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Climate Cultures

Anthropological Perspectives on Climate Change

Edited by Jessica Barnes and Michael R. Dove

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Chapter 3 From Conservation and Development to Climate Change: Anthropological Engagements with REDD+ in Vietnam

Pamela McElwee

One of the most broadly discussed options on the table for the next phase of the Kyoto Protocol, which sets targets for global greenhouse gas levels for signatory countries, is a measure for Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+) to tackle land-use-generated emissions.[1] Because forests serve as a sink for the absorption of around one-third of anthropogenic carbon emissions and have contributed around 8–10 percent of yearly anthropogenic carbon emissions when burned or cut, including them in target planning is a goal for many participants in the global climate convention (Gullison et al. 2007). The REDD+ program has been in active discussion since the Bali Conference of the Parties in 2007 agreed that the program would be a significant impetus to slow world deforestation. The fundamental premise of REDD+ is that if households and governments are given payments and other types of rewards that equal or exceed what could be raised by cutting down trees, then forests will be better protected and carbon conserved.

Yet as this global architecture for REDD+ develops, analysis is needed to determine how different REDD+ will be from the numerous forest protection policies that have come before. Anthropologists have long raised questions about the intersection between local people and forest conservation, including the ways in which power and culture often collide in forest conflicts between communities and the state (Sivaramakrishnan 2000; Haenn 2002); how communities living in forests are represented to global audiences and how they represent themselves vis-à-vis environmental problems (Haenn 1999; Brosius 2002; Doane 2007); and how such problems as deforestation come to be recognized as being in need of intervention in the first place (Dove 1983; Brosius 2006; Mathews 2008; McElwee, forthcoming). State policies for forest management have often been directed at restricting local forest use, resettling people away from degraded areas or instituting protected area boundaries, which have often had detrimental impacts on affected communities; anthropologists have long engaged in both research and activism to highlight these issues (Baviskar 2000; Laungaramsri 2002; West et al. 2006).

Similar anthropological attention is needed regarding the development of REDD+ and other climate interventions. To date, much of the emerging literature on REDD+ has focused on technical issues, including how forests will be defined and measured; how baselines against which progress in halting deforestation will be measured; how REDD+ financing will operate; and how benefits will be shared (Agrawal et al. 2011; Corbera and Brown 2010; Corbera and Schroeder 2011; Visseren-Hamakers et al. 2012). Rather than pursue these lines of inquiry, however, this chapter aims at two broader goals: one, to look more comprehensively at how REDD+ has grown out of a long line of interest in tropical forest management and, in so doing, to explore how new climate motivations may be similar to previous policies directed at tropical forests; and two, to use ethnographic tools to explore the development of REDD+ projects and assess what anthropology can contribute to understanding the implementation of REDD+ as a climate mitigation scheme (see also Mathews, this volume). I argue that major barriers to implementation of REDD+ are likely to revolve around questions regarding rights to forest environments and responsibilities of forest-using peoples. Previous forest conservation approaches have foundered on these questions, and REDD+ may face the same fate. Yet so far, REDD+ projects have ignored these deeper issues and focused primarily on seemingly apolitical technical requirements to identify and classify the myriad local conditions REDD+ projects might face, from land tenure to carbon content to social participation, a problem I term *checklist-ification.*

Using a case study from Vietnam, I examine the history of forest management and recent development of REDD+ and highlight similarities between the new climate-inspired policies and previous, usually unsuccessful forest policies, including Integrated Conservation and Development Projects and decentralized forest management. I ask what it means for our understanding of REDD+ in Vietnam if it is indeed the latest, principal medium of articulation of global, national, and local actors contesting how forests should be defined and who has rights to control them. The chapter points out that just as previous approaches often left the most vulnerable forest dwellers excluded from resources and benefits, new REDD+ policies have the potential to do the same, providing a cautionary tale for climate-driven development.

