala Tongu, and in local perceptions of femininity and traditional knowledge versus masculinity and new technological knowledge. While this division of labour is socially accepted among villagers, there is a discrepancy between the younger and older women about women's contribution to labour. Younger women, probably due to their exposure to the outside world and education, claim that they are capable of doing as much farm work as men, and that they contribute equal labour to work their household land. As a young woman told me, "Husband and wife work like each other on the coffee plantation. For example, both of us know how to trim the coffee branches" (Interview with ID2, 2015).

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[48] See Chapter 3 for more details on the local elite.

In agriculture-related activities alone, local people still follow their gender division of labour. This is especially so during the peak time, such as rice and coffee harvest, when they have to mobilise all of their available resources. Rice is harvested in July-August and then November; while coffee is picked from early November up to January. During the rice harvest in Kala Tongu, local people also utilise 'labour exchange' among their siblings or kin relatives. Although these groups of individual households work together in the rice field, there is a clear-cut division of labour between male and female labourers: women cut the rice, tie the cut rice plants together, pack the rice into packets, and prepare lunch; while men use the rice cutter and rice thresher, load the rice packets onto their motorbikes and take them back to the village.

As local men are more inclined to work with farming machineries, this also changes the patterns of farming activities. In other words, industrialising and mechanising farm work helps to shift the workload towards the men and partially free women from manual labour in the rice fields. In the past, after harvesting, the rice would be brought home and stored in a small shed next to villagers' stilt houses. To prepare it for cooking, women would grind the rice by hand using a traditional wooden pestle and mortar (made from a piece of raw timber) to separate the rice from its husk. Since the wooden mortar is fairly small, they could only grind enough rice for several days of consumption at a time. Nowadays, women do not grind rice by hand but use rice mill machines at home or in a shop (mostly owned by Kinh people). As a middle-aged woman commented, "nowadays young girls [like her daughter] do not know how to do farming. Even grinding rice [they do not know]" (Interview with ID3, 2015). Although my informant was comparing the working skills obtained by young women in Kala Tongu in the past and present, her comment seemed to imply that the increasing application of machinery in agriculture reduces women's workload (and societal expectations about women's workload).

The gender divisions of labour in the coffee plantations are similar to those in the rice fields. Coffee is said to be an imported plant (not indigenous), unlike wet rice or hill rice. Planting coffee thus requires a different set of techniques that are not easily mastered. Local people told me that they learnt these from their neighbours or Kinh migrants who came here to establish large scale coffee plantations. At first, I assumed that men might be more involved and dominant in coffee plantation than women, as working in the coffee plantations requires both physical strength and technological knowledge. My empirical findings, in fact, show that the gender divisions of labour in coffee plantations are conditioned upon the location and the origin of the coffee land. As explained in Chapter 5, there are many sources of coffee land in Kala Tongu, either from home gardens (within

the premises of residential land) or plots previously used for hill rice or forestland con-
verted to coffee land. Women tend to spend more time and energy taking care of the
nearby coffee gardens because they are more accessible (within walking distance). As
most of them have to take care of their children or grandchildren, working in the nearby
coffee garden allows them to do household chores or to bring young children with them.

For coffee plantations converted from forest, the gender divisions of labour vary
across different age groups and types of household. Older and middle-aged women appear
to work less than their husbands in the far-from-home coffee plantations, while younger
women take an active role in establishing and maintaining them. This is because for
younger and newlywed couples in Kala Tongu, they have to search for new coffee land,
and therefore need both the husband and wife's labour to work these lands. For example,
one young woman described the hard work she and her husband put into cutting down
the trees, clearing and burning the space, removing the big rocks and digging the holes to
plant coffee. She told me that during the last Christmas and New Year, both of them had
to be in the coffee plantation to water the coffee. Since there were only two of them in
the house, she had to send their children to her sister's house and assist her husband in
most of the main procedures of coffee production (Interview with ID5, 2015). To a certain
extent, the younger or newlywed couples in Kala Tongu share the same situation with the
migrant couples in the resettlement area in Indonesia's Lampung province discussed in
Elmhist's (2011) study. In such cases, a clear-cut gender division of labour is not practical
as they need to mobilise the available labour forces in the household.

6.2.2. Gendered forest rights and responsibilities

Similar to gendered divisions of labour in agricultural activities, there are certain discrep-
ancies in local perceptions regarding the forest rights and responsibilities of men and
women. According to a religious leader, the gender differences in relation to forests are
not clear. K'ho people, in his view, are more concerned about their safety when going to
the forests and the safety advice is the same for both genders. He claimed that in the past
when local people went to the forest, they could only visit those areas they were already
familiar with. They were also advised not to venture too far into the forest. If they wanted
to travel through the forests for their annual pilgrimage trip (to the coastal areas)[49], they
had to follow the senior men in the clans/village (Interview with ID18, 2015). His view
reaffirms the leadership role of senior men in a matrilineal community when it comes to

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[49] The priest was the only one who mentioned the annual pilgrimage trip, but he did not elaborate further.
When I talked to other senior men in the village, they did not mention it.

forest-related trips. Forests, especially old and primary forests, as perceived by local people, are an unknown realm and therefore only senior men, who have obtained rich and reliable living experiences, can guide other community members through them.

Another senior man in Kala Tongu village, meanwhile, seemed to appreciate the role of women in the forest economy. According to him, since women in Kala Tongu go to the nearby forest to collect medicinal plants and wild vegetables more often than men, only women know about non-timber forest products (Interview with ID25, 2015). I noticed that he had been trained by UN-REDD Vietnam Programme Phase 1 to be a local facilitator of REDD+. As a result, he might have been trained about gender equity[50] and therefore he might have been more aware of the arguments for women's involvement in forestry activities. Narratives of senior women also show that their households used to depend on non-timber forest products as a source of food security. One woman who used to join with other villagers to collect tree bark and sell them to Kinh people referred to these activities as 'destroying the forest'. She also mentioned that during the period from 1984-1985 (i.e. before the Economic Reform of 1986), Kala Tongu villagers experienced a lot of hardship and they had to go into the forest to search for food. She claimed that during that time, there were no forest protection policies (or the forest protection policies were not strictly implemented) and they only went into the nearby forest (not the old forest) to search for food (Interview with LH5, 2015).

The dependence on forest products seems to be shared by other older women including divorcees or widows. A divorced woman told me how she managed to feed her children by collecting non-timber forest products, particularly tree bark, for sale. According to her:

> A long time ago, we used to go to collect the tree bark in Brah Yang Mountain. We departed from home at around 5am, arrived at 11am, collected the tree bark and got home at 5pm. We women only carried the bark, men cut down the trees for us, because women could not do it. We worked together. If we had a lot of people, men would cut down 2-3 trees. Each time we normally got around 50kg of tree bark, and we used the bamboo baskets to carry them home. We then sold the fresh bark at the nearby village [along the big road]. The tree bark was used to make burning incense thanks to its aroma. If we cut down one tree, it would be enough for 5-6 people to collect the bark. Strong people could take more than the weaker ones, depending on their capacity [to carry it home]. (Interview with LH8, 2015)

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[50] These workshops are mostly conducted by Kinh officers.

Her story sheds light on gendered forest rights and responsibilities in accessing the forest. For women, when they say, 'we work together', it means both men and women are present at the workplace at the same time but they might perform different roles. Collecting non-timber forest products might be seen as a woman's task, but it is often made possible with men's support. This shows how gender cooperation in labour contributes to benefiting both women and men, not only within a household but also at the community level. As my informant had no support from her husband, she used to rely on other men in the village who allowed her to collect bark from the trees they cut down. There is seemingly no sense in privatising forest resources in this case, which can only work within a community bonded by kinship and conjugal relationships that share certain common resources (land and forest). My informant, seemingly, is aware of women's gendered roles in forest activities, as she says that '"women only carried the bark" and "women could not cut down the trees". In other words, she reiterates preconceived associations between physical strength and the nature of the job performed by each gender.

It is notable that the older women are also more concerned about the impacts of forest protection policies on their livelihoods, including non-timber forest product collection. These women have witnessed the transition of the Kala Tongu community from the time when they could go into the forest to look for their daily food and extract products for sale, to recent years when these activities have been considered by the state to be 'drivers of deforestation' and were banned. They also shared with me, explicitly and implicitly, the changes in their household following the enforcement of the forest laws and community participation [or commitment] in REDD+. For example, one woman said, "before we joined the forest protection projects, I still collected tree bark. I no longer do it now" (Interview with LH8, 2015). Apart from their own activities, many of my female informants mention their husbands' engagement in logging. Although logging was still considered a normal economic activity, locally they sometimes used the words *làm lâm tặc* (literally translated as 'working as a forest thief/hijacker') to refer to logging. This is partly due to social stereotypes circulated by the media about uplanders doing logging illegally. In a recent study about media portrayal of the illegal logging situation in Vietnam, Dang et al. (2015) point out that local people are often labelled as the main illegal loggers and referred to as *lâm tặc* in these articles. Kala Tongu villagers might have adopted the term from the media, Kinh authorities and forest officers.

From the women's perspective, logging is seen as men's significant contribution to household income, and as such it is acknowledged as a gendered forest responsibility. They tend to focus on logging as a means of livelihood and its accompanied risks. A

young woman told me that she was scared that the forest officers would catch her husband and confiscate his motorbike. She claimed that "logging feels like stealing, because my husband and his friends always worry about being caught and having to run away from the forest officers" (Interview with ID4, 2015). Apart from the anxiety of being caught, logging is seen as dangerous for physical health as well. A young woman explained to me why she did not want her husband to continue with illegal logging: "It's very tiring to do so [logging]. It's very easy to fall down. Other loggers in Son Dien Commune [a neighbouring commune where women go to collect wild vegetables] fell down and broke their legs already" (Interview with ID5, 2015). Another middle-aged woman was concerned about her household's participation in the forest protection projects because according to her, "if they caught us logging, they would eliminate our names from the forest protection projects" (Interview with LH5, 2015). The way women articulate their concerns about non-timber forest products and logging, seemingly, shows how they acknowledge the gendered forest responsibilities of themselves and of their male counterparts.

The narratives of younger men are, however, mostly concerned timber and logging. This is because young men have been the main loggers in the whole region. They emphasise their gender responsibilities as the main providers for the household, and feel they have to 'destroy the forest for a living'[51]. In contrast to women's narratives about the risks of logging, young men prefer to describe their own mechanisms to avoid being caught and successfully deliver timber to their customers. In other words, for young men, logging is seen as a way to assert their masculinity. According to a young man,

> Here we have to avoid them [the forest officers], like take another route to avoid being caught, but sometimes they catch us and our motorbikes as well. One time I was caught, I had to leave the timber behind so I could run, I remember they sprayed pesticides in my face. If they wanted to catch us, we could hardly escape. After that time, I stopped logging, but my relatives are still doing it now. (Interview with ID6, 2015)

While women focus on the risks of logging, young men tend to highlight how they are willing to accept these risks. This is partially because logging, according to men, serves as a quick way to earn cash. Logging also requires men to possess certain knowledge of timber and the forest. A young man told me that in the past, if he went further to Binh

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[51] Local people always justified their logging activities on the basis of livelihood needs.

Thuan Province (about an hour from his village by motorbike), he could find more valuable timber (Interview with ID6, 2015). Knowledge of where and how to locate the precious trees and timber is crucial to reducing the cost and increasing the potential profit of each logging trip, which also helps these young men construct their masculinity. Most of their logging trips, however, take place within the boundary of Lam Dong, and the further site, according to him, is at the buffer zone between Lam Dong and Binh Thuan (coastal) Province.

Other young men, meanwhile, refer to male responsibilities as forest protectors. My interview with a group of young men provided some insights on this. At first, they confirmed that they encountered illegal loggers while patrolling the allocated forest. However, one man explained that those people might have cut down the tree to build their house rather than to sell the timber. In that case, he and his group would not report them. If he thought that they cut down the tree to sell it, he would have to report them. As I questioned him about how to distinguish between a logger and a villager who just cut down a tree to build a house, he explained that since he used to be a logger, he could spot other loggers through the type of trees/timber they chose (Interview with ID26, 2015). According to this man and other loggers, if they just need the timber for housing construction, they are likely to cut down any type of tree. Otherwise, they only choose precious timber because of its commercial value. As a logger himself, he found it risky to continue doing it. He mentioned that nowadays forestry authorities have logging under control to a greater degree than before, and that both loggers and buyers can be arrested. He also admitted that logging is a tough job, because when he was a logger, he had to work in the rain, or go into the forest at 1 or 2am. If his motorbike or saw machine broke in the middle of the forest, he ended up earning nothing. Moreover, getting married and having children also influenced his decision to give up logging and focus on his coffee plantation for a more stable income (Interview with ID26, 2015). It seemed that logging, to a significant degree, is about both gendered forest rights and responsibilities. It is the right of local men to access profitable timber in the forest even though they have to go against the state regulations to do so. It is, at the same time, the responsibility of local men to perform their role as providers and meet the societal expectations of a K'ho man who should endure hardship to feed his family. The men and their wives recognise that logging is criminalised by the state and that the practice itself endangers their well-being and the men may then decide to give up.

Interestingly, some young men only engaged in logging when they were young or during their early years of marriage. Logging is a kind of 'rite of passage' for young men

in forest communities like Kala Tongu village. However, as forest resources become increasingly limited, they gradually move towards less risky and presumably more legitimate activities such as coffee plantations or rice farming. A young man shared with me his journey from an illegal logger to a coffee grower, which also illustrates his maturing masculinity. According to him:

> I thought I should have tried to concentrate on coffee plantation, but I did not have much land. Then I went to the hill and looked for space to plant coffee. After I found a piece of land, I planted coffee on it, and people [the forest officers from Forest Company] kept removing my coffee trees. I insisted on planting coffee, and finally I gained something [coffee plantation]. If I continued to do logging, it's never enough. When I did logging in Binh Thuan Province, I brought home lots of money, each time I could get 16-18 million VND [$800-900]. Even if I only went for half day, I managed to get 2 million [$200], but that money was gone very fast. The only way is to use that money to invest in coffee plantation. (Interview with ID7, 2015)

Through these young men's narratives, we can see their dilemmas around forest access. For them, it is the choice between harvesting timber and converting forestland into coffee plantations. Both of these activities are perceived by the state as illegal, as neither trees (in the forests) nor forestland belong to them. In conforming to their gendered forest rights, and responsibilities imposed by their household and female counterparts, they have to confront the state's authority. By doing so, local men also engage in a continuous process of (re)constructing their masculinity as they keep searching for mechanisms to fulfil their gendered roles (with their household) and gendered forest responsibilities (with the state). This is especially so in the context of a transitional matrilineal society where men are expected to bring productive land with them after marriage, and men's labour is also mobilised by global and national agencies to contribute to forest protection projects in Kala Tongu village.[52] Men and women's differentiating perspectives on illegal logging also reflect how masculinities and femininities are shaped at the individual level. In this case, 'rural masculinity is linked to heroism and bravery, linking men's bodies to control, strength and risk rather than dependency, weakness and safety for women' (Brandth and Haugen 2005, cited by Kimura and Katano, 2014: 112).

As discussed in 6.2, the gender divisions of labour in agricultural and forestry activities (regardless of their income generation possibilities) are perceived differently among different age groups. The older generation experienced a stricter system of labour

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[52] In the case of the REDD+ pilot project in Kala Tongu village, both men and women are encouraged to participate in forest protection activities. See Chapter 4 for discussion of how gender considerations are translated into women's participation in REDD+ pilot projects in Vietnam.

division between men and women as traditional institutions of matrilineal society were strong and access to commercialised cash crops and markets was limited. The younger generation, especially those born after the Economic Reform of 1986, tend to push this gender boundary and engage cooperatively in agricultural and forestry activities as long as they help to generate extra income for the household. This is due to the lack of access to land and kinship support to work the land among younger couples. It should be noted that local men and women focus more on their gendered responsibilities than gendered rights, given their position as forest protectors in the Community Forest scheme, as explained in Chapter 4. However, through the narratives of men and women on logging, a tension emerges between forest rights and responsibilities, and what is considered 'legal' or 'illegal'. As such, logging serves as the site of contestation between local perceptions of forest rights and state perceptions (and expectations) of forest responsibilities. Logging is also gendered as it reflects how local people understand and articulate their expectations about the gendered roles of men as providers and risk takers. The analysis of forest rights and responsibilities in 6.2, in short, is linked to the material and political aspects of the forests. The next sub-section focuses on the socio-cultural aspects of the forest through examining the gendered meanings of forest in the Kala Tongu context.

6.3. Gendered meanings of the forest

In this section, I will discuss the relationship between local people and their surrounding environments through their knowledge of extracting forest resources, and their emotional connections with the forest and land. As mentioned in Chapter 5, unlike other forest-dependent communities in Vietnam, Kala Tongu villagers, with support from state-funded development projects, have moved towards a multi-crop economy (wet rice farming plus coffee plantation). Local people have also developed their connections with the land and forest along with their history of settlement and resettlement in the current location. As such, what outsiders think about local knowledge of the forest and how local people make sense of the forest, land and natural landscapes around the village might not necessarily be convergent. In what follows, I focus on how these gaps take shape and why they endure in the context of various forest protection schemes in Kala Tongu village. As I will show, the meanings of the forest for K'ho people take different forms. Forest can be seen as a source of livelihood for local villagers to collect timber and non-timber forest products. Forest, in that case, matters in a material sense. However, K'ho people are also connected to the forest in an emotional and spiritual sense. As such, they perform certain

rituals to ask for protection and follow certain taboos to avoid being harmed or punished by these forest gods and spirits.

The meanings of the forest are gendered, as men and women have different connections with the forest, which then link to their forest rights and responsibilities. For example, old forests are masculinised because going into the forest requires a lot of physical strength to walk or to drive the motorbikes through the steep and dangerous mountain passes. Small forests covered by bamboo or bushy plants, however, are more feminised as they are located near the wet rice fields or coffee plantation and accessible to women. The clear distinction between men's and women's forests is also reflected through the anxiety of women when they have to cross the gendered forest boundaries. This will be discussed in the latter part of this section.

6.3.1 Clan forests and common forests

While local people refer to 'old forests' and 'small forests', they also differentiate between 'clan forests' and 'common forests'. This is linked to their shifting cultivation practices. In the past, each clan occupied an area of forest and divided it among themselves to clear and grow hill rice. Forests, as a religious leader explained, marked the boundary of a clan, and the boundary differed from clan to clan. Specifically, he explained that:

> back then, these forests were used and managed by certain clans. The head of the clan was responsible for finding a big enough area for the whole clan, and they would move to another area every twenty years when the soil went bad. Those who came later had to ask for permission from the older settler. (Interview with ID24)

I argue that for clan forests, the boundaries and the forestland (after clearing the trees) matter for local people. Symbolically, clan forests represent the power of one clan as they could, in the past, grant permission to latecomers to access their clan forest (or not).

In Kala Tongu village, clan forests no longer exist due to the pressure of cash crop development. Following the suggestion of my host, I visited an old man of Lo Yaoh clan considered by local villagers as the guardian of the only clan forest left in Kala Tongu. It took me by surprise that the old man is now living in a hut near his wet rice field. In the local language, this area is known as To Brong Forest. According to his daughter, he wants to live nearer to the clan forest, although most of the area has been cleared and converted into coffee plantations. The only legacy of To Brong Forest is a big tree under which a small stream runs. This man is the only person in the village who can perform the traditional rituals to worship the forest and water gods. When I finally met him in his

old house in the village, the first thing the he did was to burn the incense and start chanting. His son explained to me that he burnt the incense to report my visit to his ancestors. He used a special kind of agar wood to make incense, together with the resin from certain types of tree which was collected from the forest.

As shown in Box 4, my short encounter with the old man gives me some insights about the meanings of the forest in K'ho spiritual life. Forest products (precious and fragrant timber) are present in the main rituals in the household and community. The interview uncovers his perception of forest gods and spirits, forest-related taboos and so-called indigenous environmentalism among the older generation of K'ho people. It reflects how these emotional and spiritual connections with the forest are fading away in new socio-cultural contexts, as local people are willing to cut down the trees where their forest gods and spirits used to reside in order to plant coffee for commercial profit. While the old man is patiently and quietly fighting with other households in the same clan to protect the only remaining legacy of To Brong forest, according to his son, no-one believes in forest gods and spirits anymore. Moreover, his grandson is a logger. As I was talking to the old man, his grandson was busy fixing his motorbike used for his logging activities. The spiritual connection with the forest, seemingly, is not passed on or eagerly 'inherited' by the younger generation.

Box 4. An excerpt from the interview with a senior man and his daughter/son as translators

Q: Can other clans destroy your clan's forest?

A: No, they can't. About 10 years ago [I don't think the timing is correct here; maybe even longer ago], if a villager cut down a tree to use it for firewood, my father would make them pay a fine. For example, he/she had to kill a duck or a goat to perform the rituals.

Q: Then did people in the same clan perform the rituals before they destroyed this forest to plant coffee?

A: No, they did not. Because we fought among ourselves too much, then people started cutting down the trees in the forest.

His daughter: People did not believe in the forest gods, but my father still believed in them and he tried to protect the big tree. That's the old big tree left from the previous clan forest.

Q: Why does he have to keep that big tree?

A: Because that's where the water comes from [To Brong]. Protecting the forest means protecting the water source; the To Brong is the water source which supplies water for our wet rice fields and clean water for consumption. Thanks to the To Brong, there is a life. So when my father worships the mountain god, he also worships the water god. If there was no To Brong, then people who own the wet rice fields near there would not have water to grow rice.

Q: Then after they destroyed the forest to plant coffee, did they still have enough water for the coffee plantation?

A: There was still some water but less than before. For example, previously they used the water from To Brong to grow rice and to drink, but now they have to build ponds to get more water. Also, we always used to have enough water for our wet rice fields, but now we can only plant one crop per year.

Q: When people divided the forest into pieces to plant coffee, did your father and the whole family plant coffee too?

A: No, we did not. My father got a piece of forest, but he kept it, he did not destroy it.

Q: When this house was built, did you use the timber from that forest?

A: No, we took timber from other places. My father knew which forest had spirits or gods, so he only cut down timber where there were no sprits or gods. Otherwise he would not cut down the trees.

Q: Now there is no forest, where are the forest gods living?

A: As long as my father still believes in the forest gods, he will worship them. He sometimes sees a big serpent [representation of the forest gods] near his hut.

Q: Aren't the people who destroyed the forest scared of the forest gods?

A: To be honest, they do not believe in the forest gods. But within this clan [Lo Yaoh], several people went crazy or died because they destroyed the forest. It happened to the household in which there were people destroying the forest. Destroying the forest means destroying the house of the forest gods while these gods help to feed you, so why do they do that? It's OK to clear the surrounding areas of the forest, but you should not cut down the big tree.

Q: Do you know any taboos related to forest?

A: The young generation does not believe in it anymore.

His daughter: But I heard that when women go to plant banana trees, they have to carry the bamboo basket upside down. I heard that, but no-one could explain why.

It is worth taking notice of the gendered aspects of clan forests. From interviews with senior men, I found that, in the past, men were more involved in the process of clearing the forest and converting previously forested land into hill rice fields in both a physical and symbolic manner. This could be seen through the role of the *tom bre* (literally 'the forest owner') in traditional K'ho society. The *tom bre* was not the sole owner of the clan forests since the clan forests were co-managed by clan members. He represented the clan (comprising of several households) in performing the rituals and communicating with the

gods. The *tom bre* was normally an old man with knowledge of traditional chanting and rituals. The position was not permanent, and old men from different clans would take it in turns. When the forest to be cleared was near to a clan, the old man of that clan would be chosen to be the *tom bre*. Local people believed that the *tom bre* had to sacrifice himself for his clan's benefit, as he could not eat fish or meat when the rice was growing. During the harvest, he would be paid back by other members, with chicken or pork as a token of appreciation for his sacrifice (Interview with ID9, 2015). The position of *tom bre*, however, no longer exists in Kala Tongu village.

