VIETNAMESE VILLAGES IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION

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Each village strikes its own drum and worships its own deity
(Vietnamese proverb)

Introduction

Descriptions of contemporary Vietnam usually do not fail to mention Vietnam's remarkable economic growth since the introduction of the politics of renovation (*đổi mới*) in 1986. The transition from a centrally planned economy to an open-market economy as well as Vietnam's membership of the WTO in 2007 facilitated Vietnam's integration in the global economy, making it possible for Vietnamese companies to operate on the global market, for transnational corporations to produce throughout the country and for Vietnam's workers to find work in industrial zones within the country as well as to move abroad. Besides these economic aspects of globalization, Vietnam has witnessed an intensification of global interconnections due to improved means of transportation and communication, creating new possibilities for social and cultural exchange across the country and around the globe. Mobile phones, the internet and television have become indispensable means for many Vietnamese to stay connected and access information and diverse sources of entertainment.

Within this context, one of the questions that arise is how these global influences affect the lives and feelings of belonging at the local level. While several studies have focused on the effects of global influences and processes of modernization in the urban context (e.g. Harms 2011; Drummond and Thomas 2003), we suggest that the village is a perfect location to study such tensions between the local and the global. Vietnamese villages are important sites for understanding continuities and processes of change that affect

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Vietnamese society more generally [see also 13; 26]. Villages play a fundamental role in Vietnamese cultural identity as they accommodate a variety of central institutions and practices, from ancestor worship, ancestral houses, patrilineage organizations, village deities, and communal houses, to village mass organizations. At the same time, Vietnamese villages have experienced dramatic changes due to agricultural transformations, improved infrastructure, out-migration, as well as many other political, economic and social developments.

Within this paper, we will discuss the roles and transformations of villages and village life in Vietnam. Considering that Vietnam's villages are now part of a "global ecumene" how have villagers living inside and outside their villages maintained and transformed their lives in and their attachments to their villages? To what extent have village out-migration and land redistribution changed the way villagers see themselves and their village? These questions underlie an ongoing research project focusing on these issues of globalization and identity in relation to Vietnamese villages(*). This paper is an attempt to contextualize the topic of our research within the literature on (Vietnamese) villages, globalization and identity.

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Conceiving the village

The village is, as Rigg (1994: 123) writes, "a powerful unit of analysis in both a material and a metaphorical sense. The traditional village 'community' is often paraded as a paragon of virtue, and the modern village as a corrupted version of the original". But, as Rigg adds, the view of the village as egalitarian, self-sufficient, autonomous, corporate is often at odds with historical evidence. As a result, the nature of *the* village has been the object of much scholarly debate.

A central issue on this debate has been the relative openness or closed-ness of villages. In the mid-1950s, Eric Wolf drew a typology of closed corporate versus open peasant community. For Wolf [31, 456], the distinctive characteristic of the corporate peasant community is that "it represents a bounded system with clear-cut limits, in relations to both outsiders and insiders. It has structural identity over time. Seen from outside, the community as a whole carries on a series of activities and upholds certain "collective representations". Seen from within, it defines the rights and duties of its members and prescribes large segments of their behavior." The open community, on the other hand, "emphasizes continual interaction with the outside world and ties its fortunes to outside demands" and historically "arose in response to the rising demands for cash crops which accompanied the development of capitalism in Europe" [31, 462].

Although Eric Wolf based his analysis on peasant communities in Mesoamerica and Central Java, the typology has been used to describe the nature of village communities in various parts of the world. Villages in Northern and Central Vietnam have often been described as "closed and corporate communities with a relatively high degree of autonomy" [11, 2). As a result, the image of the Northern Vietnamese village is one of "a place where people hide behind a bamboo hedge and where traditions have kept intact from times immemorial" [12, 1]. Villages in Northern Vietnam have typically been characterized as a community in terms of social cohesion, as closed due to their efforts to fend off outsiders and the practice of village endogamy, and as autonomous in their relation with the state.

Yet, many of the newer studies take issue with this idealized image of the Northern Vietnamese village, not only because of the profound changes in the rural landscape during the past decades, but also because it does not necessarily correspond with historical realities and the diversity of Vietnamese villages(*). As Kleinen put it: "variation in landscape, physical attributes, socio-cultural circumstances and historical background do not warrant a comprehensive description of 'the' Vietnamese village" [12, 2]. It is thus necessary to consider diversity and the transformations in the Vietnamese rural landscape for a better understanding of the relative closed or open character of its villages.

Yet, before exploring how closed or open Vietnamese villages were, or are, we first have to reflect on what we exactly mean when we talk about the village in the Vietnamese context. The difficulty of defining Vietnamese villages already becomes clear from the diverse use of village terms and the distinctions between village, hamlet and commune. Nguyễn Tùng (2003) points out that there is not one way to refer to village but that the particular terms used depended on region and time. In ancient documents, many words are used to denote Vietnamese villages depending on region and time, including *làng, xã, thôn, phường, trại, châu, vạn, giáp, phố, tích, sách, động, lũng, xưởng, mỏ, bến, chòm, nậu, đội, tộc, ấp, lý* [18, 17-20]. In Northern Vietnam, the village is commonly related to three Vietnamese terms: *làng* (village), *xã* (commune), and *thôn* (hamlet). *Làng* (Vietnamese script - *Chữ Nôm*) is used to call the smallest settlement unit and fully-fledged entity of the majority *Việt (Kinh)* peasant ethnic group. *Xã* (the Chinese's language term- *Chữ Hán*) denotes the primary administrative unit of society in *Việt* countryside [30, 135]. The term *xã* was adopted under China's political control to indicate the Vietnamese rural commune. *Xã* derives from the Chinese term *she,* and took the role of primary administrative unit of society [17, 101].