FROM TIMBER MANAGEMENT TO BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION TO ECOSYSTEM SERVICES IN VIETNAM'S POLITICAL FORESTS

Southeast Asia is home to some of the richest forest resources in the world, and a history of forestry policies here shows that ideas about how best to manage forests come in waves, with remarkable similarities across the political spectrum of state governments in the region. As Peluso and Vandergeest have noted, colonial and then independent governments often undertook a series of similar actions regarding forests in the twentieth century: they all declared that the state was the sovereign owner of land and resources, enacted laws for demarcation and mapping of what constituted forests, and controlled the harvesting, trade and use of specific forest products, particularly valuable ones (Peluso and Vandergeest 2001). A consequence of these actions was the criminalization of previous forest management approaches, such as swidden agriculture, which was a particular enemy of nascent forest services, often based on inaccurate understandings of this system of land management (Dove 1983).

These new delimited areas—what Peluso and Vandergeest have termed "political forests"—were established in French Indochina in the early twentieth century, and by 1939 there were 2,250,000 hectares (ha) of reserved and protected forest (Service scientifique de l'Agence économique de l'Indochine 1931). As elsewhere, in Indochina the Forest Service made great efforts to try to keep ethnic minority peoples out of state-designated forest lands owing to fears about their use of swidden, although these restrictions were much contested by local peoples (McElwee, forthcoming). Despite the efforts of a few isolated colonial officials who argued for decentralized responsibility to local villages for forest management, most state approaches were characterized by hostility to local land practices and by attempts at centralized control of the forest estate (Thomas 2009).

Shortly after the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) was founded in the north in 1954, forest policy aimed at the complete nationalization of the forest estate and the establishment of State Forest Enterprises (SFEs) to log these lands. The nationalization of forests was extended to the south after 1975 at the conclusion of the Vietnam War, and there were more than four hundred SFEs at the height of state control of forests in the early 1980s (Ngo et al. 2006). The local peoples who had used and managed forest lands before nationalization received no financial remuneration for their land losses, and ethnic minorities in particular, who traditionally resided in much of the uplands where the richest forests were, were deeply affected. The combination of poor management in the SFEs combined with loss of official rights to forests among upland communities resulted in incentives for deforestation in many areas (To 2009). In the war years, from 1943 to 1976, Vietnam's forest cover declined from 14.3 million ha of forest to 11.1 million ha (Forest Inventory and Planning Institute 1996).

The cessation of war did not reduce the rapid deforestation; indeed, as Vietnam tried to rebuild and rejoin the world economy, deforestation increased considerably. Concern over illegal logging was voiced with increasing frequency in the Vietnamese press in the 1990s, focusing on the phenomenon of the *lam tac*, or illegal logger, someone who poaches and deforests with impunity, usually because the person has connections to political and economic elites (McElwee 2005; Sikor and To 2011). Landslides, flooding, and other environmental disasters throughout Southeast Asia in the 1990s focused further attention on watersheds and forests' perceived (though often exaggerated) role in conservation and climate regulation (Forsyth and Walker 2008). These concerns resulted in subsequent bans on timber imports and exports in many neighboring nations, and Vietnam too banned not only raw log exports but also many areas from commercial logging in 1993 (Tuynh and Phuong 2001). Yet the logging ban only regarded one aspect of the problem, ignoring other culprits of deforestation: the uneven land tenure situation among households living near forests; little support for communal management of forests, above all by ethnic minorities; incentives for illegal logging given high domestic demand for timber; mass migration of Vietnamese to upland areas, where they converted forests to agriculture; and poor management and enforcement of lands under continued SFE control (De Koninck 1999;

McElwee 2005; Meyfroidt and Lambin 2008; Meyfroidt and Lambin 2009; McElwee, forthcoming).

Coupled with the intensified interest shown in the region's forests by global NGOs concerned about wildlife and species preservation, the 1990s saw many forest ministries reinventing themselves as champions of biodiversity in areas they may have once overexploited. New protected areas that were to be free from exploitation grew substantially across the region (Déry and Vanhooren 2011). Yet despite appearances that these efforts to create strict protected areas were based on science alone, they tended to be concentrated in forested mountain areas inhabited by ethnic minorities, and certain groups, such as the Hmong in Thailand and Vietnam, were singled out and vilified as "forest destroyers" (Laungaramsri 2002; Forsyth and Walker 2008). In Vietnam, swiddeners continued to be targets of government sedentarization programs to substitute wet rice and cash crops for swidden fields.