When talking about the different types of forests, local people seemed to be concerned about whether they are seen by outsiders (including me) as 'destroying the forest'. As cutting down the trees always implies 'destroying the forest'[53], in local perceptions, they only clear the small forests where only grasses, bushy plants, and different varieties of bamboos can grow. Also, for them these small forests are scattered around their wet rice fields and cutting down a few trees does not affect the ecosystem created by the forest. As one woman shared with me:

> In the past, people could clear any forests they wanted, but no one cleared the old forests, they just cleared the bamboo [i.e. bushy] ones. They were not allowed to clear the old forests. They were to keep the underground water [catchment] [...] So basically we had to check the area first, if we saw that the soil in that area was not very fertile, then we cleared it. But nowadays people clear everything, because they can use the herbicides to spray on the bushy plants [to kill them] and, after that, dig the holes to plant coffee. I do not know much, but my mum knows a lot. We can plant coffee anywhere [in any kind of soil] so long as we do not clear the old forests. Men choose the area to clear [for shifting cultivation]; women just follow. (Interview with ID8, 2015)

In the above conversation, my informant was clear about the types of forest they can use for agricultural activities, and the importance of old forests in maintaining a healthy ecosystem. She also offered her opinions about how the land use practice had changed under the pressure of commercial agriculture. It seemed to her that local people are nowadays willing to forgo their traditional rules and regulations about sustainable forest use and management in favour of profits from coffee plantation. The basic rule about not clearing the old forests for shifting cultivation kept recurring during our conversation, which shows how these old forests matter for them and how they classify forests in their own ways.

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[53] This is from the perspective of the state and the mass media, and again, it influences the way local people perceive their own actions.

Unlike clan forests, old forests belong to the whole village and can be accessed by all the clans. However, in the past, access to both clan and village forest was subject to certain rules and regulations, based on both practical reasons, and spiritual and cultural connections to the forest. For example, according to an old man, in the past villagers were not allowed to clear the forest near the spring, and they had to maintain an area of 0.5-0.6 ha of forest surrounding the spring in order to preserve it. He claimed that since they rarely used to touch the big and old forests, the forests were so dense that they had to keep their buffalos and cows in the house to prevent them being caught by tigers (Interview with ID9, 2015).

The arrangement of clan forests was well respected within a society with low population density and low demand for productive land. It was furthermore maintained by a set of customary laws that clearly stated the punishments for potential violators. Most K'ho rules and regulations about forest use and management were passed on by word of mouth and before clearing the forest to grow rice, local people carefully followed certain rituals and taboos to pray for their crops. The usual procedures were described to me by the same senior man: they first had to view the area, and check the boundaries among households. Normally they formed a group of five or six households to work together otherwise wild boar would destroy their crops. After viewing the area, they would drink together. When they cut down the trees, if the tool broke, they would not continue to clear that forest, since they believed that the gods did not agree for them to cultivate there (Interview with ID9, 2015).

The village head, meanwhile, had a slightly different version of traditional rituals performed by Kala Tongu villagers. He told me that they had to do the rituals in the forest and come back three days later to start clearing. Before that, they had to put three rice grains on a banana leaf and cover them with a bowl. The next morning, they would come back and check if the rice grains were still there. If they were not there, it meant that the forest gods did not allow them to clear the forest there, and they had to do another round of rituals. In local language, the rituals are called *lo yang bre* (worshipping the forest gods). Apart from these rituals, in the forest, local people also performed *lo yang da* (worshipping the water god) at the beginning of the rainy season to ask for rain. This is rooted in the traditional belief, which holds that where there is forest, there is water. His explanation of the organic relationship between forest, water and life, and the integration of various rituals with particular gods reflects the environmental mythology of local people. Again, it is articulated primarily by men, and senior men in particular, as these men used to be involved in the process and sometimes lead the rituals (Interview with LH1, 2015).

It was said that the customary laws regarding forest use and management had not been followed for the past thirty years. According to the village head, "nowadays people clear the forest anywhere as long as it is unoccupied" (Interview with LH1, 2015). As a result, there are environmental consequences, such as the water shortage. A woman mentioned the case of the Lo Yaoh clan forest and concluded that "now they clear everything, and To Brong no longer has water" (Interview with ID8, 2015). The rituals of worshipping the water god and thanking the old man of the Lo Yaoh clan are still practised within the clan. However, his children are anxious that the rituals will die with him as no one in the clan can lead the rituals or recite the chants anymore.

6.3.2. Emotional connection with the forest

The emotional connections with the forest seem to play a certain role in modern K'ho society. Drawing on the K'ho people's perceptions of the forest gods, the former village head explained the outcomes of deforestation on local people's lives.

> I told them that if you went to the forest to cut down the trees, you would see ghosts [...] Because the trees have their own lifecycle, how could we cut them down one by one? Now that you have destroyed the forest, later you would not have children and the people in your clan would all die. And that is a fact. (Interview with LH3, 2015)

He also proposed that certain aspects of K'ho culture can be brought into school, so local people and their children will know about the forbidden and sacred forests that need to be protected. However, he was also aware that the traditional perception of forest spirits and its supernatural power should be seen through a scientific lens as well. He warned local people that they can get sick if they cut down the trees in the old forests, but he also explained that people often get sick for other, natural reasons. In doing so, he also sought to challenge the stereotypes of Kinh people about black magic[54] being practised among ethnic minorities in Vietnam:

> Sometimes Kinh people say that ethnic people like us have amulets [to harm others], but it's not true. Because the person destroyed the forest and burnt the forest, the smoke got in him. And because he slept in the forest, he got bitten by the mosquitoes, and drank unclean water, that's why he got sick. (Interview with LH3, 2015)

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[54] It is believed that certain ethnic minority groups in Vietnam have practised different forms of black magic and possessed harmful charms and amulets that could make people sick or mad for years. Those beliefs still persist among Kinh people in the lowland and are sometimes promoted by the mass media.

It seemed that although local people had rarely practised forest-related rituals since 1975, the forest has remained central to their spiritual and emotional worlds. As such, the fear of being punished by the supernatural forces is still discernible among the Kala Tongu villagers.

While the former village head talked openly about using traditional cultural practices to raise awareness about forest protection in the village, I did not have the chance to assess the impacts of his words on local people, especially on men. Cutting down the trees or harvesting timber for profit, as I mentioned earlier, is to fulfil their gendered responsibilities as household providers and to assert their masculinity. Women, in contrast, take a different approach to the forest, and the old trees and the spirits living in those trees. One young woman told me her experiences with the forest spirits:

> One day it rained very hard, I carried my 8-month-old brother to bring rice for my father who was working in the field. When I got closer to the big tree being cut down, it rained even harder. After I got back home, my brother got a high fever and has had epilepsy ever since. When my family went to see the magicians, they said that because the big tree was cut down, evil spirits in that tree were released and captured my brother's spirit. (Interview with ID5, 2015)

The big trees and the spirits must have scared her away from the forest. However, she also mentioned the physical fatigue she experiences when she goes to the forest. As she said:

> It is very tiring to go the forest. I do not have enough strength to go to the forest frequently. It's very steep and there are a lot of biting insects as well. If I have to go alone, I dare not walk in the forest, because it's so dense. (Interview with ID5, 2015)

The fear of getting lost in the old forests seems to be shared among Kala Tongu women. One middle-aged woman told me stories about female villagers from nearby villages who got lost in the old forests because they went to the forest on their own. According to her,

> We have to go with someone to the forest, at least two people go together, because we are scared of getting lost and not knowing where to get out. There [in other forests] is not like here [the Community Forest]. I know a villager from Krot village got lost there and had to sleep three or four nights in the forest until she met another villager who was going hunting. That person took her home. (Interview with ID1, 2015)

She also highlighted the accidents and dangers local people have to face when they go hunting for small wild animals in the forest (something she and her husband engaged in). According to her, the most sought-after animal here is called *dúi* (similar to a mole). They then sell *dúi* to Kinh people to make medicine. She also claimed that only men could catch them because they might bite with their sharp teeth and make the hunter bleed severely.

While I am aware that these women might pass on rumours rather than reporting actual incidents, these stories capture their gendered perceptions of and attitudes towards 'going to the forest'. To a certain extent, they reflect how women construct the meanings of forest from a gender perspective. Forest, for them, is associated with fear, danger and physical fatigue.

6.3.3. Gendered knowledge of the forest

For married women who frequently make trips to the forest (with their husbands), the forest is seen from its nurturing aspect. When I visited a participant in my photovoice project, I was introduced to different medicinal and herbal plants. Many were collected from the forest in the nearby commune and she provided me with a list of plants used on a daily basis:

> When we have stomach ache, we take the bark, boil it and drink the water. When I go to the forest, I collect the bark of this tree. It's normally very big, but we only need the bark, not the timber. When you boil it, the water is red, and we have to drink the strong one. It does not taste bitter […] And when the children accidentally burn themselves, we collect a kind of leaf that grows naturally in our fields, grind them and apply the mixture on the injured areas [...] When women go into labour stage, we also dig a certain type of root to eat. It only grows in the forest and we have to go into the forest to collect these. (Interview with PV5, 2015)

Apart from medicinal plants, she is also knowledgeable about edible wild vegetables including the famous *rau bếp*, of which both young and old leaves are used. According to her,

> We eat the green leaves on their own, but we grind the old leaves and put them in porridge. We boil, grind and mix them with ginger, or stir fry them with lard or pork. They are all delicious. (Interview with PV5, 2015)

According to her, because she knows more about the forest and feels comfortable going there for *rau bếp*, she does not usually feel anxious or scared of the forest. During

my trip with her to the nearby forest, she told me that she could live in the forest for weeks without going hungry because she knew where to find food. She saw the forest as a source of food and medicines, and, more importantly, perceived these foods and medicines as natural, organic and healthy. She specifically emphasised the healthiness of these forest products, which helps to promote their commercial value with outsiders. She started by sharing how she was brought up: "My parents fed me only with wild vegetables from the forest". She then offered her own explanation of local people's longevity as a result of their healthy lifestyle and food collected in the forest: "Both of my parents lived almost a hundred years, because they did not eat any food with chemicals". She also used other testimonies from her customers who have bought her wild vegetables for everyday consumption to back up her claims. According to her:

> Lately, even Kinh people also buy them. Because they contain no chemicals, people [Kinh people] like to eat them. I can sell hundreds of bunches [wild vegetables are put in bunches, each bunch costs 10,000 VND or 50c]. Not only pesticide-free, they can also help to cure headache and joint problems [...] I once met a man when I was in the market. He said that his father really liked to eat these kinds of vegetables, because he used to be stationed in the forest and had to eat them during the wartime. People who work in Son Dien State Company also buy them. (Interview with PV5, 2015)

The way she deliberately differentiates between forest products (which she grew up with) and commercialised agricultural products (which are brought from outside by Kinh people) suggests that forest products are healthier and better for herself and her customers. This shows her intimate connection with the forest in terms of both materiality and emotion. Her sharing, from my view, also reflects her own perception of 'modernity' and 'scientific' where food is not safe anymore due to chemical agents including pesticides. The forest and its organic products, in this case, represent familiarity, safety and well-being.

However, I note that although many women in Kala Tongu village go to the forest and collect *rau bếp*, they are not necessarily knowledgeable about forest products. The above woman is one of the exceptional cases and her knowledge of forest products has accumulated since she understudied her grandmother, who was a traditional healer in the village. Other women follow their siblings, relatives or neighbours to find *rau bếp* because of its commercial value; and all of them manage to access old forests where *rau bếp* grow naturally thanks to their husbands' or male members' assistance. Therefore, even though women might not show that they fear getting lost, things can be different when they are on their own. A woman shared with me that "when I was small, I got used

to going into the forest, so I was not afraid of anything". In fact, she "was not afraid of anything" because she was always with other male members of the household. As she admitted, "I only followed my father, brother or uncle [mother's brother]" (Interview with ID3, 2015).

This sub-section explored the various meanings of forest to local people from the community to individual level. At the community level, the forest was used to demarcate boundaries among clans in the past and therefore represented the symbolic power of each clan within one or several villages. While clan forests were, in the past, reserved strictly for certain clans and old forests were utilised by the whole village, both were managed by a set of customary laws. These laws and regulations helped to maintain the richness and sustainability of forest resources as well as fairness in benefit distribution within the community. The socio-cultural meanings of forest are not only reflected through the customary laws in relation to the forest. They are also illustrated in the way local people perform the traditional rituals, respect certain taboos and articulate their fears and anxiety of forest gods and spirits. K'ho people, unlike other ethnic minority groups, do not have a systematic mythology of forest gods and spirits or a rich collection of written customary laws. It is therefore challenging to give a complete picture of local people's spiritual and emotional connections to the forest at community level. Instead, this sub-section focused specifically on individuals' experiences of how they relate to the forest. It turns out that these individual experiences are highly gendered as well. For women, the forest might present danger and risk on the one hand, and health and nurturing on the other. For men, it is more about boundaries, leadership and complex rituals to ask for protection and blessing from forest gods and spirits. The meanings of forest for men and women are ultimately bounded with their gendered forest rights and responsibilities. In other words, their economic roles and political awareness (on a daily basis) of the forest are translated into the more intimate meanings of forest to them. However, I note that the discussion of gender rights and responsibilities and meanings of forest (including indigenous and integrated scientific knowledge of forest) mostly focuses on the local level (i.e. community, household and individual). The next sub-section will extend beyond the local level and attend to the differentiating, sometimes conflicting, perceptions about rights, responsibilities and meanings between local community and external forces.

6.4. Gendered politics of everyday resistance and negotiation

In this last section, I seek to examine the everyday politics of the forest (and associated forest schemes) through local understanding of forest tenure rights, fairness and transparency in benefit distribution systems (of REDD+ and related forest schemes) as well as local forms of resistance and negotiation of the existing systems of resource governance. It is noted that the 'resisting' elements can be observed in all aspects of local land and forest politics. However, I argue that since these activities are not ultimately aimed at confronting or transforming the system, but making use of them, the division between resistance and negotiation (and compromise) is not clear-cut. In the following paragraphs, I will first discuss local concerns and grievances around land and forest access and move on to different strategies employed by local people to express both confrontation and manoeuvring. I will also tease out the gendered implications of these local responses.

6.4.1. Claims of forest tenure rights

In contrast to state discourses about the forest being a national property (Constitution 1992), local people employ different discourses to articulate their claims to forest tenure rights. Although they did not explicitly talk about their indigenous rights to the land, some of them mentioned that the lands were taken away by the State Forest Company. A middle-aged man told me that:

> the Forest Company took our land, it was not serious in the past, but now because the state flooded our wet rice fields for hydro dam, villagers have no place to live [and work]. If we go up to the hill to find land, the Forest Company has already planted pine trees; if we go down to the wet rice fields, they are all flooded, nothing is left. (Interview with ID10, 2015)

He was speaking from his own experiences since his family owns some land in Hang Um village, which was confiscated during the construction of Kala Hydro Dam Complex. He pointed out two main reasons that prevented local villagers from accessing to the land: the hydro dam construction and the pine forest scheme. He implicitly claimed that these are 'their' lands and the state has taken them away for development and forestry projects. This idea of land ownership is then linked to local responses to the land appropriation of the state. He reasoned that since local people lost 'their' land to the Forest Company, they had to gather in front of the office of the District People's Committee to protest.

Meanwhile, during my group interview with local men, a young man and a former logger himself seemed to be more aware of their forest tenure rights. Specifically, he mentioned that the forest officers and local authorities prohibit them from cutting down

the trees or collecting firewood from the living trees. This regulation is situated within his perception of fairness and local rights of access to forest, as follows:

> If we talk about fairness, then it's not very fair for us, because we villagers need the forest to survive. Previously the forest belonged to us, now it belongs to the Forest Company, I don't know since when. (Group interview with men, 2015)

These two men, accordingly, refer to forest and forest tenure rights in general terms. For them, it is not fair that the state Forest Company control resources which used to belong to them.

Other Kala Tongu villagers including those who are working for the Forest Company and receive benefits through their participation in forest protection schemes also share the same perception regarding to whom the land belongs. Being active in the forest patrolling group and being paid by the Forest Company does not mean that they have to follow strictly what they are asked for by the Forest Company. In fact, even the most active members of those forest patrol groups will 'close one eye' if they witness their neighbours clearing the forest for coffee plantations or cutting down trees to build houses, because the forest used to belong to them, and they used to have rights to cut down the trees for household consumption. As such, it is acceptable to cover up their neighbours' illegal activities in the Community Forest.

Women, meanwhile, tend to claim ownership over certain types of forest and forestland on the hills. For example, one female member of my photovoice group told me that she and other villagers wanted to utilise the areas of forest near the streams where there are lots of bushy plants, unsuitable for forestry development to plant coffee. She explained that these areas are currently wasted since the Forest Company does not plant trees in these areas, and yet still prevents Kala Tongu villagers from clearing or using them for agriculture. She further commented that Kala Tongu villagers are more disadvantaged than other nearby villages when they participate in the Community Forest project because they can no longer extend their coffee plantations. Although she understood (in one sense) that the forest belongs to the government, she explained that the Community Forest is in good condition thanks to their protection and therefore they should be entitled to plant coffee on 'unoccupied' areas. The fact that she brought this up during the latest meeting with the UN-REDD representative implied that she strongly believed in rights of access to certain types of forest for locals while acknowledging the legal ownership of the state of the Community Forest (Interview with PV6, 2016). It is notable that not many villagers in Kala Tongu openly talked about their local rights over the forest.

The involvement of villagers in PFES and REDD+ might help explain why local people were cautious about discussing their rights of access to the forest and tended to frame their claims in ways that formally recognised the forest as state property. This is indicative of the underlying tension between customary forms of access to land in Kala Tongu village and state control over land, which members of Kala Tongu village were reluctant to bring up openly.

Local people tend to be more covert in the way they articulate their claims over different types of resources. This attitude can be observed from the way one prominent member of the village discussed land rights and collective actions around the land rights of local villagers. According to him, in the early 2000s when one of the protests initiated by Kala Tongu villagers took place in front of the District People's Committee office, he was involved in some negotiation sessions with his own neighbours. As he explained,

> I had to intervene, because some villagers said some things that made no sense. They were not well aware of the political situation here. There were two men who encouraged the villagers to do that. These two men had the most land in the village and they said the land was our ancestors' land, but I think now the land belongs to the government. When you have LUCs you only have the rights to use, but the land is state property, and it never belonged to them [the two men]. (Interview with LH3, 2015)

In his view, individual rights over land were used as a justification for the land protest, but he did not support that. Instead, he reaffirmed the state's right over land as national property.

6.4.2. Fairness and transparency in benefit distribution

Apart from land rights issues, local people also showed their resentment of local implementation processes and implementers of state policies represented by the village head. According to them, the current benefit-distribution systems are badly governed as they exclude marginalised groups such as poor households or those who have no biological and political connection with the village head. Since most of the benefits packages (including membership of the forest protection team) are based on nominations among villagers and the recommendation of Community Forest Management Board, the local perspective was that the opaque nature of the whole selection process might make it easier for the members of the Board to appropriate available resources. In particular, my informants shared four main concerns about local governance of natural and socio-cultural resources: (1) the ultimate control of the village head over the nomination and selection

process; (2) the appropriation of the state benefit packages by a certain group of villagers; (3) the lack of clear criteria and/or the mismatch between the stated criteria and the actual selection of households to be given the low-interest loans; and (4) the lack of grievance redressing mechanisms.

Among the various benefit packages available to Kala Tongu villagers, low-interest loan schemes are the most sought-after as almost every villager is in need of capital for agricultural development. The local perspective was that those who have access to these low-interest loans can invest more in fertilisers and water, produce more coffee beans and generate more income. However, there is a limit on how many households can access such loans and how much money one household can borrow annually. Therefore, not all villagers can access them. Technically, one household needs to be nominated and approved by the whole village at a village meeting. In fact, as reported by some of them, this is not necessarily the standardised procedure. One man vented his frustration at the unfairness in selecting the households to receive loans:

> I am angry about that, because it's not fair. Fairness, in local language, is *ring roong* which means we have equal chance to get the loan, so this year certain households get the loan, next year others should get the loan [...] There are many types of loan, but the really poor households do not get to borrow money. That's not fair either. (Interview with ID11, 2015)

For those villagers, it is the abuse of discretion by their village head that leads to this situation. In most of my conversations with those who did not receive loans, I heard the same response about the village head choosing his relatives or acquaintances to receive loans from year to year. The same complaints are applied to other benefit packages such as membership in the forest leasing contract scheme with the Bao Thuan Forest Company or financial aid for poor and difficult households (in kind and cash). As observed, there is tension between the lay people and the people with power (including both the village head and his assistants) regarding who should be the beneficiaries of certain schemes. For example, one man mentioned that the benefit packages should have been equally distributed among villagers. Meanwhile, the village head and his assistants also had their own justifications in distributing these benefit packages. According to them, a household which has not harmed the forest and has enough labour is considered for selection. A senior man further explained that some well-off households were selected because one of the household members helped to coordinate various village-based activities. Since there was no budget to give an honorarium for villagers to run these errands, the village head

and other members in the village management committee decided to include certain individuals, regardless of his/her economic conditions, in the forest protection project, so s/he could earn some extra cash. The leader of one forest patrolling team also shared with me that the selection was done publicly, but the decision-making power still lay with the group and its members. As he reasoned:

> For the forest leasing contract schemes, it's very easy to replace members. We will replace those who do not follow the rules. If choosing the poor/difficult household, we are not sure that they will participate regularly. So we can also choose well-off households if they work hard enough [...] It's up to the group to decide if the members will remain in the group or will be replaced by new members. There were some villagers questioning me about the members' nomination but I just kept quiet [...] We do not inform the dismissed members, because they will complain if they know and it can lead to quarrels within my group. For new members, I will inform them in person. There will be no further complaint because the dismissed members also know that they do not work hard enough to be re-elected. (Interview with PV1, 2016)

As we can see, the actual criteria of selection are not publicised or transparent, which causes unease among lay people. The responses of male and female villagers regarding the criteria of selection are slightly different. While men tend to rationalise the need to have a fair system of benefit distribution in the village, women emphasise their own life stories as an example of being ill-treated and marginalised in their own community. A woman told me about her destitute situation, as her husband has epilepsy and cannot bear hard work in the field. Knowing about her household's situation, the village head allowed the husband to participate in the forest leasing contract scheme with the Forest Company for one year. At first, according to her, they were promised a seven-year contract by the Forest Company.[55] Then the husband had a motorbike accident and did not collect the payments on time. She claimed that after that incident, her husband's name was removed from the patrolling group, and the son-in-law of an influential man replaced her husband. The new member, according to her, used to do illegal logging with her husband, but now that he participates in the patrolling group he has given up logging. Her narrative shows that she was not only upset with the unfair treatment of the village head, but also resented his abuse of power. She was also frustrated by the lack of grievance redress mechanisms. According to her:

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[55] This woman might have got incorrect information, since the typical length for a forest leasing contract is normally five years, according to the forest officer of the Bao Thuan Forest Company.

I did attend the meeting, but I only listened, I did not say anything. Even if I had got to say anything, they would not have changed their mind. They told us that everyone would take turns to join the patrolling group, but they did not do that. The village head just picked his son-in-law. It's a waste of time to speak to him. The village head is the boss, he can pick anyone he likes. If I just see with my own eyes, there's nothing called fairness here. He just writes down whoever name in the list as he wishes, so well-off households can turn into poor households. (Interview with ID12, 2015)

Interestingly, her bad experiences with the weak system of local governance made her go further to compare what happens here and elsewhere and proposed a possible scenario for people like her to have their voices better heard:

Nomination in the meeting is a waste of time. After the meeting the village head picks the households and no one can argue against him. I only see him pick the well-off households, but not the poor ones. If I questioned him then he would tell me that I was such a nosy one and that I did not know anything so I couldn't have a say here. I wish there would be people to come and interview us directly about what the village head did wrong; because right now, we take the trouble to attend the meetings, but when we want to talk about the negative things, he will not allow us. (Interview with ID12, 2015)

It seemed to her that the internal system of governance is not working well for poor households like hers and there is a need to have alternative fora for local people to address their grievances instead of village meetings like the current situation.

6.4.3. Gendered resistance and negotiation

Through discussing the ways that local people articulated their claims over forest and their perception of (un)fairness, we can observe local forms of resistance and negotiation. These might be everyday rumours and gossip about the village head abusing his power to benefit his relatives (Scott 1985), the 'slowly but surely' ways of encroaching the forestland and converting it into coffee plantations or the collective demonstration to ask for a three-way dialogue with the District People's Committee authorities, the Forest Company officers and affected households in Kala Tongu.