More inclusive models of resource management, which were supposed to link conservation to poverty reduction, began to arise in many parts of the globe, usually under the name of "integrated conservation and development projects" (ICDPs) (Brandon and Wells 1992). In Vietnam, ICDPs were mainly funded by foreign donors, while the Vietnamese state kept to a strict policy of no human use of core areas of protected zones (although in reality many parks existed merely on paper) (McElwee 2002; Rugendyke and Son 2005). Examples of some of the emergent ICDP arrangements that donors brought to Vietnam included establishment of mixed-use "buffer zones" around core protected areas (Gilmour and Nguyen 1999); funding for low-impact, nontimber forest product extraction (Raintree 2004); and local comanagement of protected areas (Spelchan et al. 2011). However, the ICDPs had mixed results. Projects were often not scaled to the threats the forests actually faced, such as global demand for endangered timber and wildlife. Linkages with development were also weak, resulting in resentment and poor participation, especially when the benefits of ICDPs were not equally shared among community members (McElwee 2010; Polet 2003; Zingerli 2005). Many of Vietnam's ICDPs were eventually declared failures.

The ICDP approaches, although many were less successful than had been hoped, did coincide with increased enthusiasm for decentralization in forest management, with communities and households taking over the management of forests and other conservation areas from previous state or private landowners. Many Southeast Asian nations experimented with different models of decentralization and community and "social" forestry (Colfer 2012; Dove 1995). Vietnam too began to move in this direction, particularly with regard to forests not included in protected areas. Starting in 1993 with revisions to the national Land Law, citizens could receive fifty-year land certificates to forest land and the rights to manage the land in accordance with the land classification it was under, which usually meant they agreed to replant forestry land with trees or let degraded forest recover (McElwee 2009). The forest decentralization program provided land tenure certificates, commonly known as a "red book," and financial assistance to help smallholders reforest their lands for production forestry, taking land primarily from SFEs. However, major questions were raised about what institutional arrangements should be used to manage forest lands: allocation to individual households or to groups of households and communities, which led to decentralization of forest lands that was often uneven and incomplete (Clement and Amezaga 2009). As of the Rural Agricultural Census of 2006, 92 percent of the nation's agricultural land was held by private households, while only 24 percent of officially classified forest land was held by nonstate entities (households or communities) with land tenure rights (GSO 2007). Household rights to forests also remain unevenly distributed regionally. In addition, the forest lands which were decentralized were almost without question the poorest quality forest lands, as most land tenure certifications given out were for lands already denuded of any tree cover by SFEs (Thuan 2006). There have also been mixed results with the individual land rights that have been allocated. Such allocations have inevitably been embedded in local power and economic relations that often disadvantaged the poorest and those least able to interact with the state apparatus for allocation, namely, ethnic minorities (Sowerwine 2004; Sikor and Tran 2007; McElwee 2009; Coe 2012).

Given the frustrating lack of clear successes with decentralization, a new forest policy approach began in the mid-2000s: market-based incentives for conservation, like payments for environmental services (PES), which were designed to arrest degrading forest processes by providing economic valuation of important ecosystem functions (Wunder et al. 2008). Vietnam began to experiment with PES for landscape protection, ecotourism user fees, and carbon sequestration, and by 2012 at least nineteen PES projects were operating within Vietnam, sponsored by large donors like the World Bank and United Nations Development Program as well as conservation organizations like the World Wildlife Fund (Pham et al. 2009; McElwee 2012; To et al. 2012). Two state-run PES pilot projects were set up in Lam Dong and Son La

provinces in 2008, and in 2010 the state extended PES policy nationwide through Decree 99, which aims to collect payments from hydropower companies, water companies, industrial facilities that use water, and tourist companies (Pham et al. 2013; McElwee et al. 2014). Forest service suppliers have included households and individuals near forest lands who have either protection contracts (essentially labor contracts agreeing to watch over state lands in return for cash) or red books (secure land tenure for forests), as well as state-owned forest entities, such as SFEs. Significantly, the two pilots to test PES were located in areas where ethnic minorities are the main forest users or owners (Thai/Dao/Hmong groups in Son La and Koho/Chil/Mnong in Lam Dong). While PES project documents have noted that this is an attempt to target the poorest households, the long history of the state's dislike of forest use by minorities suggests that these areas were targeted for reasons of identity as much as for forest threats. It remains to be seen if these market-oriented PES projects will be able to improve forest conservation outcomes, as current research on the policy indicates continued problems with uneven land tenure and benefit distribution (McElwee 2012; To et al. 2012; Pham et al. 2013).