While the collective actions of peasants might be considered early forms of activism, I argue that it does not in fact gain much success from the perspective of the participants. The former village head carefully selected his words to describe the nature of the land protest in early 2000. He told me that the authorities from the District People's Committee explained to the villagers that agricultural land was different from forestland and promised that they would give some land to the villagers. But he reported that, "Back

then, we went back without getting any land. Until now we did not get any land, it was just lip service" (Interview with LH3, 2015). For those who participated in the protest, they had reached an agreement with the Forest Company. Another senior man in the village summarised the situation in a more balanced way:

> The Forest Company people went to measure and demarcate their land, if someone's coffee plantation happened to be within their map of forestland, they had to reclaim it, because it's forestland. So for households which already encroached on the land, they had to ask for empathy from the Forest Company people [to continue to plant coffee there]. The Forest Company left some plots of land for villagers, but the government could not issue the LUCs because it's still forestland. Not all villagers got their land confiscated by the Forest Company. Some lodged complaints and came to see the Forest Company people. The Forest Company also had good intentions and left some land for villagers. Unless they encroached too much, then the land had to be confiscated for forestry activities. The Forest Company dealt with it quite well. If the households continue to encroach on the forestland, then the Forest Company will enforce their own punishment, or confiscate and arrest the violators. (Interview with LH2, 2015)

However, the protest did not and will not fully resolve the problems. The politics of everyday resistance and negotiation still continue in the village and women are leading these battles. On the one hand, they use the discourse of poverty as an excuse to encroach onto the land, as they are in need of land to work, to earn a living and feed their children. In this case, their gender roles as care-givers are mobilised to justify their actions. On the other hand, they portray themselves as vulnerable and illiterate women, being punished by Kinh forest officials who have their own stereotypes of women from ethnic minorities. A middle-aged woman recalled a difficult time when she had to fight forest officials to keep her land:

> Back then I had to bring my children with me because I could not find anyone to look after them for me. We went to the hill, they chased us, they used the long stick to hit us, I was scared. I begged them to let me work there, but they said that the land belonged to the Forest Company. All of them were Kinh people, they also threatened me, if we did not leave, they confiscated our working tools, but they did not hit us. Sometimes I went there alone or with other women, because my husband had to do logging to earn money. When they caught us, they asked us to sign the statement of violation. But I told them that I did not know how to read or write, and I did not sign. If I had signed, they would have chased us from the land completely and we would have had no way to go back. (Interview with ID13, 2015)

The woman, accordingly, had her own gender strategy to deal with the forest officers. Through begging the forest officers for sympathy and pretending to be illiterate, she managed to gain and maintain her (and her household's) access to land. This can only be

realised in the context of an upland community where social stereotypes of ethnic minorities as poverty-stricken and low-educated groups dominate. K'ho women have suffered from these stereotypes, yet some of them intelligently make use of them to maintain their access to land. For others, it is their courage that helps them secure their land access. As a young woman shared with me,

> people who are scared or have no guts to continue planting coffee abandon their land, and now it's re-forested again. Our group has been planting coffee there, because we followed a Kinh villager who manages to clear a lot of land. He still converts forest to coffee plantations, so we do [so] as well. If he wins, we win. If he loses, we lose. Also [we can do this without fear] because the pine forest is very far from our coffee plantation and that area of forest is not the forbidden forest anyway. (Interview with ID5, 2015)

Overall, the three issues (local understanding of forest tenure rights, fairness and transparency in benefit distribution systems, and local forms of resistance and negotiation to existing systems of resource governance) are intertwined. Through various means of articulating their understanding of how local systems of resource governance should work, local people are given an opportunity to exercise their agency. As they strongly express their own perceptions and act accordingly, it seems that they are pro-active in making use of different forms of resistance to assert and justify their access to land/forest. It is interesting to compare men's and women's gendered strategies in responding to the governance systems. As showed in this sub-section, men tend to be more rational and less personal in pointing out the weakness of the governance system and possible ways to resolve them. At the same time, they are willing to cooperate with their neighbours and the state to maximise their chance of access to resources. Women, in contrast, are inclined to rely on their personal experiences or individual cases to articulate their view of the governance systems. Also, they purposely reproduce the social stereotypes regarding ethnic minority groups as being poor, in need of land, and ignorant of state laws to maintain their access to land and forest, despite the illegal nature of these resources in the eyes of the state (see Box 5 for an example of gendered strategies of local people to maintain their access to coffee land).

Box 5. An excerpt from the interview with a young K'ho woman about her encounter with the Kinh forest officers

One time I met the forest officers, and one of them asked me, "why do you go destroy the forest while you are still so young?" I then responded to him, "I am not young, I am 22 years old already". He told me, "if you are 22 years old, then you should go to school, not destroy the forest or practice shifting cultivation. It's not good. Aren't you scared of being shot by Mr. V?" [Kinh forest officer] I did not know who Mr. V was, so I said, "I am not scared, if he shot me, then I would just die, nothing to be scared". A while ago, my husband saw them coming so he told me, "you are a woman, it's easier to talk with them, we men find it so difficult to talk through things, I will hide over there, they will not see me, and you just go and talk to them."
Then the forest officials came and asked me, "Who allows you to clear the land here, come and sign here [the statement of land encroachment]!" I told them, "I don't know how to write, I don't go to school, I have no land to plant coffee or to build the house. Later maybe my husband and I will have to cut the trees and build our house here [in the coffee plantation]. We started planting coffee late, so we could not find empty land to work anymore. Now we only plant coffee in the alleys near the streams, we do not cut down the pine trees to plant coffee, why don't you allow us?"

Having heard me, that man said "OK, you can only plant coffee at the alleys at the foothill; you can't go up to the hill and plant coffee. I saw you plant a lot of winter gourd up there, give me one two pieces of winter gourd OK?" I responded "Yes, of course, you can take as many as you want, but please don't remove my coffee trees". The other official still pushed me to sign the statement, but since one of them already told me that, I thought he was just trying to threaten me. Then the first man said to his colleague, "Just let them plant here, because it's flat here." He continued to tell me: "Mr. N [a neighbour from her husband's village] already told me the name of those who illegally occupied the land here. Are you actually local people here?" Then he made me to spell out my father-in-law's name, but I refused, explaining that we K'ho people could not spell out our parents' names. He asked where my parents-in-law were, and I said I did not know. But he was already informed by Mr. N, so they caught my parents-in-law in the hut, confiscated their tools and asked them to sign the statement. It's because Mr. N already told the forest officials, he is a rich man, he works with the forest officials maybe, I don't really know. I think here we should only mind our own business, why go putting your nose in someone else's business? Since that time, I never met anyone from the Forest Company. Before they left, they also said that they would summon us to the Commune People's Committee to solve the problem, and we would have to pay a fine. We were also scared to hear that [because my parents in law signed the statement with them]. But nothing happened after that. The coffee that we have planted since that day has all been harvested.

6.5. Summary

Throughout Chapter 6, I analysed the gendered accounts of land and forest access, local perceptions of forest rights, and responsibilities and meanings from the gender perspective and from different scales.

There are several issues to be underlined here. It appears that local people rarely discuss their gendered forest rights, but focus more on their forest responsibilities in their general interactions with local authorities. They occasionally discuss 'forest rights' with me as a researcher, although often with caution and less explicitly than when talking of many other issues. This should be attributed to the involvement of Kala Tongu in various forest protection schemes before and after REDD+'s readiness project. As a model village

in protecting the Community Forest, Kala Tongu villagers are expected to be politically aware of their forest responsibilities instead of raising their voices over forest rights.

Local perceptions of gender forest rights and responsibilities in sub-section 6.2 were further explored in sub-section 6.3 through their articulation of forest tenure rights as well as fairness and transparency in benefit distribution schemes. The findings show that the 'forest' not only matters to local people in terms of economic benefits or political tasks, but also in terms of emotional and cultural connections. Although these human-environment relationships undergo dramatic changes and continue to fragment at the present, they still play a crucial role in K'ho society. Moreover, the differences in perception regarding forest rights, responsibilities and meanings are conditioned by gender, age group and social status, which then also affect patterns of related resistance and negotiation among Kala Tongu villagers.

Regarding the scale of analysis, while the first three sections were mostly concerned with how community, household and individuals make sense of their connections with the forests, the last section sought to understand how community and local authorities and forest officers engage with one another. The resistance and negotiation discussed in 6.4 are mostly between local people and the stakeholders that directly deal with them on a daily basis such as the village head, the Forest Company and the District People's Committee. Therefore, they show how local people attempt to make room for them to work around the systems instead of directly challenging them. In the next chapter, I will deepen the analysis and evidence of everyday politics of resistance and negotiation at the interface between the community and policy- and decision-makers.

Chapter 7. Engendering national-local dynamics of resource access in the context of REDD+: reflections from the case study

This chapter seeks to situate the gendered struggles to access forest resources in the village within a broader politico-ecological context of forest policies and global and national environmental projects. The first section lays out the different claims, interests and motivations of social actors in relation to resource access and REDD+. Specifically, it looks at how different actors perceive who is involved and what sort of struggles they are experiencing on the ground. The second section discusses how these actors mobilise resources and develop strategies to materialise their claims. While the first section is about insiders' perspectives of who should be entitled to land and forest in the village, in the second section, I present a more structural analysis of how 'everyday politics' (Kerkvliet 2005) of resource access reflect the dynamics of power relations among actors. Finally, the last section brings the discussion back to REDD+ and highlights the potential impacts of on-going REDD+ pilot projects on local communities.

7.1. Who can access what? Articulating claims, interests and motivations in resource access

In this section, I focus on how the actors involved articulate their claims regarding land and forest access. Firstly, I describe the perceptions of Kala Tongu officers and ethnic minority peoples regarding forest roles and responsibilities and explore the links between these perceptions and the state discourse of deforestation. I then discuss the socio-economic relationship between the ethnic minorities and the majority group (Kinh people), especially the indebtedness of ethnic minority households in Kala Tongu village. In doing so, I aim to explore how ethnicity is played out in determining who is able to access land and forest. Secondly, I tease out the mismatch between women's interpretation of their own gendered forest rights and responsibilities and gender-related activities of current pilot projects, which intentionally overlook existing gender dynamics in matrilineal societies. This is to understand how gender acts as a mediating factor in shaping an individual's claims, interests and motivations within the relevant ethnic community. Thirdly, I situate these differentiated claims within the broader social structures of Kala Tongu village and show how they operate under the patrilineal resource governance imposed by the state. Through these observations, I seek to show how social structures and power relations at various levels, together with ethnicity and gender, shape and reshape how local actors articulate their own claims, interests and motivations and in turn, how they take action.

7.1.1. Ethnicity and access claims

Perceptions of Kinh officers and ethnic minority people

In this sub-section, I reflect on the perceptions of Kinh officers and ethnic minority people regarding their forest rights and responsibilities and how they are situated within the state discourse of deforestation. For Kinh officers, their understanding of the rights and responsibilities of ethnic minority groups living near forested areas manifests itself in how they explain why Kala Tongu was included in the Community Forest and the REDD+ pilot project of the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme. Their explanations focus on two aspects. Firstly, when Kala Tongu village first joined the Community Forest scheme in 2011, the villagers volunteered to protect the Community Forest without payment for more than a year. At the time, this was considered a good model of community-based forest protection for other ethnic minorities in the region. According to one forest officer, being a good model of community-based forest protection was the most important criterion by which to select a REDD+ pilot project (Interview with ID24, 2015). Secondly, this community was said to meet the other criteria of a pilot site, especially in terms of ethnic composition and socio-cultural structures. Specifically, both Kala Tongu and Preteng 2, the two chosen villages to implement REDD+ pilot activities of the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme Phase 2 in Lam Dong Province, are mostly populated by ethnic minority households who still preserve their matrilineal-based systems for land access and marriage practices. The above-mentioned criteria are not publicly announced by the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme Phase 2 on their website. However, my impression is that there is an unwritten set of criteria that varies according to different types of stakeholders. Both the REDD+ officers and the NGO practitioners seemed to have strong views on what constitutes an ideal pilot site. For REDD+, this village is ideal for their pilot project, because they can build on an established working relationship for forest protection and because the village's composition allows them to work with ethnic minorities as desired.[56]

Meanwhile, local villagers are not able to articulate why their community is involved in REDD+. The explanations I was offered have mostly came from those who were directly involved in decision-making and management of this REDD+ pilot project. It is likely that the site selection was made by forestry and REDD+ officers, and that local villagers were then informed about this decision at a village meeting. Although there

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[56] A more detailed discussion of the politics of site selection can be found in Chapter 4.

might have been some negotiations between Kala Tongu villagers and the REDD+ decision-makers and local authorities before the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme Phase 2 was implemented in the village, the whole process appears to have been more of a top-down or one-way decision.

These decisions from the top, as we might call them, tend to reflect certain socio-cultural stereotypes about ethnic minorities and their traditional livelihood. For example, one of the forest officers interviewed mentions that Kala Tongu was considered an exceptional case among ethnic minority groups as they managed to protect the 500 ha of Community Forest allocated to them despite the fact that they had previously practised shifting cultivation. This reiterates the common stereotypical view held by the state (and the majority group) of ethnic minorities. In the official document of REDD+, for example, the Lam Dong Provincial REDD+ Action Plan (2014), the main drivers of deforestation are said to be ethnic minorities and their shifting cultivation practices. In particular, it is believed that 'ethnic minority people have been carrying out deforestation and converting forestland to settlements and agricultural land to support their traditionally very large families' (Part 1, 1.1.4). Both the local forest officer and the official document of REDD+ in Lam Dong share the same concern and perhaps socio-cultural stereotype about ethnic minorities as the main drivers of deforestation in the Vietnamese upland. In this case, the ethnic minorities (specifically K'ho people in Kala Tongu village) are being objectified by the state and NGOs as the 'problematic' groups in terms of environmental conservation. Therefore, from the perspective of the state, ethnic minorities are prioritised as a target for intervention projects, including REDD+.

However, there may be other agendas underlying the state discourse of ethnic minority people as the main drivers of deforestation. Although implicit, this discourse implies that ethnic minorities are expected to be responsible for the environmental well-being of the country and that they should put more effort into conserving the forest for carbon sequestration. For example, a draft of REDD+ Strategy and REDD+ Readiness published on the official website of REDD in Vietnam recognised the role of ethnic minorities in sustainable forest management and effective monitoring, but noted that 'this is probably more valid for minorities with a long history of association with particular forests than for migrant ethnic communities such as those migrating from the depleted forest regions of the north to the Central Highlands'.[57] As such, it is clear that local ethnic

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[57] Refer to Vietnam REDD Office, REDD+ Strategy and REDD+ Readiness, Sub-section on Role of Ethnic Minorities, available online at http://vietnamredd.org/Upload/CMS/Content/Introduction/REDD%20strategy%20and%20REDD%20readiness-final.pdf

minority groups, not all forest dwellers, are the main targets for REDD+ pilot projects. The other groups, as noted on the REDD+ website, including ethnic minorities who migrated from the uplands in North-western or Central Vietnam and the majority group (hereafter Kinh people) who migrated from the lowland.

The Kinh people are is rarely mentioned in official documents relating to REDD+ as a potential target group or as a stakeholder in forest protection and development schemes and REDD+. This is the case in Kala Tongu village where the proportion of Kinh households in the village is low and their main livelihood is not agriculture or forestry activities. The competition for resources in Kala Tongu village between ethnic minorities and Kinh people, therefore, is expected to be less severe than in nearby villages where Kinh people arrived earlier and managed to occupy relatively large areas of land for coffee plantations. Moreover, according to my empirical data, Kinh people in Kala Tongu are not farmers or forest labourers; they rely mostly on small businesses to generate income, and some of them provide ethnic minority households with small loans. According to one interview with a Kinh household, those small loans are often 'quick cash' for everyday consumption rather than big loans for agricultural investment. This, meanwhile, is not mentioned by ethnic minority households, partly because they might feel embarrassed talking about borrowing money from their Kinh neighbours, and partly because the Kinh households in Kala Tongu village do not lend large amounts of money. When Kala Tongu villagers need to borrow large sums of money, they normally travel to other villages and borrow from Kinh people there, as they have better-established businesses which offer bigger loans. Therefore, in this sub-section, when I refer to the ethnic minority and Kinh relationship, I am not only referring to ethnic minority and Kinh people in Kala Tongu, but also to relations between ethnic minorities in Kala Tongu village and Kinh people in other villages. I also differentiate between the relationships or alliances between ordinary ethnic villagers and Kinh people, and elite ethnic villagers[58] and Kinh people, as the nature of these alliances might vary based on the social and politico-economic status of those involved.

Between the ethnic minority and Kinh people inside and outside Kala Tongu village, my research findings suggest that Kinh people also contribute to shaping local access to resources. They help the local population connect with marketisation, provide them with capital to invest in large-scale commercial cash crops, and stimulate an official and unofficial process of land transfer from ethnic minority households to elite ethnic

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[58] See Chapter 3 (3.2.1) for more detail about the local elite.

minority and Kinh people. This is closely linked to a shift of agricultural economy from single-crop rice farming to coffee plantation in Kala Tongu village. During my conversations with local ethnic minority villagers, I often heard them mention how they gave up hill rice cultivation and converted the terraces into coffee plantations following the example of Kinh migrants. I did not manage to trace the historical context of coffee plantation in Di Linh district and Kala Tongu village, but according to some senior men in Kala Tongu and neighbouring villages, they only started growing coffee after the Reunification of 1975. From the local perspective, the migrant Kinh people played a crucial role in altering the landscape and traditional methods of land use and management, when coffee gradually replaced hill rice as the main crops (together with wet rice). The extension of the coffee economy in the region nowadays provides the main income and creates wage labour opportunities for local ethnic minority people, especially during coffee harvest. With the penetration of Kinh people into Kala Tongu village, some local ethnic minority households, including one of my host families, also see opportunities for selling their land. I was told by my landlady that they managed to accrue the necessary capital to build a new house from selling land to a Kinh merchant. The land was sought-after and thus well-priced at that time because it was located right next to the newly-established road connecting the village to Di Linh Township and neighbouring districts. This process of land transfers, however, is not encouraged by the state and policy-makers and the state tries to prevent ethnic minority people from selling land so they will not become landless and destitute. When I was in the village, there was a meeting at which the Kinh officer from Bao Thuan Commune People's Committee spoke about land transactions and cases where it was not recommended for local ethnic minority people to sell their land. These policy dissemination sessions with officers from the Bao Thuan People's Committee, however, are normally conducted by Kinh officers in Vietnamese. According to a woman who attended these sessions, she did not fully understand the information provided in Vietnamese. Kinh officers may think that the only reason why local villagers sell their land is because they are ignorant of the state policies on land. In fact, local villagers may sell their land if they think it is necessary; and in case of being questioned by the Kinh officers, they might simply explain that they are not aware of the current policies.

The economic role of Kinh people is seen differently by local elites. This, however, is not specific to Kinh people in Kala Tongu village alone. According to those elite ethnic minorities, Kinh people in general tend to take advantage of local ethnic minorities and even cheat them in order to get wealthy. Moreover, as Kinh people often run small businesses based on buying and selling agricultural products for profit and lending money

with high interest rates, Kinh people in Kala Tongu village are seen by the local elite minority as traders rather than farmers. As such, these Kinh people are perceived not to have a connection with the land, nor to work hard in the field like local K'ho people, and therefore, in the view of elite ethnic minorities, they should not be entitled to benefit from state-funded forestry schemes. The historical relationship between ethnic minority and Kinh people is reflected in local perceptions of who should be the main target of forestry projects. This also resonates well with the state and international donors' perception of the importance of ethnic minority participation in the existing projects. The state, the international donors and the local elite share the same idea that *only* ethnic minority households, and not Kinh households, are to be included in these projects because the latter do not rely on the forest (even though this is not always the case).

The emphasis on local ethnic minority participation rather than Kinh participation is not only promoted by the state but also by NGO practitioners. According to a representative of one NGO working on ethnic minority development:

> Kinh people only come there [upland and forested areas] to do business and earn money, why should we include them in the forest projects? [...] Those people, they do not live on the forest, why do we have to include them, but they have to obey the [customary] laws […] They do not care if they are excluded [from the forest projects], they are not dependent on the forest, so they won't worry about it, especially those Kinh households that migrated from the north, they come here to go business, to lend money with cut-throat interest, they do not bother about the local villagers at all. (Interview with NGO3, 2016)

Her comment sheds light on how the debates on 'participation' in global and national environmental projects can potentially perpetuate the dichotomy between the ethnic minorities and the majority both geographically and ecologically: this is the case, despite the fact that some Kinh households, following both state-funded and free migration, have been settled in the Central Highlands for several decades. These Kinh households, through the process of agricultural expansion, also contribute to deforestation and therefore should be the target of forestry and environmental projects as REDD+. In fact, since Kinh people are often seen as having more capital to invest in land, and in labour to work the land, as well as good connections with local authorities, it is likely that they engage in a more intense process of land conversion and deforestation than local ethnic minority people. Although there are no official statistics about the main actors of deforestation by ethnicity, the case of Kala Tongu village shows that Kinh migrant households are normally excluded from PFES and REDD+. In my interviews with two Kinh households in

Kala Tongu village, they did not mention being invited to village meetings about the forestry projects. The Kinh man, however, mentioned that he wanted to participate in the forestry projects because he saw them as a way to earn money. Seemingly, the Kinh households in Kala Tongu village might also be interest in joining, but they are already excluded from these projects. This is also the case in other REDD+ pilot sites of UN-REDD Vietnam Programme Phase 2. For example, in a field trip to R'teng 2 village (Lam Ha district, Lam Dong Province), I learnt that Kinh migrant households there, despite being settled for more than forty years, have not yet been included in the forest protection projects.

It is likely that the effort of UN-REDD Vietnam Programme Phase 2 to shift attention to 'ethnic minorities' as the main drivers of deforestation and agents of change in tackling the question of climate change might run the risk of exaggerating the tension between the two communities in its two pilot sites in Lam Dong Province. From the perspective of Kinh people, it might evoke jealousy and rumours among their households about being excluded from state-funded projects and reinforce the social stereotypes of Kinh people. For example, a Kinh man shared with me that in Kala Tongu, the ethnic minority households have access to a better benefits package as they are paid to patrol the forest and receive regular income (every three months), while Kinh people like him have to work hard to earn money. He did not however seem to be aware of the actual work that the ethnic minority households have to do as they participate in the forestry projects, but he insisted that his neighbouring ethnic minority households have an easy life since they can rely on these projects for income. Meanwhile, he also noted that despite their participation in various forestry projects, these ethnic minority households are still poor and cannot handle their household finances, since he said they often come to him to borrow money (with interest). This reflects the social stigma towards ethnic minorities as lazy and dependent on state transfer and benefits packages, a view which is common among Kinh people in Kala Tongu and in Di Linh district generally.

Indebtedness among ethnic minority households

For ethnic minority households, this supposedly 'positive discrimination' might not directly improve their livelihood. In my case study, the ethnic minority households involved in various forestry projects are not necessarily better off than those who are not. For example, in a typical ethnic minority household involved in the Community Forest, forest leasing contract schemes with the Bao Thuan Forest Company, and REDD+ pilot activities of UN-REDD Vietnam Programme Phase 2, the main (male) labourers normally have

to divide their time and energy to attend to both the required activities of the projects and their farming work. According to my field observations, on a quarterly basis, the Community Forest scheme requires one or two days of work (for patrolling) and one day of work for emergency cases (such as a forest fire). The forest leasing contract scheme with the Bao Thuan Forest Company requires three to seven days of work, and the REDD+ pilot project requires one day of work for attending meetings and other activities such as receiving, planting and watering tree seedlings. On top of this additional work, the men (with support from their wives) have to work on their wet rice fields and coffee plantations. None of the ethnic minority households are able to tell me how much they are paid per day based on their payments from these forestry schemes and their work contribution, and that does not seem to be of concern to them. However, according to one forest officer, when a forestry company or provincial forestry department hires local villagers to work for the forestry schemes, they calculate roughly that each household receives 150,000-200,000 VND ($7.50-10) per day, which is the average daily wage for an agricultural labourer (Interview with ID24, 2015). In fact, from my interviews with local villagers, this pay rate only applies to patrolling work (not other extra work), and therefore, the labourers often end up working more than they are paid. Moreover, since their agricultural income only comes twice a year with wet rice and once a year with coffee, ethnic minority households tend to look at the totality of their income rather than the daily wage. This is why they do not perceive that they are being under-paid both in their forestry schemes and their farming work. Nevertheless, I came across cases where both men and women commented that since their household participates in various forestry schemes, the men cannot find enough time to work on their own fields or plantations, especially during peak seasons. However, as mentioned briefly in Chapter 6, this labour shortage or under-productivity might not be explicit in Kala Tongu yet, as the local ethnic minority households can still rely on labour exchange with their extended family or relatives when they do not have enough labourers in their household.

Another constraint for the ethnic minority households who are involved in various forestry schemes is to manage their everyday financial flow. This is because most payments arrive every three months (sometimes even later) in a lump sum, rather than as a monthly or daily payment. Meanwhile, these households have no alternative source of income or investment with which to buy fertilisers or food. As a result, in Kala Tongu, many ethnic minority households rely on Kinh money-lenders to finance investment in agricultural development and to sustain their household's wellbeing. This is considered by Kinh people as evidence of the inability of ethnic minority households to handle their

finances, as mentioned earlier. Most ethnic minority borrowers do not give the names of their Kinh money-lenders, but instead refer to them as 'Kinh shop owners' or 'Kinh people'. This is because some Kala Tongu villagers borrow money from more than one money lender, and they might move from one to another if the Kinh money lenders refuse to lend them the amount needed. There are two forms of loan offered by the Kinh money lenders: loans in kind (fertilisers) and loans in cash. The interest rate varies between the two forms (18% and 48% respectively). In 2015, for every million VND borrowed, they have to pay 15,000 VND if they take fertilisers in kind, and 40,000 VND if they take the cash. The interest rate for fertilisers used to be higher (20,000-30,000 VND per million), but since the coffee price has gone down, the interest rate for fertilisers has also. Compared to the interest rate of credit schemes operated by the state (through the Women's Union and the Farmers' Union), borrowing from money-lenders is apparently much more expensive, as those who manage to secure these official loans from the state only have to pay interest of 6,500 VND for every million they borrow (7.8% interest rate). However, not everyone can access these sources of credit, as explained in previous chapters. Besides, the way these state credit schemes operate, according to the ethnic minority households, is also based on an initial assessment of each household's economic condition and their capability of repayment. This means some ethnic minority households might only get a small loan the first time they borrow, and this amount will subsequently increase if they can repay it by the stipulated date. Therefore, even for those who can access credit schemes, they still have to borrow extra money from Kinh money-lenders. For example, when I talked to one middle-aged woman, she claimed that in 2015, she borrowed 10 million VND from the official credit scheme as a member of the Women's Union, but in order to get enough money to buy fertilisers and food for her household during that year, she had to borrow 20 million VND more from a Kinh money-lender, who she only referred to as her acquaintance (Interview with LH5, 2015).

Since the interest rate for fertilisers is lower, almost every household I ask (even the more well-off ones) chose to buy fertilisers from the Kinh shop owners and money-lenders at the beginning of the year to use on their wet rice fields and coffee plantation, and pay back by the year end or whenever they managed to harvest and sell their coffee beans. Borrowing cash is more expensive, and only certain households choose to take out this kind of loan. Both forms of loan can be paid back in instalments, so if their crops are not good this year, the loan can be paid off next year, but the interest will add up. It seems that almost every household in Kala Tongu is in debt because they are still paying back loans they took out several years ago. For example, when I left the field at the end of

2015, my landlady had just sold all of her coffee beans and finished paying back the loan she took out around five years ago to pay for her second son and third daughter to study in college.

The indebtedness relationship between ethnic minorities and Kinh money-lenders in Kala Tongu village is not exceptional: it is a common phenomenon in the Central Highlands. Research about indebtedness and rural livelihood transformation conducted by iSEE and SCAP (2015) in the Dak Lak and Lam Dong Provinces of the Central Highlands shows that on average ethnic households are indebted to the tune of 50 to 240 million VND ($2000-12000), and 70% of these loans are for agricultural investment and development purposes.[59] According to this research, the indebtedness results from ethnic minorities having no access to state's microcredit schemes and turning to borrow money from the private Kinh money-lenders instead to invest in their crops. In doing so, they often find themselves failing to earn enough to cover their initial investment due to lack of knowledge of new technology or missing their deadline for repayment and suffering from high interest rates.

The financial debt among ethnic minority households, in Kala Tongu and in the Central Highlands, show that granting more or exclusive access to forest protection work for ethnic minorities does not necessarily translate into economic benefits for this group. This finding about forestry projects in Kala Tongu village confirms what Taylor (2004) says about other development projects in Mekong Delta. The 'positive discrimination' access to forestry projects, accordingly, is not helping local villagers in the Central Highlands, and one of the main reasons for this is the lack of financial capital available to ethnic minorities. Instead, the main impact of the forestry projects seems to be to force local villagers to comply with reducing their access to forests and forest resources. This is also consistent with Ribot and Peluso's (2003) theory that access is shaped by capital, which the poor and less connected ethnic minority households find themselves increasingly lacking.

It should be noted that while ethnic minorities and Kinh people do not seem to directly benefit from these environmental projects, elite ethnic minority households might. As explored in Chapters 4 and 5, one of the reasons Kala Tongu village was chosen as a REDD+ pilot project, according to forest officers and authorities, is due to the excel-

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[59] Refer to ISEE (2015) *Tình trạng mắc nợ của người dân tộc thiểu số tại Tây Nguyên*, 9 December 2015, available online at http://isee.org.vn/vi/Blog/Article/tinh-trang-mac-no-cua-nguoi-dan-toc-thieu-so-tai-tay-nguyen.

lent knowledge of the village authorities about forest conservation and the smooth col-
laboration between village authorities and other forest stakeholders (i.e. Forestry Bureau,
Forest Company and Commune Forestry Management Board) in protecting the allocated
Community Forest and other forest plots under the forest lease schemes with the Bao
Thuan Forest Company. It is likely that the selection of Kala Tongu village as a pilot site
helped to utilise the newly established alliances between elite ethnic minorities in the
village and outside Kinh and forest officers. Kinh and forest officers need to rely on a
group of local people who can communicate with their forestry 'labourers' or project
implementers (i.e. forest patrol members) and who are available to oversee everyday ac-
tivities, evaluate members' performance and report back. Elite ethnic minority people, as
Kala Tongu villagers claim, often try to make use of their position, which is granted and
legitimated through their connection with higher forest officers, and use it to lay claim to
resources. The most sought-after resources in this case are official credit schemes and
payments for patrolling the forests. It is not surprising that the village head, the indige-
nous leader and the leaders and members of certain Community Forest patrolling groups
(which have a stronger connection with the village head) are included as the recipients of
loans from UN-REDD Vietnam Programme Phase 2 Village Development Fund and are
employed as labourers of the forest leasing contract scheme with the Bao Thuan Forest
Company. These individuals (the village head, the indigenous leaders and the leaders of
the patrolling groups) are the main gatekeepers for the village. As such, forest officers
including REDD+ officers and the Bao Thuan Forest Company officers rely on them to
run the forest schemes at local level. As mentioned in Chapter 4, since this involves for-
estry activities considered 'male business', these alliances between elite ethnic minority
individuals in the village with (mostly) Kinh officers of the state and private sector for-
estry interests are in fact male alliances. From my interview with a leader of patrolling
group, it seemed to me that although he managed to get 10 million VND loan from the
UN-REDD Vietnam Programme Phase 2 (2015), and received extra payments (around 5
million VND per year) from the forest leasing contract scheme with the Bao Thuan Forest
Company during the previous year, he still had to borrow fertilisers from Kinh shop own-
ers, like other households, to plant coffee, and was also indebted. He emphasised that he
is very careful when taking out a loan, as he wants to make sure he can pay it back. As
such, he did not think having access to a loan is to his advantage. However, he noted that
by virtue of being a patrol member and therefore knowing the forests and the Kinh forest
officers well, he can secretly 'encroach' upon certain forest plots and convert them into

coffee plantations. This, for him, is more important than both the loan and the extra payment, as it increases his chance to generate income from coffee (Interview with PV1, 2016).

These male alliances are remarked upon by other ethnic minority households. As Chapter 6 shows, villagers openly express their resentment and even confront the village head and other ethnic minority people in powerful positions, over their control of the benefit distribution process in previous forestry schemes and REDD+. Male alliances between elite ethnic minorities and Kinh forest officers affect the ability of the poor and less politically connected groups in the village to access resources, with the result that they see themselves as doubly exploited and vent their frustration on the direct implementers of a project. As a result, new forms of conflict are likely to emerge within the ethnic minority community itself, which the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme might not have anticipated when it chose this village.

As shown above, at the local level, access to resources (including both land and forest) is shaped by not only ethnicity (Kinh or ethnic minority people), but also by socio-political status (elite or ordinary ethnic minority). The elite ethnic minority people, in the case of Kala Tongu village, seem to be the group who benefit the most from natural and social resources associated with the forest protection schemes. The extent to which the elite ethnic minority people can access resources, however, is also conditional upon their ability to maintain alliances with outsiders and non-local actors, including forest officers and commune or district authorities. While the culture of decision-making in Vietnam, as discussed in Chapter 4, is strongly top-down, the fact that it is based on a group of local elite and authorities to run 'everyday' activities implies that this local-based (or village-based) governing body might be powerful as well. When it comes to resource access, especially around and within forestry projects, this group seems to dominate and attempts to channel the incoming resources to those who are in a close relationship with them (through family or conjugal connections). In this sub-section, the role of gender in shaping access to natural and social resources among ethnic minority households in Kala Tongu is not explicit. However, access to resources is also increasingly structured along the lines of male alliances, which in turn gives more opportunities for the village head, the indigenous leader and the leaders of Community Forest patrol groups to pursue their interests at the expenses of others in the village.

7.1.2. Local women's claims of their gendered rights and responsibilities and expectations of national actors

Actors' claims are closely linked to their perception of gendered rights and responsibilities, especially at local level. This sub-section is built upon the description in Chapter 5 of local means of livelihood, and the discussion in Chapter 6 about local knowledge of forest, as well as local perceptions of gendered forest rights and responsibilities. It identifies and analyses the mismatch between how the ethnic men and women in the village relate to the forest and how national actors including government officers and NGOs understand local gendered needs and roles. I do this through comparing local women's perceptions, views about gender mainstreaming in REDD+ from my interviews with national actors and the official recommendations of the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme to address gender issues in Lam Dong Provincial REDD+ Action Plans. In Box 6, I list the two main recommendations of the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme to mainstream gender into Lam Dong PRAP and to address the requirements of the Cancun Safeguards, which I find most relevant to my analysis here.

Box 6. Proposed options for improving gender integration within each component of the Lam Dong PRAP framework

Component 3: Measures for action plan implementation
1. Human resource development: Strengthen capacity for REDD+ governance. Priority is given to ensuring the involvement of local communities and ethnic minorities, including both women and men.
2. Review and improve land use planning. Ensure full consultation with local communities and ethnic minorities, including both women and men. Include livelihood improvement options in land use planning.
3. Review and improve the contracting, allocation, lease and use of forest and forestland:
*Secure the full and effective involvement of local communities, ethnic minorities, including both women and men, in the process; ensure equitable distribution of land titles to both women and men.
*When conducting forest monitoring and forest inventory, secure the active involvement of local communities and ethnic minorities, including both women and men.
*Strengthen dissemination, raise awareness, and mobilise the participation of local people. Conduct proper consultations with local communities and ethnic minorities, including both men and women, in identifying the appropriate livelihood improvement activities and enhance their active roles in planning and implementation of these activities.
*Call for local and international capital investment and support. In this process, enhance the active role of women as well as the Women's Union while respecting local experiences and culture.
Component 5: implementation organisation.
1. In the Provincial REDD+ Steering Committee, include members/staff from DOLISA, Sub-CEM and the Provincial Women's Union.
2. CSOs, NGOs, and the private sector should be involved when conducting awareness raising, capacity building and training on gender concepts and gender responsive monitoring and reporting to help promote the inclusion of gender equality principles during implementation. In this process, designate clear roles for DARD, DOLISA and the Women's Union.
(Pham et al., 2015: 12-13)

I note that not all of these recommendations are fed into policy documents or the REDD+ pilot activities conducted by the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme and other implementing agencies. Nevertheless, these recommendations, while aimed at gender mainstreaming and empowering local women in REDD+ processes, reflect policy-makers' perspectives on how local gendered forest rights and responsibilities should look and the assumptions behind these ideas. These assumptions are: firstly, that ethnic minority women have a close connection with the forest; and secondly, that engaging the Women's Union is a useful way to increase women's participation in forest-related projects. My case study, in contrast, shows that these assumptions of government officials and NGO practitioners do not match local perceptions of their forest-related gendered rights and responsibilities or the existing role of the Women's Union in local structures of forest governance. Regarding the first assumption, I was told by a government officer involved in writing the gender analysis report that according to their initial findings, women tend to be more sensitive to changes in the forest since they are closely linked with the forest through their everyday activities (Interview with GO1, 2016). Therefore, one of the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme's recommendations is to include women in forest protection and monitoring afforestation. However, the situation in the field, particularly in Kala Tongu village, is more complicated than that.

Firstly, local ethnic women of different ages claim that they do not go into the forest unless they are accompanied by husbands/male family members. Going into the forest, or in local language 'going to the mountain', refers to a livelihood activity. In other words, local people only go to the forest to look for food (i.e. wild vegetables) or to harvest timber for housing construction or commercial trade. As shown in Chapter 6, the forest economy is normally a 'male business'. Women are believed to be more knowledgeable and therefore keener on collecting non-timber forest products, but in this case, the challenging geographical landscapes and physical labour required to look for these products contribute to limiting women's involvement in forest activities.

Secondly, although women express interest in participating in the forest-related projects, their actual motivation might be different. As such, women's interest in participating might not represent their specific gender interest, but rather their household's interest in being included. For example, with ordinary women in Kala Tongu village, economic incentives are their main motivation for participating in projects. In weighing up their interest in participating, women are mostly concerned with the availability of labour, particularly men's labour, within the household and the potential economic gain (or loss) from the projects. As such, they normally attempt to calculate the time spent on project

activities and make sure that these activities do not interfere with the allocated time and energy spent on their coffee plantations. This is because for them, coffee plantations help generate the main household income and therefore need to be prioritised. Moreover, they tend to be more open to participating in various forestry schemes at the same time if the male members of the family are available to take up the assignment on behalf of the household. In some exceptional cases where the project responsibilities are not physically demanding, and/or the men are busy with other farming works, some women are willing to fill this role temporarily. Elite women and women who used to be invited to training workshops within the REDD+ pilot project sometimes portray forest protection as a national and global task. For them, protecting the forest is for ecological purposes. For example, an elite woman (whose husband is active in the Management Board of REDD+ in the village) told me that villagers here have to protect the forest to keep the underground water. She probably heard about this from one of the village meetings with REDD+ officers, and perhaps passed it on to me as she might think that I am interested in knowing about their environmental awareness. Non-economic incentives are sometimes mentioned by women, as they see these community-based forest activities (such as putting out forest fires) as opportunities for them to socialise as well. There is no mention of potential benefits from carbon stock though, probably because the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme does not focus on this aspect in its pilot project in Kala Tongu village.

Regarding the second assumption, my empirical data suggests that the recommendation regarding the main implementing organisation might not align with what is actually happening on the ground either. Specifically, the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme proposes to increase the visibility and involvement of the Women's Union, a gender-based grassroots organisation, in the decision-making and implementing process of REDD+. This recommendation, in my view, mainly responds to the lack of women represented in the current institutions involved in REDD+. As shown by Pham et al. (2016), despite a large number of women being engaged in REDD+-related policy fora, their full and effective participation is not guaranteed, and Pham et al. (2016) argue that this is because they seldom hold leadership positions. The recommendation of UN-REDD Vietnam Programme, however, is not based on a careful analysis of Women's Union's roles at the local level especially in such agro-forestry communities as Kala Tongu village and other villages in the Central Highlands where PFES and REDD+ exist.

As shown in Chapter 4, the Management Board that helps to coordinate and manage forestry projects at the village level might comprise of representatives from key grassroots organisations including the Women's Union, but it is not compulsory and can be

adjusted in accordance with local circumstances. Bringing in the Women's Union and making use of this grassroots organisation as an instrument to enhance women's empowerment and advancement in forestry governance at village level might sound rational, but whether and to what extent it works in the village is another story. In the village, the Chairwoman of the Women's Union is included in the village-based Management Board, but from my interview with her, it seemed to me that she has relatively little interest or influence in decision-making related to forestry projects or REDD+. In terms of governance, the Chairwoman of the Women's Union and her assistants in the village, most of whom are local ethnic minority people, actually receive the orders, agendas and action plans from Women's Union at the higher levels. Above the village and commune level, the leadership positions are normally filled by Kinh women whose interest is centred on how to discipline the local ethnic minority and Kinh women, who are members of the village-based Women's Union, to become good wives and good mothers rather than active participants in forestry projects. These agendas and plans might be driven by certain stereotypes about the ethnic minority women as not being good mothers, like Kinh women.

In Kala Tongu, the main concern of the Women's Union is managing state credit schemes and its direct consequences on agricultural development. For example, during my meeting with a Women's Union group leader, she only talked about various loan schemes offered to women and their households in the village and how the Women's Union is running them. The annual report of Bao Thuan Commune Women's Unions (dated 2015) prepared by the Chairwoman only focused on key agendas of the Women's Union, such as an income generation scheme through growing mushrooms, and teaching and learning Vietnamese language within households with mothers from ethnic minorities. There were no statistics or outcomes for women's participation in forestry activities or REDD+ pilot projects recorded. When I mentioned the word 'environment' to her, I was told that the Women's Union also focuses on protecting the environment through its programmes to encourage women, especially from ethnic minority groups, to dispose of household waste in the designated areas and clean their residential areas and surroundings at weekends. On top of these annual (customised) programmes, Women's Union representatives also raise awareness of family planning and children's healthcare. The current organisational structures of Women's Unions in Kala Tongu village, with four assistants in the village and two paid staff on the Commune People's Committee, do not seem sufficient for this amount of work. It seems that the recommendation of engaging the Women's Union in forestry activities without reducing the current workload or creating

any incentives for them is unlikely to work in Kala Tongu village and Bao Thuan Commune.

There is, however, one exception: the Chairwoman of Bao Thuan Women's Union, who is a K'ho woman and works in the Commune People's Committee, occasionally offers informal legal advice to women in Kala Tongu village about how to apply for LUCs. According to her, some women in the village live in the same house as their parents and female siblings and often share the same old LUCs although they have their own shares of land and cultivate them separately. When it comes to taking out loans from the state or selling land, these women need to apply for their own LUCs to facilitate the necessary transaction. In these cases, they normally ask for help from the Chairwoman, as she works for the government and is more aware of the administrative procedures. Although these women who need help are normally her relatives and come to her house to ask for help personally rather than going to her office at the Commune People's Committee, I argue that these informal legal advice sessions might serve as a more promising channel for the Women's Union (or the Chairwoman) to tackle women's rights of and interest in land access. My observations about the existing role of the Women's Union is in line with other previous studies regarding the Women's Union political mission and its grassroots campaigns that work against gender equality instead of empowering women or protecting women's rights *per se*. As Waibel and Glück (2013: 357) point out, the Women's Union 'neglected another key aspect of feminist action, that is, the promotion of freedom for women, individually and collectively, to identify their own political interests and the needs which arise from these'. The Women's Union, as a result, might not be an effective channel to mainstream gender in forestry and environmental projects as expected by the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme.

Throughout this sub-section, I set the perceptions of ethnic minority women alongside current recommendations to address gender issues proposed by the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme. By doing so, I attempt to show the mismatch between what happens on the ground and what is taken away and eventually feeds into policy-making. I focus exclusively on two aspects considered by the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme as crucial steps in gender mainstreaming, namely enhancing women's participation in forest activities and the visibility of Women's Unions in REDD+ processes. I then show that these recommendations, despite being based on global guidance and working experiences in Vietnam, do not coordinate with women's perceptions of their gendered forest roles and responsibilities or the structures and operations of Women's Unions in rural areas. While highlighting this mismatch between local and national interpretations of gendered forest

rights and responsibilities, I also seek to uncover how outsiders' expectations of gendered rights and responsibilities and the role of gender-based mass grassroots organisations in gender equality and women's empowerment might fail to connect during the implementation of forestry projects.

7.1.3. Matrilineal-based claims within a top-down patrilineal-based system of resource governance

In this sub-section, I attempt to trace why there is a mismatch in what local ethnic minority people think they should do and what national actors expect them to follow in order to promote gender equality. This leads me to the co-existence of two systems of social organisation, namely matrilineal and patrilineal, which is embraced and accommodated by both local ethnic minorities and outsiders. This co-existence, however, has its own historical context and is linked to broader debates in Vietnam regarding ethnic minorities and their 'traditional' social structures. Matrilineal societies are often seen as a less advanced form of social organisation and it is assumed by many that they will eventually be replaced by patrilineal ones in the modern (socialist) society. As Salemink (2003: 33) points out,

> Following ethnologists of the 19th century, including Bachofen, Tylor, Frazer, Morgan and Engels, matriarchy was opposed to the notion of patriarchy, taken to be the normal state of affairs in civilised society. Friedrich Engels and many of his Marxist followers even considered the historical victory of men over women a condition of social progress. Hence, matrilineal societies that by extension are consistently labelled 'matriarchal' are considered 'primitive' and 'backward', two notions that are often used in relation to Montagnard societies.

Driven by this ideology, the post-socialist state invested a great deal of effort in eradicating the matrilineal systems. This effort was realised through the nationwide propaganda campaign to remove the 'long house' which comprised of several families of female siblings mothered by the same woman and sharing a house, because they were seen as 'key elements of backwardness' (Rambo and Jamieson, 2003: 154). This campaign was backed up by a number of state policies aiming to reduce poverty and develop alternative means of livelihood for rural farmers, such as Program 135 which was partially successful.[60] In the Central Highlands and in Kala Tongu village particularly, 'long houses' of

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[60] Research about why long houses among matrilineal groups in the Central Highlands have been disappearing was not readily available when I conducted fieldwork in Vietnam. Therefore, I relied more on newspaper articles to collect data about the transition of matrilineal societies, for example, Nguyen, P. L. (2013) *Liệu có còn nhà dài như tiếng chiêng ngân, Nhan Dan* online, 2 August 2013, available online at http://www.nhandan.com.vn/phongsu/item/20907802-liệu-có-còn-nhà-dài-như-tiếng-chiêng-ngân.html

matrilineal clans almost do not exist anymore. However, the traditional matrilineal descent and inheritance, post-marriage residential patterns and groom price systems still play a central role in the community. Kala Tongu village seems to fit in with the ideas of REDD+ and its implementing agencies and donors about gender equality in resource access as both women and men have their own land to cultivate before and after marriage. However, as the following paragraphs show, certain efforts to ensure gender equality might not work for matrilineal communities as they have been produced by patriarchal-influenced policy-makers and based on the presumptions and contexts of patrilineal-based communities (i.e. Kinh villages in the lowland).

In matrilineal societies particularly, land and other productive resources belong customarily to women, although this arrangement is not considered legally binding. In other words, women's control over clan-owned land such as wet rice fields is recognised by the community rather than by the state. While patrilineal structures protect the rights of men as heads of households throughout Vietnam, women's names have been added as co-registrars on the family LUCs according to the Marriage and Family Law 2014 and the Land Law 2013. Therefore, the official titling is primarily under men's names, which goes against the core principle of matrilineal societies. The official titling does not only recognise the rights of men over land that might customarily belong to women, but it is also tied to other state benefits such as access to loans and other forms of agricultural development funds.