THE DEVELOPMENT OF REDD+ AS EMERGENT FOREST POLICY

The rise of market mechanisms to protect forests has in more recent years coincided with concerns about slowing or halting land-use emissions as part of climate mitigation efforts. As Michael Dove (2003) has noted, the idea that tropical forests are the lungs of the planet is a long-standing one. However, this concept has taken a long time to develop into global climate policy. Early discussions regarding the Clean Development Mechanism of the Kyoto Protocol, which allows developed countries to transfer funding and technology to developing countries and claim emissions reductions realized in those countries as part of their own national emissions reductions, centered on strong political arguments against including forestry activities for fear that this would lower the quality of carbon credits (Fry 2008). Eventually reforestation and afforestation projects were made eligible for Clean Development Mechanism funding and emissions reductions credits (although they comprise but a small portion of the overall portfolio), but not "avoided deforestation" (Fry 2008). Avoided deforestation returned to the agenda for the post-2012 commitment period, as several developing countries, including Costa Rica and Papua New Guinea, have pushed for it to be included since 2005. Negotiations have been under way since then, and the Conference of the Parties in 2013 has confirmed finalization of the "Warsaw Framework for REDD+" (Corbera et al. 2010).

Part of the enthusiasm for REDD+, particularly from some of the same actors involved for many years in forest policy debates, stems from the potential amounts of funding that could be linked to carbon. Conservationists have argued that REDD+ has the potential for secondary add-on effects (known as co-benefits), such as conservation of biological diversity, leading many to suggest REDD+ is a win–win option (Hagerman et al. 2012). A number of regional and national projects, primarily implemented by bilateral development donors and NGOs, have begun pilot projects to prepare countries for REDD+ implementation in the future (Cerbu et al. 2011). These "REDD+ readiness" programs include the World Bank Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) and the United Nations REDD readiness project (UN-REDD).

The possible economic benefits of REDD+ to Vietnam have been estimated at US$60–100 million per year (Ebeling and Yasué 2008), as more than half of Vietnam's total greenhouse gas emissions in the past decade has been attributable to the land-use sector, including agriculture and forestry (Hoa et al. 2012). A new national REDD+ steering committee was established by the government in early 2011, coordinated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, and a National REDD+ Network was set up in 2009 for NGOs and donors to offer advice. At least seventeen pilots are under way in assorted provinces to publicize REDD+, conduct carbon baseline measurement, and perform other activities. Like PES projects before them, the REDD readiness pilots are being implemented by NGOs and donors with a wide range of interests, from community-based rural development to biodiversity conservation. The largest REDD+ pilot project has focused on Lam Dong province (site of the above-mentioned PES pilot), where the UN-REDD project is operating, and a phase two will soon expand REDD+ activities to six more provinces (Pham et al. 2012).

Questioning Win–Win Scenarios

Despite often being presented as a win–win scenario that will tackle both conservation and poverty issues, much as other forest projects were supposed to in the past, questions need to be asked as REDD+ activities expand. Can REDD+ projects overcome some of the past barriers to successful forest conservation in Vietnam? Previous challenges to ICDPs, decentralization,

and PES approaches have included poor understanding of the most significant drivers of land-use change, with a dominant focus on ethnic minorities and swidden agriculture to the exclusion of attention to corruption, excessive state logging, and industrial cash crop expansion; the regional unevenness of secure land tenure rights to forests, with only 25 percent of forest area under nonstate management; and a lack of support for local households to truly participate in the management of the benefits of forest preservation, such as in community forestry (Sikor and To 2011; Sunderlin and Huynh 2005; To 2009). Will REDD+ be able to do things differently?