As matrilineal communities move into environmental projects like REDD+, the need to secure their land tenure through official titling will become more crucial. This is because the forest will be placed under special protection and conversion from forestland to coffee plantation will be strictly banned. Those who own, use and sell original forestland for coffee plantation may no longer be able to do so without a proper land title. There are three groups in the village. The first group tries to maintain its traditional ways of governance, but its land is increasingly vulnerable to dispossession. This group normally consists of poor households or newlyweds who have no land passed on from their parents. The second group partially adopts LUCs/land titling systems to make use of state resources. These are households that are well aware of the legal systems of land ownership and more importantly can afford to pay to apply for LUCs. The last group is comprised of those who choose to keep their traditionally occupied land and convert their land to be officially registered. For this last group, it is not surprising that many of them can do so thanks to their position in mass grassroots organisations or personal networks. Some villagers occasionally referred to Kinh people who are rich and know the right

people in the local government to facilitate their application for LUCs. They also commented on how convenient it is to have official LUCs. Seemingly, for matrilineal villagers, patrilineal institutions and associated bureaucracies are seen as unfair and inconvenient. As explained in Chapter 5, local responses to household and individual land titling are also highly gendered. Women, especially old women who enjoyed advantageous status in the past, tend to be more concerned about their lack of legal rights over the wet rice fields and keener on getting either both husbands' and wives' names in the LUCs, or only wives' names, as these customarily belong to them. The Chairwoman of the Women's Union at commune level and her sister are strongly in support of women's rights to have individual titling over wet rice fields. However, both men and women in Kala Tongu village confirmed that there is no case of men taking away their wives' wet rice fields in this village. According to them, this is because everyone respects matrilineal traditions of land inheritance. Since it is often costly and time-consuming for K'ho households to apply for land titling and there are rarely any land disputes regarding customarily-owned land in the village, the co-existence of two systems seems to work well here at present.

In short, the Kala Tongu case illustrates how the co-existence of both matrilineal and patriarchal systems in this village might create tension between local access claims and national policies and enforcement acts. This tension is not just about resource access, but also about the state's ideas of matrilineal societies as backward and primitive. This tension leads to state efforts to better regulate land and forest and supposedly better protect the forest through land titling. However, as land titling is carried out in such communities where different land and forest claims are in place, it is also adapted to better align with local contexts and especially local practices of using and managing land and forest. In the Kala Tongu case, as shown above, not all land customarily used by local villagers is registered under one or several LUCs, as even without these LUCs, local villagers still manage to access their land as long as the agreement between themselves and other actors (neighbouring land owners and forest officers) is intact.

Section 7.1 identified the involved actors, the claims they attempt to put forward and how this interaction is played out on the ground, from the perspective of Kinh officers and local villagers (both ethnic K'ho and Kinh). Local actors seem to be more interested in maximising their access to land and forest as well as project benefits, maintaining certain aspects of their own culture and getting more involved politically (through more meaningful participation in project design and implementation of far and transparent governance of forest projects at local level). National actors, meanwhile, attempt to enlist local labour for conservation purposes and extend their control over local access. At the

same time, they seek to demonstrate their commitment to ensuring social safeguards to international donors and environment agencies. The UN-REDD Vietnam Programme's recommendations about engaging women in forestry activities and involving Women's Unions in implementing REDD+ at the local level are two examples. The mismatch of claims, interests and motivations of different actors and at different levels, in one way or another, are gendered. My findings suggest that at the local level, gendered access to land is somewhat independent from the state's efforts to impose and standardise land titling, and that local perceptions of gendered forest rights and responsibilities do not necessarily overlap with the assumptions of national actors. As a result, in communities such as Kala Tongu village, traditional and matrilineal-based practices regarding land and forest access still exist and they are respected by the community as well as by local authorities, although tensions might emerge when the two systems interact. In the next section, I will explore how actors mobilise their resources and develop their mechanisms to deal with tensions and somehow transform their tensions in accordance with their initial claims, interests and motivations. I will also reveal why it is possible for particular actors to mobilise certain resources and employ certain strategies, or in other words, how their deployment of resources and strategies in fact reflects the (gendered) power relations among them.

7.2. How to mobilise resources? Conflicting, negotiating and cooperating interactions among actors

The 'everyday politics' (Kerkvliet 2005) around resource access, as discussed in Chapter 2, might manifest in various forms, including cooperation, negotiation and resistance (and this resistance is not necessarily confrontational or violent by nature). The different actors involved may not agree on whether a particular action is cooperative, negotiating or resisting as their perspectives on it are likely to be tied to their social identities and social relations. This section focuses on specific scenarios to show how these relationships are not fixed, but rather fluid and flexible across different scales of analysis.

In the following sub-sections, I analyse how each actor uses and manages their resources and tactics in each scenario and explore the possibilities for conflicting cases to be transformed into cooperative or negotiating ones and *vice versa*. Overall, local and national authorities utilise structural institutions such as PLR(s), various means of enforcement such as removing trees, arresting illegal loggers, exclusion from the forest projects and even politico-social stereotypes and dominant discourses in policy fora while engaging with other actors. Local people in most cases make use of everyday forms of

negotiation and resistance as their weapons. This includes various ways of framing 'good' and 'bad' governance within their own communities and with outsiders (NGO practitioners and researchers like me). In extreme cases, collective actions, such as protests or petitions, are brought in; however, the scope for these kinds of actions is constrained due to the political sensitivities of the Central Highlands. NGO practitioners, although not very visible, are increasingly influential in the process. For example, they might rely on both actual pilot project activities at local level and their involvement at national policy fora to advocate for the local communities that they work with. While NGOs in Vietnam are largely controlled by the Communist regime, they often seek support from global frameworks and sources of funding to frame their discourses, justify their project rationales and design interventions. The framework that NGOs cited most was the Cancun Safeguards on the full and effective participation of local communities, indigenous rights and gender equality. By focusing on 'everyday politics' or 'how local people go about doing or not doing certain things' (Kerkvliet, 2005: 3), I argue that local people (and the NGOs representing them) are by no means powerless. Rather, their differentiating tactics influence and shape these interactions.

More importantly, the resources and tactics of asserting claims often have gender implications. Among authorities and NGO practitioners, gendered strategies are not visible, although I notice that most gender-related positions in governmental bodies were held by women, and female NGO practitioners tend to include gender components in their programmes, although they do not necessarily represent gendered interests at national policy fora (Pham et al. 2016). At the local level, it is more straightforward. For example, women usually try to act as mediators by using their feminised qualities. They believe that the deployment of 'nice talk' are useful tactics in tense interactions. This is to evoke sympathy from forest officers (both Kinh and K'ho) and to maintain their customary access to certain plots of land or forest that legally do not belong to them. Women might also use 'everyday politics' while engaging with other actors, including gossiping about the corrupt village head or even cursing their bad karma and the potential consequences for their children's wellbeing. These gendered tactics are generally rooted in their traditional culture and beliefs, since often they cannot rely on political power, and these tactics tend to be more effective within a close-knit community like Kala Tongu.

7.2.1. Benefit distribution: a site of potential conflict

As explained in Chapter 4, gender considerations in REDD+ are vaguely mentioned in official texts and are often pushed aside as there are other components of the REDD+

readiness stage that officers feel need to be prioritised, especially at sub-national and local levels. Meanwhile, media representations, as well as awareness-raising about REDD+ in the pilot sites (including FPIC), tend to emphasise the financial gains and downplay the complicated process of implementation and the risks associated with it for local livelihoods and access to land and forest. According to one NGO practitioner, the REDD+ awareness-raising campaign was aimed at advertising only good things about REDD+, especially at local level (Interview with NGO4, 2016).

As a result, discussion at the village level about REDD+ revolves around benefit distribution. The most important concern of villagers in Kala Tongu and other pilot sites is what kind of benefit package they can take away from participating in REDD+. Benefit distribution, as a result, is the most likely area for conflict to arise at the local level. In the case of Kala Tongu, the problem of REDD+ benefit distribution has yet to emerge. As mentioned in Chapter 5, for the Community Forestry project in Kala Tongu village, every household that officially registered their residence status[61] in the village receives an equal payment for patrolling the Community Forest. Local people do not talk about this equal payment, partly because the amount is insignificant in relation to their total income. Instead, they normally mention the forest leasing contract scheme, which is more selective but more appealing financially. However, the criteria for selection for the forestry leasing scheme is not made known to everyone. I have shown in Chapter 4 that the fuzziness of these criteria has been due to different perceptions between villagers and authorities regarding the main purpose of forest protection schemes. However, this fuzziness triggers a great deal of resentment among households who identify themselves as marginalised. Their resentment is not directly aimed at REDD+ specifically but has built up during the implementation of various forest and development projects in Kala Tongu village. The discussion of REDD+ benefit distribution, however, re-evokes their resentment and brings it to the fore. I was told by villagers that they occasionally saw foreigners and Vietnamese forest officials going to the village to meet local people or to check on the project progress (especially the agro-forestry reforestation components). Some of them were invited to the first meeting and wanted to raise their concerns in a follow-up meeting, but did not have the opportunity to do so. According to them, the village forest management committee and the village head might have chosen others instead of them.

Since there are no functional grievance mechanisms in the village, villagers tend to employ various non-confrontational strategies to articulate their concerns regarding the

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[61] This criterion is to exclude the Kinh households that rent land or shops from local villagers.

systems of resource access and governance in the village. While they mainly blame the village head and other members of the Management Board for this unfair treatment, I argue that this kind of conflict should not be seen as purely 'horizontal conflicts between social groups' (Li, 2003: 5120). These actors are one node in a complex chain of forest governance, as although they represent the local government in terms of implementation of state policies, they have little or no influence over the making of these policies. Nevertheless, one NGO practitioner working on other REDD+ pilot projects reported that the village head in most cases dictates the implementation process. She also claimed that this is due to the top-down approach in REDD+ and other environmental projects in Vietnam. According to her, although the government administrative systems in post-socialist Vietnam are believed to be decentralised, they do not work when imposed on top of community/clan-based structures of the village where most of the households are biologically related (Interview with NGO5, 2016).

In the case of Kala Tongu village, villagers sometimes refer to cases where they cannot apply for state credit schemes through the Farmers' Union or the Women's Union because they do not have a biological connection with the chair of these organisations. One woman recalled how intimidating it was for her to face the village head and challenge him about his unfair treatment of her husband: she had found out that her husband was dismissed from the forest protection schemes and that the village head's son-in-law was chosen to replace him. As such, the resentment of local villagers towards the village head and other members reflects conflicts between traditional ways of governance in the village and the modernised model of state governance. Seemingly, the everyday politics of benefit distribution is not just about benefit distribution but also about fuller participation in the political process/development process and entitlements to land/forest tenure rights.

As such, the everyday politics of benefit distribution is also situated within the broader context of conflicts around forest and land access in Kala Tongu village, which can be traced back to the Reunification of 1975. This is illustrated by personal recollections of many old villagers recalling the early days of the collective farm period when their ancestral wet rice fields were taken away and redistributed to other villagers. Accordingly, they had to struggle to make ends meet because they were not able to grow rice on their own land and found no motivation to work for someone else's benefit. Collectivisation ended in 1981 and land was returned to individual households (see for example Cox and Le 2014). It is noted that collectivisation mostly affected wet rice fields. Individual households normally kept plots in which they used to grow hill rice and instead planted them with short-term crops (maize or sweet potatoes) or left them unattended.

During that time, coffee was not popular in the region. Coffee land became more valuable and conversions of forestland to coffee land increased after the Economic Reform of 1986, when the national economy was moving in a market-oriented direction and cash cropping began to boom in the Central Highlands. At the same time, the discourse about 'barren hills' and their negative effects on the ecosystem dominated in forestry sectors in Vietnam. This in turn justified the implementation of several afforestation programs to allocate land to individual households to plant forest and re-green the barren hills in the uplands such as Programme 327 and then the Five Million Hectares Programme or Programme 661 (Nguyen and Sikor 2011, Ngoc et al. 2015). However, as McElwee (2011: 83) points out, in areas where forest allocation to individual households has taken place, they have received mostly 'land that has almost no forest cover'.

Meanwhile, forestland in Bao Thuan Commune was not allocated to individual households but was managed by the State Forest Enterprise (nowadays known as Forest Company). As I mentioned in Chapter 5 (5.1.4), this state forest agency was the sole forest owner in the area until 2011 when Kala Tongu village became the owner of 500 ha of Community Forest. Local villagers commented that their access to forestland for coffee plantation started to reduce during 1993 when the Bao Thuan Forest Company attempted to plant pine trees on the hills which Kala Tongu villagers used to access freely. However, according to one forest officer, the reforestation program had already started in the region prior to 1993, and local people only noticed the change when this program started to be implemented on their village's land (Interview with ID27, 2015). Even though the afforestation program was officially launched and is still going on in some areas, local people continue to go back, remove the tree seedlings and plant coffee on the same plots. Others choose to expand their coffee plantations into bushy areas of the Community Forest, secretly planting coffee under the branches of other trees, and eventually clearing those trees to make way for their coffee. These local responses, in a way, reflect their 'contestations over the meaning attributed to landscapes' (Sikor, 2011: 13-14): what the state sees as 'barren hills' that need to be re-greened, may be fertile land on which to plant coffee from a local perspective.

These local responses, moreover, are anonymous. The actions of tree removal or crop sabotage are undertaken while other parties are not physically present. Amanor (2005) reports a similar reaction amongst indigenous people coping with land expropriation in Ghana. Through these 'weapons of the weak', as Scott (1986) calls them, local people seek to exercise their 'agency', to express their opinions about how land access should be dealt with and how justice should work for their benefit, and in some cases, to

influence existing or future policies, especially policies pertinent to land and forest use and management. In some cases, these incidences of resistance become more organised collective action. For example, in 1995 and early 2000, several households, and then the whole community in Kala Tongu, decided to gather together and demonstrate to challenge the authorities at Di Linh District People's Committee and demand more land. It is notable that these collective actions are not meant to change the current system. They are instead aimed at advancing a specific form of grievance considered legitimate within the political structures of Vietnam so that local people can be heard by the local authorities. In the language of one forest officer, Kala Tongu villagers simply wanted to 'clarify' why this land was taken away or why their coffee was removed. There was no political agenda underlying the demonstration (Interview with ID27, 2015). Kala Tongu villagers, who were directly involved in one or both demonstrations, justified their actions as simply following their neighbours to ask about their land. Some of them claimed that they did not know anything about the political outcomes or consequences of these collective actions.

7.2.2. Forestland conversion: negotiating access claims

Forestland conversion is common in Kala Tongu and nearby villages. The implications of forestland conversion for local villagers' access to land, however, are not straightforward. In what follows I will detail the possible scenarios and responses from involved actors.

As discussed in Chapter 5, local villagers, both discreetly and openly, expand their coffee plantations into land classified by the state as forestland, claiming that this land is not forestland because it is not covered by pine trees. It is likely that for local people, tree cover delineates land available for conversion to coffee plantation and land managed by the Forest Company and therefore indicates ownership. In theory, when locals convert forestland, forest officers (mainly from the Bao Thuan Forest Company) first have to warn them that they are violating the land law and then remove the coffee from the land and replant pine seedlings. In practice, however, forest officers often react differently based on specific cases/households. They might verbally agree for local villagers to continue to harvest coffee on this land if their coffee is old enough to be harvested. They might insist local villagers change from coffee to other types of crops that require less time to grow and harvest so that the state can reclaim the land when needed. Or they might request that villagers turn the occupied land into agro-forestry land by planting certain types of trees in between their coffee plants to increase soil quality and forest

cover. The types of short-term crops or agro-forestry trees are decided by the Forest Company and Di Linh District Forestry Bureau, as the latter is in charge of providing forestry-related scientific knowledge and technical support for the former. For law enforcement actions, such as taking the statements of local villagers caught encroaching on land, or removing coffee plants planted by local villagers, forest officers from the Di Linh Forestry Bureau are also required to be present. Local villagers, technically, do not hold LUCs for these lands.[62] However, they can still sell the land within their community if they are destitute. In those cases, both the seller and buyer understand that the land can be taken away from them at any time. In other words, they can cultivate it temporarily, but cannot claim legal rights or apply for LUCs.

However, the proposal of the Bao Thuan Forest Company to convert some coffee land of local people (originally categorised as forestland) into agricultural land and agro-forestry land was sometimes mentioned in my conversations with local villagers. Although there is some talk about it in different circles, including official circles, there is no written document about this proposal yet. According to one forest officer, it is under negotiation and not finalised. Under this proposal, there are two possible scenarios. The first is that, if the (encroached) land is suitable for agricultural purposes, it will be assigned to the Commune or District People's Committee to process the LUC application. In this case, local people will receive a LUC for agricultural land. The second scenario is more complicated. If the (encroached) land is located on steep slopes and unsuitable for agricultural purposes, the coffee plantation owners (or anyone who has access to the land) will be required to plant timber/agro-forestry trees between their coffee plants. The coffee plantation is then managed by the Forest Company and accessed by the coffee plantation owners through a long-term contract with the Forest Company. The Forest Company will apply for a Forestland Use Certificate for this land and allocate them to individual households based on the terms and conditions set out in the contracts. There might be some overhead costs incurred for individual households. The overhead costs, according to the forest officer, will not be more than 1-2% of the total value of agro-forestry trees grown on the individual households' land when the trees are ready to be harvested. In the meantime, local villagers will be free to harvest the agricultural trees and products from their

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[62] The Land Use Certificates (LUCs) discussed in this sub-section refers to the Forestland Use Certificates on coffee plantation converted from forestlands. The Forestland Use Certificates would give local people contingent ownership over their coffee plantation. This is because local people would be required to obey the forest company's requirement. As such, there is a huge distinction between the Forestland Use Certificates and the Land Use Certificates (for agricultural and residential lands). In other chapters, especially in Chapter 5 and 6, I use the term 'LUCs' to refer to various types of agricultural lands such as wet rice field or coffee land converted from home gardens or on land located 200 m lower than the wet rice fields.

land. In summary, the idea is that the local people have full use of the agricultural plants on these plots providing that they keep a stipulated percentage of forest cover (this percentage is not yet decided). At the moment, of about 19,900 ha of forest and forestland managed by the Bao Thuan Forest Company, 500 ha is reported as being used for non-forestry purposes and technically these are considered illegally encroached lands. However, as the forest officer told me, of this 500 ha around 50% is proposed to be converted into agricultural purposes following the second scenario (Interview with ID27, 2015).

This proposal aims to respond to the actual situation in Kala Tongu where many ethnic minority households cannot get LUCs for their coffee plantations, have no access to low-interest loan schemes offered by the Vietnam Social Policy Bank, and have become more financially vulnerable. Some of my informants are aware of the future possibility of applying for forestland use certificates, but no-one has taken action yet. The most cited reason is lacking either time or connections to learn about the proposed procedures. However, it seems to me that villagers are not under pressure to 'legalise' their land through LUCs as long as the informal negotiation between them and the Forest Company is in place. At the moment, these people are unofficially allowed by the Forest Company to access coffee plantations converted from forestland more than four years ago. As such, they will not lose the crop from their established plantations. Although having LUCs will be an advantage for them in applying for loans from the state bank, rather than going through the Women's Union or the Farmers' Union, some will still find it less troublesome to borrow directly from Kinh money-lenders rather than putting in the application for the proposed LUCs.

In my view, the proposed schemes could potentially benefit local villagers whose coffee plantation is categorised as forestland. It may also reflect an attempt of the state, through the Forest Company, to retain ultimate control over forest and forestland and prevent individual households from claiming legal ownership of this type of land. Under the scheme, local villagers would sign a contract with the Forest Company and become forestry workers. In other words, they would enter into an agreement that requires them to follow the terms and conditions set out by the Forest Company. In exchange for fifty years of forestland use rights[63], they will need to grow a certain percentage of agro-forestry trees approved by the Forest Company and pay the overhead cost to the Forest Com-

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[63] The duration of use rights for a LUC is twenty-years, renewable on land for annual crops and fifty years for perennial crops and forestland (McElwee, 2011: 82). For Forestland Use Certificates, according to the forest officer, they also look at fifty years in length.

pany on the land that customarily belongs to them. This proposed scheme is known lo-
cally as a proposal to apply for LUC for coffee land with the Forest Company (*làm sổ đỏ
với Lâm trường*). In fact, from what the forest officer described, it is a hybrid version of
a leasehold and share cropping arrangement (see Figure 10).
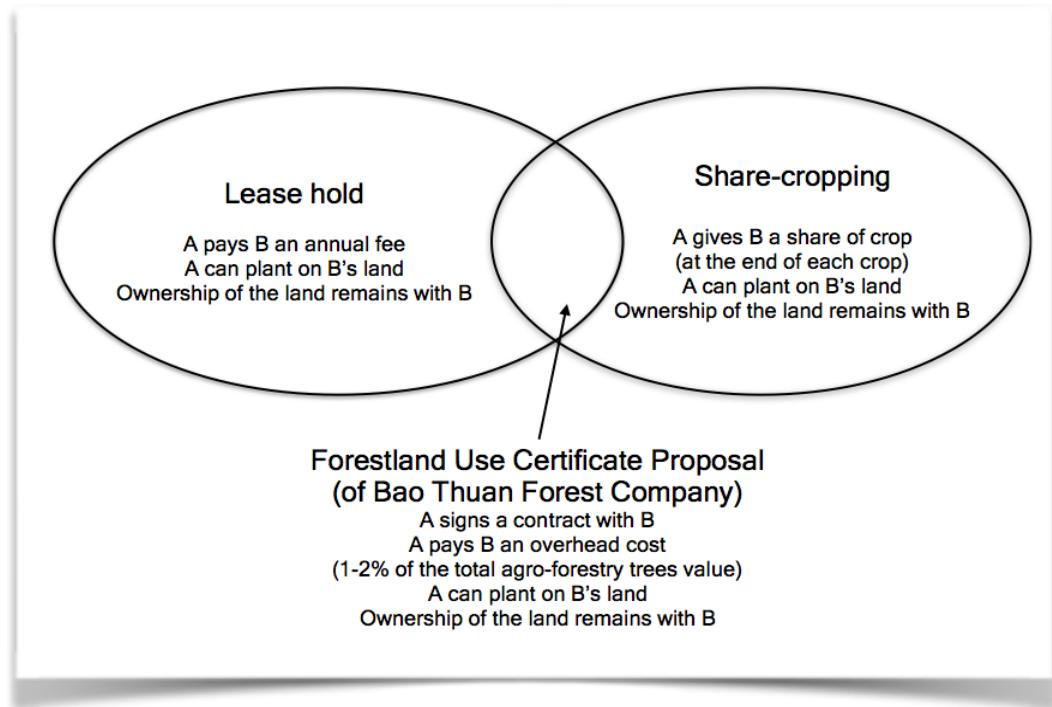
Figure 10. Terms and conditions for a Forestland Use Certificate
(proposed by the Bao Thuan Forest Company)

There are, however, many issues that remain unclear about this proposed scheme. For
example, it is not clear what rights local people have over the agro-forestry trees, how
these trees will affect the productivity of their coffee and what percentage of forest cover
they have to maintain in their coffee plantation. During my conversation with local peo-
ple, they are more concerned that they would, under this proposed scheme, be able to
keep their established coffee plantations. Most of them do not really know what the terms
and conditions they might have to accept to get the Forestland Use Certificate. It could
be argued that the proposal of applying for LUCs with the Forest Company might serve
as a strategy of the state, through the Forest Company, to utilise cheap, local labour (alt-
hough they are paid, the payments are often very low) for afforestation purposes and fur-
thermore lay official claims on local people's coffee plantations, currently scattered
around within the forest and therefore difficult for the state and forest companies to reg-
ulate.

7.2.3. Constituting a successful model: when actors attempt to cooperate

Despite all the underlying conflicts and informal negotiations, Kala Tongu stands out as a successful model of a Community Forestry project, which makes it ideal for REDD+ pilot projects, as noted by one forest officer when we discussed the outcomes of various Community Forest projects in Lam Dong Province. In other areas, such as in Lac Duong District, by 2011-2012, the forest cover in Community Forests was declining, and defor-estation was reported to be more serious. In Kala Tongu, out of 500 ha of Community Forest, only a small percentage of trees have been felled (around 4.4 ha) (Interview with ID24, 2015). The main reason for this felling, according to him, might be because some local people looked for orchid flowers growing naturally on the big trees to sell, and ended up cutting down the trees. He emphasised that a few felled trees were spotted during his recent trip to the forest, and according to the pictures taken from that trip (see Figure 11), it was clear that whoever cut down the trees did not intend to take the timber. He also informed me that this area is currently being reforested by Kala Tongu villagers, under the support of the Lam Dong Provincial Agricultural Extension (Interview with ID24, 2015). [64]

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[64] See Chapter 5 (5.1.4) for more details.

Figure 11. Trees felled in the Community Forest (provided by ID24)

Before the payment for forest ecosystem services schemes arrived, Kala Tongu villagers organised themselves into groups to patrol the Community Forest without being paid. Local authorities and villagers claimed that they did not cut down the trees in the 'forbidden' or Community Forest. As such, 'conservationism' sentiments are often woven into the official narratives of local authorities and into conversations between me and my informants in the village. Maintaining a cooperative manner seems to be more practical, as long as it allows the villagers to temporarily access resources available from the forestry project. This is evidenced in the case of one male participant in my photovoice project.

Figure 12. Picture showing the boundary between
the Bao Thuan Forest Company forest and local people's garden (plantation)

(provided by PV2)

In Figure 12, as he explained, on one side there is the pine forest of the Bao Thuan Forest Company, and on the other side there is his land (around 0.5-0.6 ha). The land has belonged to his wife's family since 1975. Currently, he only plants maize and beans as the Forest Company says that this land is forestland and under their management. He has asked the Commune People's Committee about whether he could apply for an LUC but they said no. He is concerned that he will be forced to leave the forest leasing contracts scheme if he starts planting coffee. As he reasoned, "the company might say this is their land, and I am encroaching upon state-owned land, therefore I can't be in the scheme anymore, and I do not want that" (Interview with PV2, 2016).

Although the on-going struggles between local people and the Forest Company might continue into the official stage of REDD+ implementation, this relationship can be seen in a cooperative light from the perspective of the Forest Company. According to one forest officer, the current forest management model is mutually beneficial. For the Forest Company, it helps reduce the workload of management as most tasks are shared between forest officers and local villagers. Local villagers, in his view, are contracted to work for the Forest Company as employees and therefore, they have less responsibility over the forest, yet receive stable payment and other benefits such as training workshops (Interview with ID27, 2015).

Section 7.2 laid out three possible scenarios when actors from different levels interact. It is noted that none of these scenarios are permanent or fixed (see Box 7). A situation might present itself as one of conflict, but under certain circumstances or from certain viewpoints, it might transpire to be negotiation or cooperation. In terms of cross-scale interactions, from section 7.1 and 7.2, it seems that conflicts or cooperation are more visible between local people and local authorities and indigenous leaders who are involved directly in delivering the state's programmes than they are between local people and other actors and authorities operating at higher levels. However, as forestry policies and projects in Vietnam are highly centralised and top down in nature, the way in which local people respond to their village heads or village-based Kinh forest officers reflects their responses to decisions made at higher levels.

Box 7. Reflection on the relationship between cooperation, conflicts and negotiation mechanisms

In this box, I reflect on how these scenarios unfolded themselves in the process of my data collection. Cooperation was the first thing I saw when I got to the field and during the first few months in the village, but then negotiations among stakeholders at various levels and finally conflicts slowly emerged. Therefore, I start with conflicting relations as it forms the core theme of my informants' narratives. These conflicts, as it turns out, go hand-in-hand with the negotiation in which both sides have their own bargaining power. Furthermore, conflicts about land and forest, as To (2007) notes, are not necessarily negative, as they often help to clarify misunderstandings and create a more transparent and fair system of governance, especially with regard to common resources such as land and forest. This, in fact, is closely linked to the way I approached the community and how I recruited my respondents during the first field trip. When I first arrived, I sought to interview forest officers and senior men who are more involved in forestry activities to understand the historical contexts of land and forest access in the village. According to them, environmental ethics are rooted in their traditional culture and new forest protection projects help to promote these traditions. Senior men and men involved in different forest protection projects, meanwhile, were very much influenced by the rhetoric and propaganda of the state about their gendered forest responsibilities, and automatically reproduced these discourses when talking to me. This might be because they were cautious about me as an outsider and preferred to maintain a positive outlook about state-funded programmes. Elements of cooperation were therefore more predominant at first. As I moved along with my fieldwork, I started to interview local women from various backgrounds and also to build up close relationships with my photovoice group. Interviews with these informants somehow breathed new life into the seemingly simplistic picture of actors' interactions surrounding resource access. In particular, through women's narratives and photos of photovoice participants, different perceptions of benefit distribution, citizens' rights to participate and to be consulted by the state, and transparency in governance are brought to the fore. These perceptions illustrate how women and lay people in the village, despite being seen as politically ignorant and powerless, have actively employed 'everyday politics' to make their cases and to make their voices heard within a patriarchal system of governance.

7.3. What does this research mean for REDD+ and REDD+-like projects? Bringing REDD+ into the picture

This section seeks to show how this research, through contextualising the gendered struggles of local villagers to access to resources, helps unveil existing issues of resource use and management in Vietnam that may impact REDD+. Specifically, I discuss how REDD+ is expected by national actors to be a platform to improve access to productive resources including land and forest of local villagers, especially ethnic minority groups, and how the situation presents itself in my case study. I also tease out the direct implications that current practices of gendered resource use and management might have on REDD+ and other forestry activities in the pilot sites.

7.3.1. Choosing a REDD+ pilot site: Convenience for implementing agencies or benefit for local communities?

The question of whether REDD+ can potentially contribute to improving local livelihood and local structures of resource governance in the pilot sites emerges throughout this research. This has been a central topic of discussion among national actors, including government officers and NGOs. In Lam Dong Province, this is especially important due to its socio-political context. As I detail in Chapter 4, in the second phase of UN-REDD Vietnam Programme, Lam Dong was among six provinces chosen as pilot provincial sites. According to one NGO practitioner who is currently running REDD+-related pilots in Lam Dong Province, this specific site has certain qualities that make it valuable for piloting REDD+, especially in terms of its current governance structures. These include flexibility in administrative procedures, the receptivity of provincial authorities, as well as the willingness to advance matching funds, as the most important factors for donors and organisations in selecting REDD+ pilot sites (Interview with NGO2, 2015). As such, choosing Lam Dong Province for piloting REDD+ is seen as a way for implementing agencies to make the REDD+ officers' work easier. However, the existing structures of resource governance in Lam Dong Province might limit what kind of pilot activities UN-REDD Vietnam Programme can implement at the provincial and local levels. As a result, these REDD+ pilot projects might not necessarily lead to positive experiences for local communities.

The main argument of NGO practitioners is that, in theory, REDD+ is designed as a results-based mechanism to provide financial compensation for forest-dependent communities (or forest dwellers). Therefore, it is more practical for REDD+ to be piloted in areas where local communities can access or are allocated forest. This, however, is not the case in Lam Dong Province. The general forestry policy in Lam Dong Province does not allow forest to be allocated to individual households. In fact, most of forested areas are managed by the State Forest Management Boards or State Forest Companies[65], and local communities have been contracted by these forest owners to patrol the forest and receive payments, as in the case of Kala Tongu village. In my individual meetings with the two local forest officers, both of them emphasised that there is no forest owned by individual households in Lam Dong Province, but they did not explain the rationale behind this policy. Meanwhile, the issues of 'no individual forest owner' in Lam Dong

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[65] See Nguyen et al. (2008) on different forest tenure arrangements in the Central Highlands of Vietnam.

Province are openly discussed and criticised by NGO practitioners. According to one NGO practitioner, the local government (in the Central Highlands only) is aware that the soil/forestland in this region is very profitable when converted into cash crops (coffee and tea) and so believes that local communities are likely to convert these forestlands into cash crop plantations. She claimed that from the perspective of local government in the Central Highlands, if forest was allocated to individual households, it would subsequently lead to deforestation. Therefore, to retain control over forests, the local government have turned local communities into 'forestry labourers' through forest leasing contracts with forest companies to protect the forest. Explaining the forest tenure schemes in Lam Dong Province and the Central Highlands, she noted that REDD+ should not have been piloted in Lam Dong Province because there is no forest owned by local communities there. It is noted that her criticism might be related to her own agendas and her organisations' priority activities: at the moment, her organisation is working with another foreign donor to pilot REDD+ in the North-western uplands of Vietnam, and this may be why she disagrees with UN-REDD Vietnam Programme's choice of Lam Dong Province as a pilot site (Interview with NGO5, 2016).

The Community Forest scheme, according to NGO practitioners, is relevant for local forest management in Lam Dong Province and the Central Highlands. This is because the community-based forestry relies on traditional institutions for resource governance within local communities. Therefore, some NGO practitioners attempt to advocate community ownership of the forest in specific areas like the Central Highlands (Interview with NGO3, 2016). The case of Kala Tongu indicates that community-based forest management can actually work. Only a relatively low percentage of deforestation has been reported here after four years of implementing the Community Forest scheme (equivalent to 4.4 ha during the period of 2011-2015). However, the extent to which local communities can actually benefit from this communally-owned of forest is not clear. Moreover, the Kala Tongu case might not be representative enough to draw implications about what works in other villages. I discuss these two issues further in the following paragraphs.

The first point to note, as mentioned in Chapter 5, is that the village's history, K'ho villagers and households in Kala Tongu are linked to one another, either via kinship or conjugal relationships. Although community ownership and common properties no longer exist in Kala Tongu, traditional ways of governance still predominate in this village. The influence of traditional institutions and the homogeneity that comes from being one community (i.e. the community spirit), according to one NGO representative, is the

most important factor for explaining the success of the Community Forest scheme (Interview with NGO1, 2015). These reasons are also cited by local people and forest authorities to explain why the level of deforestation has remained low in Kala Tongu village.

However, my empirical data shows that this success is mainly attributed to the nature of the allocated forest and the alternative options available for Kala Tongu villagers to access forestland. Firstly, it is noted that the 500 ha of Community Forest is classified as 'production forest' in the state's forestry policies. However, local villagers in Kala Tongu and other villages do not perceive the potential value from this Community Forest, since, according to them, there are no economically valuable timber, wild vegetables or bamboo shoots here. As such, there is nothing to attract loggers or non-timber forest product collectors.[66] Instead, there are alternative 'outlets' for local people to collect timber and non-timber forest products in the nearby forests, which helps to keep them away from the Community Forest. Moreover, the 'good practice' of forest protection in Kala Tongu[67] is maintained by a complex mechanism of 'covering for each other' among the villagers themselves. From my interview with members of patrolling groups in the village, I learnt that a villager will not report his/her neighbours (who might happen to be his/her siblings or family members) if he/she sees the person cutting down trees in the forest. An influential man in the village, in informal conversation, claimed that he specifically told his relatives and villagers not to cut down trees in the Community Forest, because they are paid to protect it. Instead, he suggested they cut down trees in the pine forest managed by the state Forest Company (Interview with LH1, 2015).

Local villagers in Kala Tongu cannot directly access forest resources in the Community Forest, and they have realised this. They do receive payments for protecting the Community Forest, which they supposedly own. In the local context where the coffee plantations contribute most to villagers' household income, Kala Tongu villagers' involvement in the Community Forest scheme might in fact be seen as an economic loss for them. A participant of my photovoice group said that since Kala Tongu villagers are participating in the Community Forest, they cannot convert the forest into coffee plantation as is the case in other villages, and therefore, they do not have enough land for coffee. She also claimed that since they protect the forest so well, they should be allowed to occupy the empty areas where the Company do not plant pine trees, and to clear the trees or bushes there, and plant coffee instead (Interview with PV6, 2016). However, Kala

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[66] There might be orchids growing on the old trees, which probably led to several big trees in the Community Forest being felled.

[67] This is the phrase used by one local forest officer when talking about the Community Forest scheme in Kala Tongu village.

Tongu villagers, or indeed any villagers in Bao Thuan Commune, are unable to access these empty areas. For the current activities of the REDD+ pilot project in Kala Tongu, local villagers are required to plant two types of trees in their gardens or houses to 're-green' their lands. However, as some women in Kala Tongu told me, they did not plant these trees in their home gardens as they were worried that the young trees would be eaten by their goats and that the mature trees would occupy the space reserved for drying coffee beans after harvest. In other words, bringing the 'forest' into their living space (house/village) might also affect their main livelihood. The Village Production Fund (VPF), which gives selected households a loan (up to 10 million VND) to invest in coffee, does not reach those who are most in need of capital in the community. Partially, this is because the selection process is biased towards the elite ethnic minority households, as shown in Chapter 6. Also, according to one local forest officer, there might be a gap between the principles set by the REDD+ officers and the actual implementation in the local contexts. The forest officer told us that UN-REDD officers wanted to prioritise poor households as the loan recipients. However, he continued to argue that this is problematic for two reasons. The first reason is that the criteria for borrowing from the VPF is not to damage the forest (the forest officer argued that some poor households might damage the forest). The second reason is to do with the fact that there are other state-funded poverty reduction programs that provide loans targeted at poor households, and the officer disapproved of poor households being recipients of multiple loans (Interview with ID24, 2015). A recipient noted that, those who manage the VPF are interested in getting the loan paid back so that next year other villagers can borrow. Therefore, he claimed that they tend to choose households that have capacity to repay the loan, rather than targeting poor households alone (Interview with PV1, 2016). Among women I spoke to, there are also mixed views about whether the current operationalisation of the VPF is fair. For example, one woman told me that this is fair since every household in the village will get to borrow from the VPF at least once. Another woman disagreed and explained that some households, especially those seen as least likely to repay the loans on time, will have to wait longest to get the loan. Local perceptions of the VPF in relation to other poverty reduction programs illustrate how the 'moral economy' (Scott 1976) works in Kala Tongu village. While such pro-poor programs as 135 are reserved for poor households, the perception is that other benefit packages should be accessed by all households. Adjusting the eligibility to UN-REDD Vietnam Programme's VPF from being pro-poor to forestry-oriented is one of ways local people negotiate what they see as inequality.

Another issue is that while Kala Tongu villagers protect their Community Forest and make use of the support from UN-REDD Vietnam Programme to invest in agricultural development, this does not necessarily mean that other communities would be able to do the same. For example, in the case of Kala Tongu, having access to other forests in nearby villages that they can convert to coffee plantations and from which they can still collect forest resources enables local villagers to move activities that reduce forest cover away from designated protected areas. As shown in Chapter 4 and section 7.1 of this chapter, the success of this Community Forest and positive attitudes of local people towards those areas of protection is also conditional upon strategic alliances between the national and sub-national forest officers, REDD+ officers and local implementers (i.e. members of Community Forest and REDD+ Management Board). As the national and sub-national forest officers rely on local implementers to run the project and make it successful (at least during the pilot project), returning to the same community with a good track record of forest protection is convenient for them. In exchange, these national and sub-national forest officers attempt to give local implementers more freedom in adjusting the selection criteria or scope of beneficiaries in accordance with the specific contexts. For example, local implementers nominate candidates and then the national and sub-national forest officers will accept them even though sometimes these candidates might not fit the initial criteria. In short, the politics of resource governance and the nature of pilot project, as shown in my case study, are likely to influence the outcome of the project in a way that may not benefit local lay villagers, whether Kinh or K'ho.

7.3.2. Gendered implications of REDD+ safeguards compliance for local gendered access to resources

As discussed in Chapter 4, debates at the national level between NGO practitioners and government institutions about REDD+ safeguards centre around land tenure and indigenous rights. As such, other implications of REDD+ on local communities, especially in terms of gender considerations, tend to be overlooked. My empirical data, meanwhile, suggest that within the context of Kala Tongu village, two gender-implicated project activities might affect local practices.

The UN-REDD Vietnam Programme and other implementing agencies of REDD+ pilot (Vietnam Forest and Delta) have recommended that both husband's and wife's names should be written on the contract signed between the forestry agencies and the concerned households. The rationale of this recommendation is to ensure that both

the husband and wife have an equal right over the payment from forest protection projects. This, according to a government officer, is based on their findings from interviewing men and women in the pilot sites. At the moment, the contacts are made between the forestry agencies and the head of household, normally the husband. The husband is also the main labourer of forest patrol groups (of both the Community Forest and forest leasing contract scheme). Despite this, the wife, for reasons that I will discuss below, normally manages these payments. UN-REDD Vietnam Programme and the men participating in the pilot sites are concerned that this arrangement might be unfair for the men. In those cases, some officials argue that having both the husband's and wife's names on the contracts might remind both parties that the payments are to be shared among them, rather than belong to exclusively men or to women (Interview with GO1, 2016).

My findings on gendered power relations and household income in Kala Tongu village show that the rationale behind this recommendation might be too simplistic. In this village, the woman/wife normally handles the finances of her household. She keeps most of the payments from forestry activities, agricultural activities (coffee and wet rice), non-timber (and sometimes timber) forest products and occasional wage labour. However, she does not make decisions about how to spend the household money on her own. Instead, the decision-making regarding household finances is based on negotiation and mutual agreement between husband and wife. For example, when a household wants to borrow money from a Kinh money-lender or a bank, both husband and wife need to give verbal consent. Moreover, according to local men in Kala Tongu, the woman/wife has to buy food and pay for other expenses in the household on a daily basis, and for that, she has to have access to the finances. Some men admit that they do not know how to save money and might end up spending their wages on alcohol, so for them, it is better to give the money to their wives. In terms of labour contribution, the man is normally the main labourer in a forest patrol group, but the woman also participates in forest-related activities, such as putting out forest fires and preparing meals for the men who are on the patrol duties. Therefore, women, in my view, are entitled to share the payments. Moreover, this source of income does normally not make up a significant percentage of the total income of each household, as explained in Chapter 5. The assumption of the government officer that it is unfair for women to keep the payments while it is the men who work, therefore, might not be relevant.

For local women, as observed, having both the husband's and wife's name on a contract, might not be preferable either. From the perspective of UN-REDD Vietnam

Programme, putting both names in a contract would help to address gender equity in financial control and at the same time engage women more in the forestry sector, particularly village-based forestry projects. However, this approach fails to engage with local realities. Firstly, local women are reluctant to engage in forestry activities which they see as 'male business' and so do not want to be named on forest contracts. Secondly, neither the absence of women's names nor their names being together with their husbands threatens women's control over household finances in this specific matrilineal context. In this social system, it is widely understood that it is for the benefit of the children and the household that women are responsible for their household finances because of women's traditional gender roles in child-rearing and their status within the matrilineal system. Thus, payments that men receive are in any case normally handed over to their wives. Thirdly, women's handling of household finances does not in any sense mean that husbands have no voice in deciding how to spend the money they earn for the household, such as payments from forestry projects. Fourthly, and decisively, in this context there are no contracts between the individual households and the forestry agencies; instead, there is one contract between the representative of these households (normally the village head) and the forest agencies. Consequently, no villager in Kala Tongu could show me a contract they had signed with the Forest Company, either for the Community Forest or for the forest leasing contracts scheme, despite the fact that many villagers/households are named in the contact signed on their behalf by the village head. According to one forest officer, all of the paperwork is handled by the village head, in order to reduce the bureaucratic formalities for villagers and make it easier for Forest Company officers to keep track (Interview with ID27, 2015).[68]

The recommendation of UN-REDD Vietnam Programme about women and men signing the forest leasing contracts echoes the wider gender debate in Vietnam that advocates joint gender titling of agricultural land. This policy, when situated within the context of a matrilineal community moving into the official stage of REDD+ implementation, raises certain issues about the mismatch between this approach to legal titling and traditional customary access to land in the village. As discussed in Chapter 6, the Marriage and Family Law 2014 and Land Law 2013 state that both husband's and wife's names have to be registered in the household LUC(s). In the case of Kala Tongu village, what actually matters is not whose name is registered but who can access what and to what extent women or men are allowed to exercise their bargaining power, both within their

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[68] Local villagers, meanwhile, do not offer any explanation for this.

households and at the community level. The joint titling, in the view of local women, does not necessarily give them more access to land, but in fact merges their own land (wet rice field and residential land) into the common pool of household land and takes away their exclusive customary access to these lands. This is not to say that removing the joint land titling will enable women to take control of their own land and exclude their husbands from access to this land. As noted earlier, decision-making related to household affairs is normally based on mutual agreement. Consequently, I instead argue that a formal joint land titling which requires both husband's and wife's names on all sorts of lands might not reflect the dynamics of gender relations between men and women in the matrilineal societies where the traditional customary access to land is currently being practised.

While the case of wet rice fields and residential land are quite straightforward because they are mostly inherited by women, the implication of joint land tilting on coffee land might be more complicated. This is because coffee land might belong to the husband alone, the wife alone or be jointly owned by both the husband and wife after their marriage. As unfolded in Chapter 6 and Section 7.1, regularising coffee land in the uplands and in Kala Tongu village is challenging for both local authorities and villagers. From the perspective of authorities, these plots of land are not legally owned by local people and cannot be registered, plus they are normally scattered around hilly and less accessible landscapes, which makes it more difficult to measure and illustrate on the administrative map. From the perspective of local villagers, these plots of coffee land are gendered spaces governed by customary arrangements. In fact, it is more convenient for local women to access to coffee land individually as they can divide it between their children, rent it out to their relatives or grant access to it separately in case of a marriage breakdown. While there is no clear information about how REDD+ payments are to be calculated and distributed during the official implementation stage yet, these might potentially endanger local customary access (without LUCs) to coffee land, because of the preconceived association between coffee plantations and deforestation. Specifically, coffee land will continue to be taken back and handed over to the Forest Company for afforestation programs, and access to natural forest will be more restricted because of its carbon stock as REDD+ progresses. As such, these gendered spaces might decline as this community enters the Implementation Stage of REDD+.

This masculinisation of land in Kala Tongu village, as discussed in Chapter 5, is the direct consequence of the coffee boom in the region and the joint land titling policy that transfers the land customarily owned by women to the joint household property of

husband and wife. While matrilineal societies are based on women's control and inheritance of wet rice fields, the masculinisation of land may contribute to demise of matrilineal societies. In other words, coupled with the agrarian change in the Central Highlands, the implementation of gender mainstreaming policies (within the context of forestry sector and REDD+) is likely to contribute to transforming matrilineal societies into patrilineal ones.

In summary, section 7.3 focuses on the implications of both everyday struggles over resources and the new dynamics introduced by forestry projects including REDD+ for local communities. As such, this section builds upon the discussion in 7.1 and 7.2 about the dynamics between national and local actors in relation to actors' claims and mechanisms of access. It reflects the debates of national actors (government officers and NGO practitioners) about how to address local land rights and gender equity in relation to the actual situation in the case study. By doing so, it shows that while national actors might envisage certain recommendations or policies as useful in improving livelihood and gender equity for local communities, those might not necessarily work in practice as envisaged. I illustrate the lack of connection between the national debates around gender and local realities with respect to the recommendation to put both husband's and wife's names on a forest leasing contract. I further situate it in the wider debate about joint titling of agricultural land regarding the gendered dynamics of access to wet rice land. As I have argued, local communities such as Kala Tongu might not benefit from the projects or pilot activities or policy recommendations that do not respond to or aim to address problems arising within their community.

7.4. Summary

This chapter seeks to explore how factors such as ethnicity, gendered perceptions of forest rights and responsibilities and socio-economic structures of upland areas interact and shape local villagers' claims and responses to national discourses and policies around forestry projects. The first section 7.1 introduces the main actors with their claims, motivations and interests as well as the current situation of resource access in this case study. The second section 7.2 then analyses the differences and similarities in strategies employed by the main actors in the forestry sector to materialise their claims and/or influence the other actors. The interactions among the main actors are manifested in either conflicting or negotiating relationships, although they might overlap in some cases. Understanding the fluidity and flexibility of these interactions and associated terms and conditions helps to identify how REDD+ processes, throughout the Readiness Stage, might affect

local communities. These dynamics shape the outcomes of current REDD+ pilot projects with respect to their operationalisation of the requirements of Cancun Safeguards about ensuring land tenure and gender equity, as section 7.3 has illustrated.