To answer this question, anthropological analysis can explore how knowledge is being produced in REDD+ and how climate-related land-use plans compare with previous forest management approaches (Mathews, this volume). For example, which agents of deforestation are REDD+ projects aimed at, and how is this knowledge generated? How are forest communities that are targets of REDD+ designated and represented? Are these agents the true drivers of forest change or simply convenient or more visible scapegoats? Additionally, analysis is needed of the emerging regulatory apparatuses that are associated with REDD+. To what degree are REDD+ projects similar to or different from previous attempts to regulate forest use, particularly in regard to land tenure and participation questions? And are the emergent regulations being proposed truly about climate or about long-standing questions of land-use rights and responsibilities?

Anthropological tools of participant observation in a number of REDD+ readiness meetings and workshops in Vietnam since 2008, as well as field research involving household surveys and interviews in the pilot REDD+ province of Lam Dong since 2011, form the basis of my analysis. Such an approach informs the conclusion that an overattentive 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, have dominated pilot "REDD+ readiness" activities to date. By presenting REDD+ as a series of checklists and benchmarks that need to be met in order for forestry funding to flow, donors and other actors within Vietnam have neglected a deeper problematization of forest rights and responsibilities, much as previous approaches to forest management did.

Defining Targets of REDD+

Emerging REDD+ projects share with earlier policies a lack of clear understanding of the key agents of deforestation and even common definitions of what deforestation and forests are. For example, in Vietnam's submissions to the FCPF and UN-REDD programs asking for funding, the documents noted that drivers of deforestation "are generally agreed to be a result of: (i) conversion to agriculture (particularly to industrial perennial crops); (ii) unsustainable logging (notably illegal logging); (iii) the impacts of infrastructure development; and (iv) forest fires" (FCPF 2011; UNREDD 2010: 26).[2] Yet on the ground, the main joint government–donor pilot project that has been funded to date, namely, activities by the UN-REDD program in Lam Dong, has concentrated only on smallholder households of ethnic minorities, who have been targeted for awareness-raising activities around REDD+ (interviews with Lam Dong provincial officials, 2012). Other drivers, including infrastructure development (such as roads, hydropower, and industrial parks) and logging, have not received much attention.

For example, at a workshop in January 2014 on the progress of a REDD+ pilot in Dien Bien province, a mountainous area of Vietnam's far northwest that is dominated by ethnic minorities, provincial officials blamed the majority of forest loss in the area on shifting cultivation. They even went so far as to present figures that twenty-two thousand ha of forest had been recently lost to swidden, which contradicted an earlier presentation of satellite data on forest loss, which had estimated only fourteen thousand ha of land conversion. The fact that remotely sensed data for all types of forest conversion had been increased by over 50 percent and then attributed to ethnic minorities indicates deep-rooted inclinations to place blame on some populations but not others. An agricultural extension officer in Lam Dong confirmed these tendencies, noting in an interview that "the main reasons for land conversion are people who have rights, people who have money. But we blame swidden instead" (interview, January 2014).

Further, despite the fact that many of the REDD+ pilots are being targeted at ethnic minority communities, little attention has been paid to the fact that ethnicity is not allowed to be used as the basis for land claims or self-governance in Vietnam (McElwee 2004), and collective ownership of land is still politically difficult, which is one reason why so little land (less than 1 percent of the total forest estate) has been allocated to communities. The state of Vietnam is unlikely ever to allow ethnic minorities as collective groups to have extensive communal land tenure titles. This will likely keep REDD+ in Vietnam from achieving some of the goals of indigenous development that have been advocated at global levels (Dressler et al. 2012; Brown 2013; Lyster et al. 2013).[3]

I myself witnessed how the sensitivities of land rights and ethnicity were skated over in the local pilots through a REDD+ training session in August 2012 in Lam Dong. During an afternoon devoted to understanding the principles of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), the young female lecturer from the nearby regional university tried to give examples to the audience of local officials of why FPIC needed to be used and what benefits it could bestow, noting that FPIC was likely to be a requirement of international REDD+ donor funding. Rather than discuss the actual land tenure situation in the province in which we were working, in which no ethnic minorities hold collective titles to land and most ethnic minorities do not hold individual titles to forest land either (titles are available only for agricultural land), she chose an example from Australia. In the case study, Rio Tinto had, in the late 1990s, signed the Yandi Land Use Agreement with the Gumala Aboriginal Corporation, which had been created to represent the collective interests of the traditional owners of the land, and FPIC had been used to get these owners' consent to the development of an ironworks on their land (see Mahanty and McDermott 2013 for a history of FPIC in mining). Ironically, in this example, the Nyiyaparli, Banyjima, and Innawonga peoples who were negotiating with Rio Tinto had ancestral ownership of land, which they were able to use as the basis for incorporation as a firm that could negotiate with the powerful conglomerate. This would be politically unheard of in Vietnam. The confused questions that accompanied the presentation on the Australian FPIC example (such as one local agricultural official who whispered to me, "What is an indigenous corporation?") gave an indication of the difficulty of translating the idea of FPIC from a country with recognition of indigenous peoples and collective land rights to one without. These problems were confirmed in an interview with the head of the provincial agricultural extension service, who had been extensively involved with REDD+ pilots. He noted, "FPIC is taken from a foreign model, and it's not really suitable for Vietnam. FPIC is based on the idea that communities have rights and voice [over forests]. . . . The UN requires certain things like FPIC, and we did it according to the requirements, but what should be the long term way to institutionalize this [participation] in a way that makes sense for Vietnam?" (interview, January 2014).

Expansion of REDD+ Regulation

REDD+ projects in Vietnam have not yet transferred any money to participating localities or imposed new restrictions on forest use. What they have done so far is spend most of their time on getting "REDD+ ready." New checklists of things that must be done to be "ready" are proliferating, including having completed FPIC processes, having undertaken a Participatory Governance Assessment, and having a traceable monitoring, reporting, and verification system for carbon emissions. These REDD+ requirements have largely been devoted to "making things the same" (MacKenzie 2009), that is, making complex ecological systems amenable to a numerical valuation, such as carbon per hectare, which could be used across the country, or using a simple safeguard "tool" to ensure that each and every community that was involved in REDD+ had given consent to their participation through FPIC. As the Lam Dong extension official alluded to previously, these requirements are seen as being outside objectives pushed by the UN that have been difficult for local officials to understand. Trainings are being held in local areas to pass the new global acronyms and requirements downward, and the rapid expansion of these norms has required new specialists familiar with the language. In this manner, REDD+ policies are bringing in forms of what are referred to in the anthropological literature as new "audit cultures" (Kipnis 2008; Strathern 2000). Below I show how these new types of audits, regulations, and checklists were interpreted by Vietnamese actors and how they ran into problems on the ground.

At the REDD+ training I attended in Lam Dong in 2012, the trainer who had used the Australian land rights example mentioned previously had had problems from the start in getting the definition of FPIC across. Speaking in Vietnamese, she had translated *free* as *self-volunteerism* (*su tu nguyen), prior* as *before* (*truoc), informed* as *enough information* (*du thong tin)* and *consent* as *collective agreement* (*su dong thuan).*[4] (The unclear relationship between self-volunteering and then being part of an agreed-upon consenting collective was not discussed.) The trainer's approach was to try to get across that FPIC had to be implemented prior to any REDD+ work expanding in the province, and that this process would help guarantee both local participation and prevention of abuse. If a project had "done FPIC" prior to implementation of any REDD activities, then it would be considered a success in safeguarding participation. This idea that FPIC was a simple, easily applied tool was widespread. For example, in an interview with a local university official who had been contracted to help with FPIC, he expressed great excitement at the business opportunities it presented; as it was so new, he was going to set up a consulting company to be hired to go "do FPIC." "Doing FPIC" would involve spending a half a day in a community, with two hours for

training on what FPIC was, followed by collective voting on whether to allow REDD+ to proceed. The official enthused that if every village in Vietnam had to do an FPIC checklist he would be in business for years with this new firm.

But the effectiveness of FPIC as the sole means to safeguard rights is questionable. In a few pilot UN-REDD tests at the village level, for example, meetings to get consent for the development of REDD+ were held but were very short, no more than a couple of hours in length, and only forty-five minutes were allocated for questions and answers after the "awareness-raising activities" (mainly explanations of what climate change is and how forests mitigate carbon). Then villagers had to make the decision to consent or not consent to REDD+ activities, often with open shows of hands. No one in the FPIC preliminaries was presented with any information on the possible risks and costs of participation (that is, changes in agricultural practices that might need to be made). Rather, the participants were asked general questions like, "Do you want your forests to be conserved?" (Nguyen et al. 2010). Not surprisingly, most people supported REDD+, since the question did not refer to any costs that might be incurred in forest conservation or how it might be carried out.