In section 7.1, I pointed out that for the ordinary villagers, kinship and conjugal relationships play a central role in shaping their access to resources through inheritance and membership of forestry projects, following Agarwal and Jackson (2003). At the same time, I found that with the new arrival of REDD+ and its associated frameworks (Cancun Safeguards), local access to resources is increasingly structured along lines of ethnicity and gender. Specifically, the exclusion of Kinh people and women from the forestry projects in Kala Tongu village is due to the politics of local forest governance. As such, these politics result in the pilot sites being chosen and managed by a small group of male forest officers and local-based authorities and the actual tasks being done by male patrol groups. However, competition for resources is not observed at the household level, as in the case study of Rocheleau and Ross (1995). Competition for resources is more visible between the K'ho and Kinh people at the discursive level (through their differentiating perceptions of who should participate in the forestry projects), and between local villagers and outsiders (the Forest Company) on a practical level (through local struggles to access to coffee land). These two kinds of competition are manifested in everyday forms of interaction, from (financial) indebtedness between the ethnic minority households and Kinh moneylenders, to the local strategies to beg for sympathy from the forest officers, or of passing on rumours of the bad practices of forest governance in the village, to selectively protect certain areas of forest and discreetly encroach on other areas of forest. Previous research on the upland areas in Southeast Asia and Vietnam is more concerned with how the state, through various forms of government, attempts to reach out to its local population and natural resources (Li 1999). This research, while attending to the 'everyday politics' of resource access, focuses on the role of 'local agency' in shaping and reshaping the interaction between the state and the local population. Moreover, it highlights the gendered aspects of local agency, or how women and men make use of everyday forms of resistance based on their gendered roles and their socio-cultural and emotional relationship to the forest. This is one way of operationalising FPE and theory of access in my research.

Another way to reflect on how FPE and theory of access work in this case is through the scale of analysis. In section 7.2, it is clear that certain discourses, especially those related to gender equity, are interpreted differently as they travel across various scales from the global documents to national policies and actual REDD+ pilot projects. As a result, gender is translated by policy-makers in Vietnam as including more women

in project activities. Increasing the number of women involved in the forestry sector, especially in leadership positions, has been always problematic in Vietnam due to structural obstacles that work against women. Increasing the number of women in project activities, however, seems to be an easy way to comply with the social safeguards frameworks (i.e. Cancun Safeguards) and donors' terms and conditions for funding disbursement. This is normally the situation where discourses of gender equity are brought in as a mediating element for national policy-makers to negotiate with international donors (bottom-up) and to monitor project activities at local level (top-down). Here local practices within matrilineal-based household and community influence implementation of national policies, as certain elements of gendered access to forest are addressed and integrated into the existing forest protection schemes. These national gender policies do not in fact reflect local perceptions of gender equity or gendered access to forest. The reality is that the state interprets local practices and turns them into legal codes to regulate and discipline local people to rethink their practices. So here, the mediating role of gender is used as a 'technique of rule' (Foucault 1979) for the state to assert its claims and power.

In the next chapter (the conclusion), I will return to the research findings, reflect on the contribution of this research and propose future research.

Chapter 8. Conclusion

This research sought to understand how gender is played out in shaping resource access in an upland community in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. It also explored the dynamics between local perceptions of gendered resource access and national discourses of gender equity in forestry projects. These national-local dynamics of resource access were contextualised within a particular REDD+ pilot project implemented by the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme. The selected case study of this research, Kala Tongu village, was specifically relevant to an examination of gender and resource access as it is a matrilineal community. By focusing on gendered relations around resource use and management in this community, this research also sought to challenge the conventional approach to gender equity in forestry projects of international and national implementing agencies which are rooted in socio-economic and cultural attributes of patrilineal communities. Moreover, the selected village was nested within the Central Highlands of Vietnam, a politically sensitive region where everyday struggles of local people to access to land and forest were often associated with recent movements to reclaim the indigenous territory and establish an indigenous state independent from the Vietnamese communist state.[69] Within these particular contexts, research about land and forest necessarily requires a careful unpacking of the historical and geo-political backgrounds of the region, socio-cultural norms of the local population and the diverse claims of actors involved in environmental and forestry projects. To address the complexity of the chosen topic and case study, I employed a theoretical framework that fused both Ribot and Peluso's (2003) theory of access and FPE (Rocheleau et al. 1996) and relied on a set of qualitative-based methods, including interviews, participant observation, life histories and photovoice, to collect data.

8.1. Summary of findings

The research showed that there are various types of resource an upland villager can rely on to develop his/her livelihood. Different types of resources often overlap in space and therefore are subjected to contestation among local actors and between local actors and non-local stakeholders. This is especially the case for coffee land, which can be converted from other types of land, such as residential land, home gardens, hill terrace fields or forests. Coffee land, therefore, is an embedded resource, and its extent is not normally fixed in terms of boundary (since more can be created by converting other land). In Kala

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[69] See Chapter 3 for more details on this.

Tongu village, as the value of coffee increases, the increase of coffee land converted from forest is seen as problematic for both the state and local villagers. This is because the state owns and manages the forest and forestland;[70] and Kala Tongu villagers are paid by the state forestry agencies to protect the forests. Converting the forest and forestland into coffee land is treated as a serious violation of the law. The contestation around forest and forestland, in fact, is fundamentally about forestland that has been (or will potentially be) converted to coffee land.

This research also showed that gender plays a central role in shaping resource access and associated tenure in matrilineal Kala Tongu. Specifically, wet rice field is seen as a women's resource because it is customarily controlled and inherited by women. Coffee land and forestland, due to their origins, locations and labour-intensive requirements, are seen as masculine resources. The gendered aspects of coffee land and forest are closely linked to the new socio-economic contexts of matrilineal systems and forestry projects. In a transitional matrilineal society, coffee land serves as a kind of dowry for men and thus helps to reduce their economic dependence on their wives when they marry. Moreover, due to Kala Tongu villagers' involvement in existing forestry projects, extractive activities in the forest are restricted by the state, and men's labour is remobilised from logging to patrolling the protected forests instead. The forest projects perceive men as the main 'breadwinners' in the household and this perception is reinforced by the fact that men are the main participants in the forest patrols. Forestry and forest patrol groups, in this case, are 'male-only' business, since women do not directly participate in these activities, although they might well manage the payments arising from them. Furthermore, the land titling scheme, as one of the state's efforts to legalise and formalise local access to resources, helps to stimulate a process of masculinisation of land in Kala Tongu village. Wet rice fields and residential land traditionally belong to women. However, under the joint titling scheme, these areas become the joint properties of women and men. Meanwhile, men are already in control of coffee land, both before and after marriage. Joint titling contributes to pushing certain types of resource that traditionally belong to women (i.e. wet rice fields and residential land) into men's hands, and potentially allows men to exert legal claims (should they decide to do so) over their wives' land as well.

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[70] It is noted that the Vietnamese state divides forest into three categories: special use forests, protection forests and production forests. Forestland, in the forestry policy documents, is a term to refer to land with forest or land without forest reserved for reforestation purposes. There is no specific criterion defining forestland in the official documents as far as this research can conclude. According to Jackson (1968: 73), in the north, all land with a slope greater than 25 degrees was classified as forestland. In Kala Tongu, according to the local forestry officers and villagers, land which is located 200m higher than the wet rice land is declared as forestland as it is not suitable for agricultural activities.

The state's efforts to regularise local forms of customary access also transform the way local men and women relate to the forests. The state, through the Community Forest Scheme, allocated 500 ha of natural forest for local villagers in Kala Tongu to protect. In legal terms, they are recognised as the 'forest owners' but they are treated by the state as 'forestry labourers'. As above, the Community Forest Scheme also has certain gender implications for Kala Tongu village. It is run by a Management Board and various patrolling groups which consist of mostly male members. Apart from protecting the Community Forest, male villagers in selective households are also hired to protect other forests owned by the Forest Company.

Access to forest, seemingly, is seen as a men's domain. This is, however, not completely the case in Kala Tongu village. Local men and women, in fact, still rely on alternative areas of forest that they do not protect or where the state's laws cannot reach. Thanks to these alternative areas of forest, women can and do access non-forest timber products and thus still contribute to their household income that derives from the forest. These alternative areas of forest, and local activities in these areas, however, are not considered legal by the state. Therefore, women's involvement in current forest-related activities outside of the forests that the villagers protect (namely their Community Forest and the forests that the Bao Thuan Forest Company contracts some villagers to protect) is, to a certain extent, overlooked by the state. This invisibility of women in legal and formal forestry activities (i.e. forest protection) has been used as a rationale behind the recommendation of international agencies to increase women's participation in the existing forestry projects in the village.

The argument to increase women's participation, as this research showed, has become a major part of gender debates at the national level in Vietnam, especially in the context of REDD+. This is because, according to the Cancun Agreements on Social and Environmental Safeguards (UNFCCC 2010), ensuring gender equity is one of the crucial conditions for REDD+ countries to receive their results-based payments in the forthcoming implementation stage. The argument to increase women's participation has been employed by NGOs and international implementing agencies to negotiate with policy-makers and government bodies in the new fora created for REDD+ (such as the REDD+ Sub-Technical Working Groups). Their efforts are unlikely to have a significant impact as NGOs and international implementing agencies have limited influence over decision-making. Consequently, the likely result is gender-related components being placed at the bottom of the policy priority list of policy-makers and government bodies both within and beyond the context of REDD+. Moreover, the current absence of specific guidance

or 'adequate' understanding of gender in REDD+ might well contribute to a simplistic approach in which gender equity is monitored by the percentage of women participating, for instance in a training workshop or on a Management Board.

8.2. Contribution to the existing literature

This sub-section discusses the potential contributions of this research to the existing literature. It addresses the empirical, theoretical and methodological contributions as well as how this research contributes to knowledge about REDD+ policy.

8.2.1. Empirical contribution

This research offers a detailed ethnography of how a specific community in the Central Highlands of Vietnam uses and manages their land and forest. Following Leach (1994)'s classic research on the Mende of Gola (Sierra Leone), this research seeks to apply a gender approach to the K'ho people. Findings from this research reaffirm two key points raised by Leach (1994): firstly, that gender plays a crucial role in shaping local men's and women's differentiated relations to the environment, and secondly, that forest resources, despite being strictly controlled by the state, continue to sustain the local economy in various ways.

This research, while focusing on a matrilineal community of K'ho people, is built upon the rich ethnography of different matrilineal societies in the Central Highlands conducted by French researchers (Dournes 1978; De Hauteclocque-Howe 1985). Comparing the traditional social structures of matrilineal societies described by other researchers and the existing practices among K'ho people of Kala Tongu, the research shows that many key characteristics of matrilineal systems (gendered access to productive land especially wet rice field, groom price, patterns of post marriage residence and child-rearing) are still respected and practised. However, their significance has changed under the influence of new socio-economic contexts. Specifically, this research reveals that the matrilineal system is being challenged by the economic independence of men and their ability to control coffee land. My research findings, in a way, resonate with Salemink's (2003) observations on gender transformation in the Central Highlands, who noted how men's status has improved due to women's loss of control over land and men's increasing involvement in non-agricultural income activities. These dynamics, in Salemink's case, originated in the expansion of the colonial administration system in the Central Highlands. By choosing the Central Highlands as a research location, this research contributes a unique case study

to the existing literature on upland transformation and changing gender relations in Vietnam. Previous studies have focused on ethnic communities in the North-western upland of Vietnam, where new opportunities brought about by the local tourism boom (Duong 2006; Bonnin and Turner 2014) or the herbal and medicinal plant trading business (Sowerwine 2004) have encouraged women to participate more in marketisation activities and thus have transformed the economic and gendered roles of men and women in the household. In contrast, the local population in the Central Highlands still rely heavily on natural resources (land and forest) and traditional cultivation practices to make their living. Since local people's engagement with the market-orientated economy is less visible and the region is regarded as both politically and ecologically sensitive, the Central Highlands have been relatively under-studied. So far, there have been few studies about the gender aspects of resource access in the Central Highlands since the Economic Reform of 1986, except for UNDP's research on women access to land in eight economic regions of Vietnam (see Tran et al. 2013). Therefore, this research contributes to filling in this gap by providing a 'thick description' of how the local villagers in Kala Tongu use and manage their land and forest, in a new context of post-socialist Vietnam and from a gender perspective.

What differentiates this research from other ethnographic studies on Montagnards in the Central Highlands, in my view, is that it presents different ways of looking at the forest. In other words, this research distinguishes between local gendered perceptions of forest and the state's perception of how local people should think and act in relation to 'forest'. For local people, forest is associated with its resources in a material sense, including timber and non-timber forest products. Forest is also seen in a more emotional and spiritual sense, as some local people also worship the forest gods and ask for their protection and blessings. In the case of Kala Tongu, where the Community Forest, the forest leasing contract scheme with the Bao Thuan Forest Company and the REDD+ pilot project of UN-REDD Programme is being implemented at the same time, forest is politicised. This politicisation reminds local people of their national responsibility to protect the designated areas in exchange for their quarterly payments for ecosystem services. This research shows that, for the state and state forestry agency, forest is for local people to protect rather than to access. As such, the state only acknowledges local forest-related responsibilities and overlooks local gendered forest rights and local gendered meanings of forest. This research brings together the local and state's gendered perceptions of forest, and more importantly, how and to what extent these perceptions intertwine in shaping gendered access to resources in this particular community.

8.2.2. Theoretical contribution

This research is built upon two main theoretical bases: Ribot and Peluso's (2003) theory of access and FPE (Rocheleau et al. 1996). Bringing the theory of access and FPE together and supplementing them with the notion of 'everyday politics' (Kerkvliet 2005) enables this research to deepen theoretical approaches to gendered access to resources and upland transformation in Southeast Asia and Vietnam.

Contribution to theorising gendered access to resources

Firstly, this research confirms arguments made by Agarwal (2003) and Jackson (2003) that intra- and inter-household relations condition an individual's access to land. Secondly, it enriches the discussion on how women's membership of formal or informal groups mediates access to resources as argued by Agarwal (2003) in the South Asian case and Rocheleau and Edmunds (1995) in the African case. Thirdly, the research supports the value of a nested case study designed to looking at gendered access to resources. Fourthly, it confirms the importance of an intersectional approach to exploring gendered struggles around resource access.

Firstly, intra and inter-household relations play significant roles in shaping local access to land. Specifically, my case study shows that kinship and conjugal relationships continue to play an important role in shaping women's access to land. For example, divorced women in Kala Tongu can return to their natal family and get a share of wet rice field/coffee land from their mothers/other female siblings. Also, young K'ho women can expand their household's coffee land through marrying K'ho men who own more coffee land. Moreover, compared to what Jackson (2003) observes in the case of South Asia, relationships with formal and informal authorities are comparatively more valuable for individuals to access other socio-economic resources necessary to work the land (i.e. capital and technology) in Kala Tongu.

Secondly, the significance of membership of women's groups in this socialist context contrasts with the meaning of group membership for women in many other contexts in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. As Agarwal (2003) and Rocheleau and Edmunds (1995) suggest, in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, women can assert their access to various resources through women's formal or informal groups. My case study, meanwhile, presents a different scenario, for three reasons. First, women's membership in formal groups is seen by local women as ineffective in gaining access to resources such as low-interest credit. This is because the most common formal groups operating at grassroots level in Vietnam are socialist mass organisations. Most rural men and women are

members of these mass grassroots organisations, such as the Women's Union or the Farmers' Union. However, being a member of a mass grassroots organisation by no means guarantees the member's ability to access state-sponsored benefit packages (although these mass grassroots organisations are supposed in part to serve as a channel to re-distribute those benefit packages). Due to local social and ethnic structures, membership of these formal groups often overlaps with that of other informal groups (i.e. labour exchange groups based on biological and conjugal relationships). Both women and men make use of relations around these informal groups (not the formal groups themselves) in order to access resources, including resources channelled through the formal groups. For example, members of Women's Unions and Farmers' Unions can secure a loan with low interest from these respective organisations, if they have biological or conjugal connections with the relevant representatives in the village. Second, given these dynamics in which the relationships of informal groups dominate the operation of women's formal groups, the attempt of state (and implementing agencies of environmental projects) to mainstream gender through these formal groups is misleading and might exclude poor and marginalised people from accessing resources. Third, these dynamics also raise the question of how much political space local women have to exercise their agency and voice concerns about the distribution of resources and their in/exclusion from resource access within formal groups. As shown in this research, the dynamics of women's groups are complex and women use informal relationships to manoeuvre within (and beyond) formal structures of the mass organisations. This suggests that intervention that aims at redressing gender equity, or indeed any kind of social inequity, through formal groups alone in Vietnam is likely to be ineffective.

Thirdly, the research also provides other reflections around the value of a nested case study design, which I found more useful to analyse gendered access to resources in this context than a user approach (Rocheleau and Edmunds 1997; Rocheleau and Ross 1995; Schroeder 1997), or an institutional approach (Kelkar et al. 2003) would have been. First, a nested case study approach is particularly valuable in contexts where there are multiple levels of state and customary governance over natural resources and points effectively to the blurring boundary of gendered productive spaces. This is because the structures of the local agricultural economy in the Central Highlands mean that the main resource types (wet rice land, coffee land and forest) can only be understood as embedded resources and consequently the division of gendered productive spaces in relation to these embedded resources is not straightforward. For example, in matrilineal Kala Tongu, women inherit and control wet rice land, and men tend to control coffee land, but both

women and men work on both types of land. In the joint land titling scheme, wet rice land is registered under the names of both husbands and wives. Wet rice land, in both customary and legal senses, is not a woman's gendered productive space *per se*. These subtleties in local perceptions of gendered productive spaces are also related to the potential impacts of environment projects on gender relations. In African case studies (for example Rocheleau and Ross 1995), the introduction of such gender-biased environmental projects as a timber scheme upset the local systems of gendered cropping and triggered conflict between men and women in the same household. In matrilineal Kala Tongu, gendered conflicts are less explicit. This is because the existing forestry projects such as the Community Forest and the REDD+ pilot project of UN-REDD Vietnam Programme attempt to mobilise both women's and men's labour to protect the forest and pilot the planting of a small number of agro-forestry trees in their wet rice land and coffee land. In contrast to the situation studied by Rocheleau and Ross (1995), these project activities do not directly influence local women's control of (wet rice) land in relation to men's and *vice versa*. Whilst in Kala Tongu the environmental intervention seeks to promote gender equity, local women prefer men to take the lead in forestry projects. Although they still want to be able to access forests through extractive activities (non-timber forest products collection) and forestry projects (forest fire prevention), they choose to do so only with support from men (their husbands or male siblings). In most cases, they completely leave it to men. Women's reluctance to engage in forestry activities, as shown in this research, is rooted in their gendered perceptions of forest-related responsibilities. Second, a nested case study highlights the voices of stakeholders involved in the environmental projects across different levels. By looking at the gendered perceptions of stakeholders across various levels (global/national/local/individual), this research confirms the systematic mismatches in understanding how gender interests should be addressed in existing environmental projects. This resonates with previous research in South Asia, using an institutional approach to analyse gender issues at various levels (Kelkar et al. 2003). However, this research goes beyond institutions to bring together the voices of those directly involved in the decision-making and implementation of environmental projects across different levels, from forest officers to locals). By using a nested case study approach, I focus on local perceptions of gendered forest rights and responsibilities in the matrilineal societies and situate them in relation to the gender debates around policy documents at global and national levels, as expressed in interviews with national actors. As such, I not only trace how policy is translated from the global to the national level and how action

plans are formulated and executed; I also compare the perceptions of gender interests expressed at these levels with those expressed by local women.

Fourthly, this research contributes to confirming the usefulness of an intersectional approach in studying gendered struggles around resource access and control. Previous studies have considered how gender and caste traditionally play a role in segregating spatial positionings of local villagers in Nepal (Nightingale 2011); how gender and ethnicity differentiate resource access of indigenous and migrant communities in the resettlement areas in Lampung, Indonesia (Elmhirst 2011); and more recently, how gender interacts with life stage and ethnicity to shape the decisions and trajectories of four East Kalimantan communities to engage in the palm oil sector (Elmhirst et al. 2017). In this research, I find that even in a matrilineal system where inheritance of the main productive land is traditionally structured along female lines, gender is not the only factor that influences an uplander's access to resources and their access claims. The coffee boom in the Central Highlands and the various efforts of the state to control forest and forest resources and of international implementing agencies to engage local communities in reducing deforestation and managing resources sustainably have created new opportunities for uplanders to access land. At the same time, they risk of losing their customary use of certain types of contested resources, especially forestland. As such, for the uplanders, various factors are proven to be crucial in granting local villagers access to forestland for coffee plantations, as well as to forest protection work that gives them payments and potentially also access to capital for investing in their main agricultural activities.

Specifically, in this research, I highlight the interconnectedness and interaction between gender and ethnicity, social status (or class), age and matrilineal kinship relations in shaping men's and women's access claims and associated actions. These correlations, as discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, vary across levels of analysis. At the individual and household levels, access to resources tends to be highly differentiated by gender, social status, age and matrilineal systems. Gender and matrilineal systems are the two main social categories that influence men's and women's access to land. Specifically, a K'ho woman can access wet rice fields, coffee land and residential land through inheritance by virtue of being a woman, while men, traditionally, do not have inherited access. At the community level, meanwhile, social status and ethnicity play equal roles in differentiating access to land between an elite woman (or man) and an ordinary woman (or man), and between K'ho and Kinh households. For example, an elite woman can rely on political connections to buy forestland or maintain access to forestland informally, while an ordinary woman cannot. Similarly, a Kinh household, because of better access to necessary

capital, technology and political connections, has a greater capacity to buy land than a K'ho household. As observed in my research, there is a strategic alliance between the K'ho elite and the Kinh authorities to make use of the available resources. In the case of Kala Tongu, ethnicity is further complicated by the historical relationship between Kinh and K'ho people in relation to forest and forestland access; the state's perception of traditional shifting cultivation as the main drivers of deforestation; and the state's expectation of local K'ho men as the main forestry labours. These in turn are linked to how ethnicity and ideas of matrilineal/patrilineal systems held by the state shape forestry policies and interventions targeted at ethnic minorities, including K'ho villagers, and subsequently transform their traditional ways of accessing resources. Lastly, age (or generation) also intersects with gender in influencing access to resources at both household and community levels, although it is often less explicit than ethnicity or social status. As shown in Chapters 5 and 6, among the older generation, gender divisions of labour in agricultural production and the meanings of forest were quite distinct between women and men. For example, in the past, men were in charge of heavy manual jobs while women took care of less physically demanding jobs, both in the field and in the forest. Among the younger generation, especially for newlyweds, the gender division of labour between women and men is blurring, as women are also in charge of heavy jobs such as clearing land, digging holes, and moving large rocks in their coffee plantations. They are also not expected by their husbands or the community to take care of traditionally gendered tasks such as grinding rice by hand, as they can use grinding machines. Also, in the younger generation, as noted in Chapter 5, due to the recent changes in residential land access and land transaction, sisters might not live next to each other, unlike in their mother's generation.

Overall, I have shown that an intersectional approach that takes into consideration gender and other social differentiation such as ethnicity, social status, matrilineal relations and age is useful to capture the complexities and nuances of access to land and forest in the case of Kala Tongu village. Understanding these complexities and nuances will help to address the gaps within gender policies in forestry and in REDD+ specifically. Accordingly, focusing solely on gender and overlooking ethnicity, social status, age or matrilineal relations in designing policies and translating policies from national to local level, might result in an essentialist approach that undermines pilot activities. I will further discuss this in the following section on my contribution to theorising upland transformation in Vietnam and Southeast Asia.

Contribution to theorising upland transformation in Southeast Asia and Vietnam

This research also engages closely with the literature on upland transformation in Southeast Asia and Vietnam. In this research, I deploy the concept of everyday politics (Kerkvliet 2005) to highlight local agency in resource access and how this local agency is gendered. I will lay out how I develop these two aspects from previous studies, as well as how I approach them differently in the following paragraphs.

The first aspect concerns whose voices and which levels of analysis are to be highlighted. I note that in previous research on natural resources in the uplands there has been a tendency to focus on the formation of 'political forests' (Peluso and Vandergeest 2001). In my case study, I focus on what happens on the ground and how local people, through their everyday politics, develop their own way of classifying the forests. Accordingly, local people differentiate two kinds of forest: forests to protect, which includes any kind of forest for which they sign a contract to protect; and forests to 'eat'[71] (i.e. for timber harvesting, non-timber forest products collection and coffee plantation), which refers to other forests, especially remote forests considered 'out of sight' of forest officers. Instead of analysing how the state educates local people to think and act (see for example Li 1999), this research looks at how local people take action based on their perceptions and classification of forest.