Further, the FPIC process in Lam Dong has been mostly undertaken in villages that do not have formal land tenure rights to nearby forest lands, which are actually owned by the state. Thus the villages who were "consulted" and who "consented" to join REDD+ have no formal landownership rights granted to them that would enable them to have legally defensible say over local forest management. UN-REDD project documents on FPIC in Vietnam have been widely promoted as the first example of a UN-REDD project anywhere to carry out FPIC, but they do not discuss the problem that the majority of households were voting to participate in REDD+ on lands that were not really theirs to offer consent for (UN-REDD 2010a). While the pilot community met all the requirements on the checklist for FPIC (that is, they were given information, it happened prior to REDD+ implementation, and they voted voluntarily), can such a system truly be considered to be legal consent over forest activities and regulation? Interviews with people who had participated in the FPIC sessions a few months after the fact revealed that many had no idea what they had raised their hands for, and most had forgotten the idea of the meeting altogether (personal communication, UN-REDD consultant, 2013). In fact, in one commune that has seen numerous consultants going in and out, doing FPIC meetings and carbon assessments and other readiness activities, but providing no actual financial support for local households, a local leader had coopted the REDD acronym, stating that in Vietnamese it actually stood for "Roi Em Den va Di," which translates to "Here you come and go again" (interview, Forest Department of Lam Dong, 2014).

A second type of checklist-ification that was occurring in Vietnam involved the work of making forest carbon in diverse areas comparable to one another through the mapping of carbon distributions, the identification of tree types that stored more carbon than others, and the development of a formula to determine payment rates for protection of carbon-rich forests. Consultants have been hired to create lists of tree allometric equations, which are an expression of the amount of carbon likely to be found in particular species of tree, based on average stand density, wood volume, wood density, bark-to-wood ratio, and other factors (UN-REDD 2013). Local valuations and assessments of forests' usefulness were not needed for such equations, which seem to fit the definition proposed by Michel Callon of "dispositifs de calcul," or calculative mechanisms, that form distinctions between things and shape the parameters of new understandings of calculated entities (Callon and Muniesa 2005; Callon 2009). In this imagining, the calculative mechanisms turned forests from ecological groupings of trees into stocks of carbon.

These extra-local calculative mechanisms were not accepted without challenges, however, as the use of carbon content to value trees also raises certain ontological questions: what is a tree? If a tree is simply a mass of woody material made of carbon, as the tree allometric equations suggested, then many species that have long been classified in Vietnam as agricultural crops, such as coffee, cashew, and rubber, potentially become new actors in REDD+ plans. Indeed, households interviewed in our local research sites raised these questions themselves: once told of what carbon was (using the term *cax bon* in Vietnamese, adopted from English, as there was no previous word for it), several households said that they should be eligible to receive carbon payments for coffee trees, the very planting of which had driven figures on deforestation that made Lam Dong province a site for REDD+ targeting. Why shouldn't coffee be considered carbon under local reasoning, if *cax bon* was simply visible woody matter? Similarly, several local provinces in areas where rubber grows have argued that replacing poor quality natural forest with rubber trees is not a significant change in ecotype, as it is just substituting one type of carbon-holding woody material with another. These arguments have recently been boosted by a decree of the prime minister

which allows rubber conversion with central government permission. Given that industrial rubber expansion in Southeast Asia has been implicated in major patterns of deforestation in recent years (Fox and Castella 2013), it is ironic that the ontological questions raised by REDD+ of what counts as carbon-worthy trees may in fact further drive local deforestation.