By doing so, it uncovers various gendered strategies employed by local women and men to articulate their claims to coffee land and negotiate access to this land. For example, between local men and Kinh forest officers (usually men), conversation about coffee land is usually oriented around ethnic minority people's customary access to forest and coffee land respectively. Access to coffee land for local men, therefore, is justified through a combination of customary rights, indigeneity and labour investment, rather than being explicitly about legality or illegality. In contrast, interactions between local women and Kinh forest officers normally operate on an assumption that the ethnic minority people encroach on the forestland and convert it to coffee land because they are poor and ignorant of the law. Therefore, when local women face Kinh forest officers, they may beg for sympathy to keep the already-converted coffee land. This 'politics of *xin* (favour asking)', as Sowerwine (2011b:185) terms it, is commonly observed among K'ho women in Kala Tongu village, and sometimes it is encouraged by their male counterparts as an efficient strategy to keep family land.

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[71] Here I borrow Condominas's words from his famous ethnographic study 'We have eaten the forest' (1994) to refer to the shifting cultivation culture of local people in the Central Highlands.

The tendency of local people to justify illegal activities using different terms from those deployed by state is also illustrated in McElwee's (2004) research on illegal logging in the Vietnamese uplands. However, this research brings in a gendered aspect of every-day politics of land and forest access, which is not the main focus of these two researchers (Sowerwine 2011b; McElwee 2004). Moreover, in the case of Kala Tongu, I find that the 'everyday politics' is not limited to negotiation between local villagers and Kinh forest officers. It manifests in various forms, from rumours to open protest. Some villagers even take advantage of the newly established platforms of the REDD+ pilot projects to voice concerns (meetings with REDD+ officers). Although, this new 'political space' is modest, it shows the agency that villagers can mobilise to contribute to debates on justice and fairness around resource access at local level.

The second aspect is related to the question of how policy shapes local practices and in turn how local responses contribute to reshaping the outcomes of project imple-mentation. Specifically, this research picks up on two key gender policies: the first being the recommendation by UN-REDD Vietnam Programme and other REDD+ implement-ing agencies that husbands' and wives' names must be written on a forest leasing contract between a household and a forestry agency; and the second being the joint titling scheme for agricultural land, which has been implemented since 2003 independently from REDD+. Those policies illustrate how the household has been the main target of state policies regarding resource use and management and how ideas of a patriarchal family sharing a common pool of income are central in the state's plan to modernise the uplands of Vietnam. This resonates with Elmhirst's (2011) observation among migrant communi-ties in Indonesia. Elmhirst (2011) shows that the idea of a heteronormative family as a requirement for state transfer in turn shapes how local people represent themselves to fit this idea and maximise their chances of accessing resources.

In my case study, it is evident that the state's gender policies have mixed out-comes, some of which are not always seen as desirable by local women and men. For example, the rationale of both husbands' and wives' names on the forest leasing contract of PFES from the policy-makers' perspective is intended to ensure gender equality in access to the payment and to ensure that the household (not individual men or women) is the main target of state intervention. In practice, local men act as the labourers doing forest protection while local women manage income for the household regardless of who earns it: this is part of their traditional responsibility as mothers with children within the matrilineal system. Similarly, regarding the join titling scheme for agricultural land, the

state seeks to regularise customary access of local women and men and transform traditional ownership based on female lines, to one registered under patrilineal nuclear families. In practice, local women in matrilineal societies either want to have their names only on land that customarily belongs to them, or choose not to apply for individual LUCs so that their customarily-owned land remains within their matrilinear family. Men tend not to argue for joint titling that allows them to lay claim to their wives' land, because men accept the fact that they do not control their wives' land customarily, demonstrated by the fact that men do not normally pursue access to this land in the event of divorce.

8.2.3. Methodological contribution

This research employs an ethnographic approach to uncover individuals' relation to resources. In this sub-section, I discuss how certain techniques of data collection have been employed in previous research on land and forest access. I then reflect on how I apply these techniques in this research and how they are useful to tease out the gendered struggles and gender relations around resource uses of Kala Tongu villagers. The two main techniques of data collection of concern here are the life history interview and the visual data generated through photovoice.

Life history interviews are recognised as an effective way to deal with sensitive data such as land disputes. For example, in a methodological reflection on researching geography and development in Vietnam, Scott et al. (2006: 35) find that a better way to collect information about the processes and impacts of collectivisation and de-collectivisation is through 'listening to people's life histories and experiences under different policies and historical periods'. In this research, I find that life history interview can serve a similar purpose in helping to construct the story of customary access in the village. Moreover, I specifically attend to how local men and women, through their life histories, choose to reflect on and recall certain events and practices, such as how their community used to access 'the old forests' as a common resource or how they gathered in a land protest. These narratives are also useful for me, as a researcher, to understand their motivation, interests and claims in relation to resources, and more importantly, how this 'selective forgetting and remembering' (Li, 2014: 5) is gendered.

Data from life history is sometimes enriched by visual data such as photos. Previous research on the role of visual data, including both photos taken by outsiders (experts or researchers) and insiders (local people), has tended to focus on two main themes. For one, Nightingale (2003) analyses the discrepancies between aerial photos of forest cover and

local narratives to understand how local people articulate their perceptions about the community forest management (cited by Richardson et al., 2017: 2346). For another, Duong (2006) uses photos taken by Hmong women in the Northern uplands, together with their narratives, to challenge the stereotypes of ethnic women as victims of modernisation. The use of visual data in Duong's research was useful because it offered a platform for the insiders, or the communities being studied, to express themselves and construct their cultural identities. As far as I am aware, little has been discussed about the utility of visual data in studying the political ecologies of the uplands and/or conflicts around resource access. In this research, I conducted a photovoice project with a group of mixed-gender participants. I collected different sets of photos taken by my informants, together with photos taken by a forest officer based in the village and my own photos taken during my various fieldtrips. These photos are mostly shown in Chapter 7 to discuss the local perception of boundaries between agricultural land (coffee plantation) and forest and forestland (grown and natural forests). The visual data from different sources (taken by my photovoice participants, the forest officer and myself), despite its modest representation in this research, helps to analyse the local gendered perceptions of forest rights and responsibilities and highlight their understanding of land and forest tenure. For example, I find that male participants tended to take more pictures of their coffee plantations/gardens, located next to the pine forests of the Bao Thuan Forest Company or the Community Forest. In the subsequent interviews, I was told that these male participants have been engaging in a long process of negotiating with forest officers to keep their plantations. This shows that photovoice can help the researcher construct a fuller account of the local sense of space/boundaries and local understandings of legality or illegality of their practices.

Last but not least, this research raises issues about how to use an ethnographic approach within the context of policy and development studies. This research is concerned with gendered access to resources at the micro-level and explores a context that has been involved in various forestry projects implemented by both international and national implementing agencies. It was therefore important for me to include the interactions between the local villagers (the subjects of development) and the forestry and REDD+ officers (the intervenors) (Long and Long 1992) within my study. My findings and analysis show the significance of these interactions for understanding gendered access at the micro level. As such, this research confirms the value of pairing local study and scaling up analysis in understanding policy and development processes.

8.2.4. Policy implications

Local access to resources, in this research, is situated within the context of REDD+ Readiness Stage, and various pilot forestry projects implemented by both the state and international implementing agencies such as UN-REDD Programme. REDD+, therefore, serves as a part of the forest governance context of this study. In turn, a better understanding of how things work in the REDD+ pilot project through this study is anticipated to have implications for the future implementation of REDD+.

This research looks at REDD+ from below. My observation from a REDD+ pilot site helps to clarify what kinds of struggles local people experience, where and how these conflicts, in local perceptions, are reshaped by the arrival of REDD+. The potential contribution of this research to knowledge about REDD+, therefore, is to illustrate the connections between what REDD+ is supposed to be, what REDD+ is expected to deliver and how the REDD+ pilot project is shaped by existing forms of customary access and structures of forest governance in a pilot site. My case study poses the question of whether REDD+ is actually about sustainable forest management and livelihood development for local communities or forging strategic political alliances between national actors and local actors in pilot sites to implement required project activities and spend the allocated funding. Moreover, it looks closely at the dynamics of each pilot site, and analyses the interests, motivations and claims of involved actors to understand what and how these actors make the best of their situation within and beyond REDD+. By focusing on REDD+ as a context rather than the subject of study, this research responds to the call for a new approach to understand upland transformation in Vietnam. As Sowerwine (2011a: 70) points out, this approach

> shifts attention away from 'state policy' as the place of departure from which to examine people's response, by starting at the local level and studying what exists as well as the boundaries and flows that emerge out of local context.

Among the existing research on REDD+, To et al. (2016) provide one of the few studies that focuses on micro-level analysis. From their case study in the Central Highlands, they argue that local people are making use of REDD+ to pursue their own interests (i.e. strengthen their land tenure by applying for the Land Use Certificate or the Red Books). This kind of opportunity would not be available for them without the REDD+ pilot project of Fauna&Floral International, the international implementing agency in their research site (To et al. 2016). My research, while focusing on the UN-REDD Vietnam Programme's pilot project, finds that REDD+ is in fact largely insignificant on the ground as

far as local people are concerned because it does not bring them extra benefit. Such insights might not be visible if we treat REDD+ as the main research subject, instead of studying what actually exists, and what emerges out of these local contexts prior to and during REDD+ piloting.

8.3. Future research agenda

This research raised a number of interesting points, not all of which could be explored in detail. Firstly, through a nested case study, this research is more grounded at the local level, so the analysis has focused on access to resources at the local level more than nationally and sub-nationally. Further research to explore the sub-national level, where it is anticipated that many political and economic negotiations take place, would complement the findings of this research.

Secondly, another area of research that could be sharpened is the gender-based collective action in response to state environmental projects. In my case study, this is not visible yet, due to the nature of the state and political system in Vietnam. However, as local people are increasingly involved in global environmental projects such as REDD+ and local NGOs are working directly with local communities in terms of building capacity, transferring knowledge and advocating for their land and forest rights, there might be more fora open for local men and women to voice their concerns and take political actions accordingly.

Lastly, due to my constraints in recruiting male respondents, this research does not reflect the voices of local men as strongly as I would have liked. As such, my analysis of how resources in the village are increasingly masculinised is mainly based on women's perspectives. This research would benefit from an extended discussion on how masculinisation of land proceeds within the context of REDD+ and whether REDD+ will hasten the demise of matrilineal systems.

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Appendices

Annex A List of respondents

Annex B List of meetings attended at the national level

Annex C Guiding questions for interview with local villagers

Annex D Overview of REDD Sub-Technical Working Groups in Vietnam

Annex E Institutional Arrangement for REDD+ in Vietnam

Annex F Summary of UN-REDD Vietnam Programme activities in Lam Dong Province

Annex A. List of respondents

1.List of respondents for life histories

Identity code	Gender	Ethnicity	Age group
LH1	M	K'ho	50-54
LH2	M	K'ho	70-74
LH3	M	K'ho	60-64
LH4	F	K'ho	50-54
LH5	F	K'ho	55-59
LH6	F	K'ho	45-49
LH7	F	K'ho	40-44
LH8	F	K'ho	55-59

2.List of participants for photo voice project

Identity code	Gender	Ethnicity	Age group
PV1	M	K'ho	40-44
PV2	M	K'ho	55-59
PV3	M	K'ho	55-59
PV4	F	K'ho	30-34
PV5	F	K'ho	40-44
PV6	F	K'ho	25-29

3.List of respondents interviewed at national and provincial levels

Identity Code	Gender	Level	Ethnicity
NGO1	F	National	Kinh
NGO2	M	National	Kinh
GO1	F	National	Kinh

NGO3	F	National	Thai
NGO4	M	National	Kinh
GO2	F	National	Kinh
NGO5	F	National	Kinh
GO3	M	Provincial	Kinh
GO4	F	Provincial	Kinh
GO5	F	Provincial	Kinh

4.List of in-depth interview respondents

Identity code	Gender	Ethnicity	Age group
ID1	F	K'ho	40-44
ID2	F	K'ho	20-24
ID3	F	K'ho	35-39
ID4	F	K'ho	25-29
ID5	F	K'ho	25-29
ID6	M	K'ho	30-34
ID7	M	K'ho	30-34
ID8	F	K'ho	50-54
ID9	M	K'ho	60-64
ID10	M	K'ho	40-44
ID11	M	K'ho	40-44
ID12	F	K'ho	30-34
ID13	F	K'ho	45-49
ID14	F	K'ho	45-49
ID15	F	K'ho	20-24
ID16	M	K'ho	55-59

ID17	F	K'ho	20-24
ID18	M	Kinh	60-64
ID19	M	Kinh	35-39
ID20	M	K'ho	45-49
ID21	M	Kinh	40-45
ID22	M	K'ho	35-39
ID23	F	K'ho	30-34
ID24	M	Kinh	60-64
ID25	M	K'ho	55-59
ID26	M	K'ho	30-34
ID27	M	Kinh	40-44
ID28	M	Kinh	40-44

Annex B. List of national meetings

Date	Name	Organizers
27/03/2015	The 6th Meeting of Sub-technical Working Group-Safeguards in REDD+	Vietnam REDD+ Office in Hanoi
07/04/2015	The 6th Meeting of Sub-technical Working Group-Governance in REDD+	Vietnam REDD+ Office in Hanoi
21/4/2015	Research Seminar on REDD+ Politics On Media (Cross-country Comparison And The Case Of Vietnam	CIFOR Centre for International Forestry Research
02/07/2016	The 11th Meeting of Sub-technical Working Group-Local Implementation in REDD+	Vietnam REDD+ Office in Hanoi
10/07/2015	Research Seminar on REDD+ Financial Flow	Forest Trends
30 and 31/07/2015	JICA Final Technical Workshop of SUBFORM-NOW (REDD+ in Dien Bien Province)	JICA Japan International Cooperation Agency
09/09/2015	Consultation Workshop on REDD+ Social and Environmental Indicators	PanNature
22/09/2015	The 7th Meeting of Sub-technical Working Group-Safeguards in REDD+	Vietnam REDD+ Office in Hanoi
02/03/2016	The 8th Meeting of Sub-technical Working group-Safeguards in REDD+	Vietnam REDD+ Office in Hanoi

Annex C. Guiding questions for interview with local villagers

Part 1.
1. Personal and household information
- What's your name? How old are you? Which ethnicity are you?
- How many children have you got? Are they married and have they moved out? Where do they live? How many people are there in your household at the moment? Who are they? How are their marital history (any inter-marriages?)?

2. History of settlement
- How long have you been living in this current place? Please tell me about the place where you used to live and this current place when you first moved to it. Have there been many changes in your life since you moved here? (What and why?)

3. Means of livelihood
- What do you do for a living? Where does your household's main income come from? Do you grow rice or cash crops (coffee, rubber, fruit tree, vegetables etc.)? How many crop of rice do you grow per year? In your opinion, do you have enough rice to eat?
- Are you collecting timber and non-timber products from the forest? What products, where and when do you do that? How do you know what, where and when to collect these?

Part 2.
1. Property relations:
- How many hectares of land do you have? From which sources? (Inherited from family, bought from other households/villagers, or from the Forest Devolution policy?) (For analysis: Any differences between men and women/sons and daughters?)
- How many hectares are officially registered under your household? And how many hectares are not? Please tell me more about your strategies to secure your land tenure (and any conflicts or disputes with other households and other land owners i.e. State Forest Companies).
- Do you have a Red Book (Land Use Certificate) for your land? Under whose name was it registered? (Husband? Wife? Or both?) Do you have any preferences about whose name it is registered under? If so, why?

2. Forests and their mythology
- Is there a sacred forest in or outside the village?
- Where do/did the forest spirits usually live (stream sources, salt licks, waterfalls, areas with large, old trees, watering holes frequented by animals)?
- Do the villagers (who and why?) still worship the forest and forest spirits? When is this usually done? Who leads the rituals? How do the villagers normally prepare for these rituals/festivals?
- Were there any taboos or prohibitions on clearing, burning and cultivating in the area or restrictions on the extraction of certain animals and plants?
- Is there a hierarchy among spirits? Which spirit is the most powerful? Are there differences between outside spirits and inside spirits? What do you call them? Where do you place God (Jesus Christ) in this system? For which spirit do you have to perform sacrifice rituals? (Or all of them?) Why?
- How did these forest spirits systems change during the war and under the state-centralised economy? How about when you shifted to growing rice and coffee? Do you think the pressure on forest was less severe previously with the presence of spirit forests? Do you think it is necessary to have state laws and regulations to protect the forest?

- Do you still talk to your children and grandchildren about forest spirits and sacred forests? Do you think it's important to do so? If so, why?

3. Forests and laws (customary and official)
- Did you have customary laws in the village previously? In your household and among your kin, are they still practiced? (Please be specific). Do you know what the customary laws say about protecting the forest and about distributing forest land among households in the village (for crops and livestock)? Are there differences in distributing forestland and responsibilities of forest protection between men and women, old and young, elites and villagers?
- Do you know any official laws regarding forest use and management? If yes, please specify. If not, why? (Are these reasons gender-based? e.g. women do not know and care about official laws while men do). If and when needed, where will you seek this information? Whom will you consult and why?
- Do you prefer customary laws or official laws in relation to forest use and management? Why it is so?

4. Forest development schemes and REDD+ in the village
- Are you aware of or have you been involved in any forest development schemes at provincial, district or village levels? If not, why? Do you think it would be better to be involved? If yes, what are those about? What do you think of these schemes? Who do you think get involved in these schemes and who tends to be left out and why?
- Have you taken part in any REDD+ training workshops? Do you think these workshops are easy to understand? Are there any recommendations you want to make based on participating in REDD+?

5. Gender relations in the household and community
- In your household, who does what work? Who is responsible for what in your household? Who decides which kind of crops are to be cultivated? Who does what in farming activities and why is it so? Who sells agricultural products (what products, sold to whom and where?)? Who manages income in the household? (Income from what and for what?)
- Who patrols the forest? Who manages payments? Who attends the training workshops and meetings (consultation meetings with community conducted by REDD+ officers)? Why is it so?

Annex D. Overview of REDD Sub-Technical Working Groups in Vietnam

The REDD Technical Working Group is diversified into different Thematic Sub-Technical Working Groups. These consist of:

(i) Sub-technical Working Group on REDD Governance, which covers issues of REDD governance; government structures and capacity building; forest policies, rules and regulations; external linkages with other government agencies;

(ii) Sub-technical Working Group on MRV, which covers issues of forest data, forest inventory, data management and MRV;

(iii) Sub-technical Working Group on REDD financing and benefit distribution, which covers issues of development of the REDD+ fund;

(iv) Sub-technical Working Group on Local Implementation of REDD, which covers issues of REDD implementation at districts and communities, capacity building, interventions, alternative rural livelihoods and ethnic communities;

(v) Sub-technical Working Group on Private Sector Engagement, which covers issues of development and implementation of Programme, and forming related policies; and

(vi) Sub-technical Working Group on Safeguards, which covers issues of co-ordinated technical assistance as delivered to the Government of Viet Nam, and other relevant stakeholders, in operationalisation of safeguards to promote social and environmental co-benefits from REDD+ at the national, sub-national and local levels.

(Source: http://vietnamredd.org)

Annex E. Institutional Arrangement for REDD+ in Vietnam

Institution	Chair	Members	Functions
Vietnam REDD+ Steering Committee January 2011	Minister of MARD	Representatives from the Office of the Government Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE); the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI); the Ministry of Finance (MOF); the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST); the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA); and the National Ethnic Committee (CEMA)	Facilitating and coordinating REDD+ implementation among the ministries and within the agricultural and rural development sectors in Vietnam Developing and submitting proposals on the establishment of a joint working group to develop Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMA) and a transparent monitoring, reporting and verification system (MRV) to meet international requirements and national circumstance, and integrate these activities into socio-economic development
Vietnam REDD+ Office January 2011			Serve as the standing office for the REDD+ Steering Committee and is placed at the VN-FOREST Coordinate and manage the process of developing tools to implement Viet Nam's National REDD+ Program

Institution	Chair	Members	Functions
National REDD Network September 2009	Vice Minister of the MARD and an international development partner on a rotation basis	Representatives of MARD Office of Government; International Development Partners; Local NGOs; and Research institutions (such as Forest Universities)	Support the development of REDD+ readiness Decisions made by the National REDD Network will be presented to the National REDD+ Steering Committee Prepare an action plan, including a road map, for the design and implementation of all elements of an effective national REDD+ system for Vietnam; Establish milestones and deadlines for delivery of each component of the action plan; Share experience and lessons learnt among stakeholders in the REDD+ implementation; Undertake regular reviews and assessment of the status of implementation of the action plan, and design and implement measures to address any shortcomings in implementation; and Ensure that all activities in support of the development and implementation of REDD+ measures in Vietnam fall under, and are consistent with the action plan.

Institution	Chair	Members	Functions
Technical Working Group and Sub-Technical Working Group September 2009	VNFOR-EST leader with the REDD National Focal Point as the Deputy Head	Open-ended, might overlap with National REDD Network	Develop and update the donor mapping for REDD+ development and implementation in Vietnam; Identify a pilot scheme of REDD+ application in Vietnam in cooperation with respective stakeholders; Review the current and planned programs of international development partners related to the action plan; Prepare annual reports on the implementation of the action plan; Prepare national report of Vietnam for COP 15 and other related international conventions. Perform administrative work and financial management allocated to the National REDD Network and TWG to ensure their continuous operation and functioning; and Organise National REDD Network meetings.

(Source: www.vietnam-redd.org)

Annex F. Summary of UN-REDD Vietnam Programme activities in Lam Dong Province

Phase	Main activities in Lam Dong Province	Involvement of Kala Tongu village
Phase 1 (2009-2012)	In 2010, FPIC was implemented in an 8-step, 3-phase approach from the end of January to mid-June. 78 village consultation meetings were held, with about 5,470 people participating from 20 communities in the two pilot districts.	Kala Tongu villagers were consulted during FPIC.
Phase 1 (2009-2012)	In 2010, the preliminary benefit distribution system (BDS) was presented at a local consultation workshop in Lam Dong on 21-22/12 to receive feedback on key specific areas, including: REDD+ fund (establishment and operation) and REDD+ payment (method and eligible recipients). In 2011, a stakeholder meeting regarding BDS was held in Lam Ha on 28/2 and Di Linh on 10/3. Workshop participants included community authorities, the farmers' association, women's union, forest protection units, village heads, and villagers. Participants showed great interest in the program activities as well as the designed BDS.	Representatives from Kala Tongu village were invited to participate in these workshops.
Phase 1 (2009-2012)	In March 2011, village facilitator training was organised at commune level as one of the follow-up activities of FPIC exercise. The training has provided village facilitators with the following knowledge and skills: understanding of the role and tasks of grassroots facilitators in raising awareness and changing behaviour of the local community related to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation; how to use and apply the UN-REDD Vietnam Programmes's communication materials for activities at the local level; basic skills in effective communication for facilitating meetings and community counselling sessions; and how to take initiative in conducting and reporting on communications activities on REDD in the village after the course.	Two village facilitators from Kala Tongu village were trained.

Phase	Main activities in Lam Dong Province	Involvement of Kala Tongu village
Phase 2 (2013-2015)	In 2014, the Lam Dong Provincial Programme Management Unit (PPMU) approved the REDD+ action plans for Kala Tongu Village (Bao Thuan Commune, Di Linh District) and Preteing 2 Village (Phu Son Commune, Lam Ha District). They are the first site-level REDD+ action plans to be developed and approved in the programme. The process of developing these plans used participatory approaches following FPIC principles. Local people, forest owners and users as well as village-level stakeholders effectively and actively participated in the process. A grievance mechanism was in place before starting the planning process in order to address issues and concerns raised by local people. This also helped to ensure integration of local priorities and interests in the plan. The potential REDD+ interventions for the villages were identified based on current gaps and future potential for forest management and protection. Local people identified drivers of deforestation and forest degradation and suggested potential REDD+ interventions to mitigate these drivers. Forest owners were specially targeted and engaged in the whole planning process as they would be directly implementing the plans.	Kala Tongu villagers were invited to formal meetings to draft the village-based REDD+ action plans
Phase 2 (2013-2015)	In 2014, Lam Dong PPMU approved the plans and signed contracts with villagers to implement the plans. Specifically, the PPMU provided the villages with tools to protect the forest, tree seedlings to plant in the village and support for the establishment of village development funds to manage and provide credits for livelihood development. Up to 2015, 33 households have received funds amounting to VND 10 million per household.	Kala Tongu villagers directly implemented the plans.

(Source: UN-REDD Programme Vietnam Newsletter March 2011 and April 2015)