COMPARING NEW FOREST POLICY WITH OLD

The saying "old wine in new bottles" is widespread in Vietnam (*binh moi, ruou cu*) and is often applied to the numerous attempts that have occurred over the past twenty years to improve the forest sector, from land allocation to reforestation funding to market-based conservation. REDD+ may indeed be the newest bottle, but it must be seen in the light of a long history of global interest in forest management in the tropics. Despite years of searching for outcomes that do not exacerbate inequity and poverty, no magic bullet has been found to deal with the complicated issues of conservation and development that forest management entails, and this dilemma can be seen in the history of forest management in Vietnam. In this respect, REDD+ faces the same challenges that troubled earlier panacea approaches like ICDPs and community-based natural resource management. Identifying REDD+ solely as a new type of global climate governance hides this long history of struggles over local forest rights, which this chapter has sought to contextualize.

Whether or not REDD+ will be able to make a difference in global carbon emissions remains an open question. As evidenced by the case study in Vietnam, much of the production of knowledge about forests and people under REDD+ and the regulations that are developing seem to be mostly a rehashing of previously unsuccessful endeavors. Like other approaches before it, REDD+ may not be focused on the right forest change drivers, as local forest users, many of whom have long been excluded from formal land title and recognition of their forest use, continue to be the targets of environmental rule and intervention, while other agents of deforestation like export agriculture, migration, and infrastructure development are ignored. Similar processes of overattention to local actors at the expense of global drivers can be noted in other REDD+ pilot sites (Leggett and Lovell 2012; Murdiyarso et al. 2012; Pokorny et al. 2013; Awono et al. 2014). Given this uneven focus, exploring how various actors make assessments of the drivers of deforestation or climate emissions can be a highly useful contribution of anthropologists (e.g., see Milne 2012; Leggett and Lovell 2012; Bull 2013).

Anthropologists also have a crucial role to play in drawing attention to the social justice and equity implications of environmental interventions. Such questions require us to look carefully at the globalization of forest and climate policies like REDD+, given the specificity of social and property relations in most countries (Forsyth and Sikor, 2013; Evans et al. 2014). In Vietnam, REDD+ projects have not been designed to deal with two major equity issues that have long plagued the forest sector: uneven land tenure and the lack of a strong participatory role for local people, especially ethnic minorities, in forest management. REDD+ pilots have appeared to steer away from sensitive issues such as ethnicity and land tenure rights, instead stressing more bureaucratic and apolitical calculative checklist approaches for supposed participation through FPIC and environmental protection through carbon equations. While these processes of checklist-ification have distilled complexity into neat formulaic simplicity, they have prevented a deeper discussion of fundamental, often political, issues related to land tenure and other rights. As local actors noted, the use of FPIC as a tool has been primarily about meeting the demands of global donors' requirements, not about a fundamental reassessment of land rights and participation in forest management.

It is not clear if REDD+ has been cast in climate solution terms precisely to avoid answering these difficult questions about rights and citizen participation to begin with. Presenting REDD+ as an urgent project for climate emissions reductions and as "low-hanging fruit" in global climate negotiations (Laurance 2008) may serve to gloss over the eminently political implications of a restructuring of forest rights and responsibilities. Certainly in Vietnam, REDD+ runs the risk of simply replicating existing patterns of institutionalized management of land and commodities that are spatially uneven and socially unequal. Similar conclusions have been drawn for other climate mitigation approaches, indicating a strong role for anthropologists to continue to raise important concerns regarding participation and equity.

NOTES

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1. REDD is now often referred to as REDD+ to indicate the additionality of "the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries." Others have also suggested REDD++, indicating the "need to examine emissions from all land-use activities in efforts to reduce terrestrial emissions" (Agrawal et al. 2011). REDD+ is used here to indicate the current state of the suggested program (Pistorius 2012).
2. A review of preparatory documents for the global Forest Carbon Partnership Facility indicates that many national authorities, not just Vietnam, have pinned blame for deforestation on simplistic culprits like swidden agriculture rather than on the complicated processes that are often at work, including tenure issues, competing land uses, and corruption (Dooley et al. 2008).
3. Indeed, the lack of attention to political issues of indigenous rights and land tenure by REDD+ in Vietnam and other states was recently blasted by an advocacy organization at the UN Permanent Forum for Indigenous Peoples (Goldtooth 2013).
4. The acronym for FPIC in Vietnamese would have ended up being STNTTDTTSDT, so everyone simply used FPIC, despite the fact that there is no letter *F* in the Vietnamese language.

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Part Two **Knowing Climate Change**