(*) In fact, Vietnamese villages are diverse; there are "differences in the pattern of village administration and society between North, Centre and South, between low-land and high-lands. It is therefore impossible to speak of common features of traditional Vietnamese villages. In this paper, we limit our discussion here to lowland and midland villages in northern Vietnam.

In the lowland and midland areas of Northern Vietnam, *xã* can be made up of one or several *làng* (villages) depending on its size. Being integrated into *xã*, these *làng* become administrative units; in this case, *làng* is called *thôn* (the Chinese term). Therefore, *làng* and *thôn* are nearly synonyms. However, there are nuances in using the terms of *làng* and *thôn*. *Làng* denotes a sense of attachment, of personal feelings, the term often used in everyday life, while *thôn* with its administrative attribute, is usually used in official texts [30, 135; Yu Insun 2000: 21). In some cases, *xã* have only one *làng*. This leads to a jumble of the two terms. In the everyday language, Northern Vietnamese usually connect the two words *làng* and *xã* together into a compound word with vague meaning: *làng xã* [30, 135].

Since the 20th century, there has been a tendency of using *xã* (commune) to denote a primary administrative unit, which consists of one or more *thôn* (hamlet) while *làng* (village) remains the basic settlement unit where peasants actually share their sentiments [18, 98-99]. The residents in the village follow both the rules of kinship relations and neighbor relations (Mai Văn Hai, Phan Đại Doãn 2000: 151). The village is the cultural and social unit of countryside which traditionally circumscribed a certain territory, social structure and customs but which is at the same time located within a wider economic and administrative system.

This brings us back to the question regarding the relative closed-ness or openness of Vietnamese villages. In the following, we will discuss the two main approaches regarding the characteristics of the traditional villages in the lowland and midland regions of Northern Vietnam. The first approach contends that the traditional village was characterized by political autonomy and economic self-sufficiency; it is a closed and static community. The second emphasizes the open features of the village in many aspects.

Vietnamese villages: closed characteristics

The first approach perceives 'traditional' villages – i.e. villages before the French colonial time – not only as administrative units but also communities with many functions. Though small, villages were tightly structured, suitable to the demands of everyday life, and able to cope with difficult situations such as natural calamity, banditry and warfare. The particular trait of the village was a closed life. The village was as a distinct world by itself. All villagers could depend on village institutions, the communal spirit and sentiments between villagers without going out or exchanges beyond their village [29, 297]. The closed features of these 'traditional' villages rely on territory, structure and organization, politics, religion, culture, and self-sufficiency in population reproduction.

Several authors have described the importance of village territory, social institutions, and political apparatus prior to 1945. Each village had its own

territory, which includes housing land (*đất ở*), cultivation land, lakes, hills and mounds. The traditional village charter (*hương ước*) states clearly the boundary of the village and villagers are called upon to protect the territory against the encroachment of other villages [15, 464]. Moreover, the village territory is not an area where any outsider can settle if they want. In fact, each village has its roll of taxpayers, that discriminate between the official residents (of the village) (*chính cư, nội tịch*) and the unofficial residents (those off the village) (*ngụ cư, ngoại tịch*) and only through the process of confirmation unofficial villagers can become official villagers [12, 7; 29, 241]. Concerning this matter, Popkin (1979) also calls attention to this sharp insider-outsider distinction through the term 'village citizenship'. Popkin stressed that: "Clearly, the concept of village citizenship was important, for the insider-outsider distinction was sharply drawn"… The emphasis on village citizenship, therefore, encouraged local ownership and impeded the development of powerful multi-village landed fortunes" (Popkin 1979: 89).

Although villagers were internally considerably differentiated in wealth and status, they were linked together by extensive social ties (Luong 2010: 55). Trần Từ (1984) illustrates this in his description of the organization and operation of the village taxpayers (*dân hàng xã*), the Council of Notables (*Hội đồng kỳ mục*), and the Village Officials (*Lý dich*), patrilineages, groups of households in the same alley, age group associations, and the volunteer groups (guilds). The village taxpayers/village inhabitants include all men over 18 year-old, paying tax for the state, having the right to vote and to deliberate village affairs. The council of notables consists of people who were elected by the village inhabitants (*Dân hàng xã*). Actually, they were people who usually had both mandarin's grades (*Phẩm hàm*), and personal estates. The function of the notables' council was to lay down village policies and measures to implement the policies. The village officials or state bureaucratic officials at villages were the village chief and his assistants. The function of village officials was to implement policies of the council of notables and carry out the duty and obligations toward the state [30, 65-66].

In political affairs, the village apparatus was run by the council of notables and the village officials. The village had its own law or specific charter (*hương ước*). Depending on its apparatus and its own law, the village could establish its own court of justice. In emergency situations such as banditry or war, the village could mobilize troops from among able-bodied villagers (Trần Đình Hượu 1996: 241). Village politics were furthermore influenced by several kinds of social institutions such as patrilineages, groups of households in the same alley, age group associations, and the volunteer groups (guilds) [30]. Despite the interventions of the central government, the village was rather isolated and

autonomous. After fulfilling its obligations to the state, such as taxes and the provision of military conscripts and corvée labor, the village could run its own affairs. Most importantly, the state had no affairs with individuals but with the village [7, 247; 19, 824]. This also means that only through the village one could be a fully participating member of society [11, 30]. With regard to the nation, the traditional Vietnamese village was like a state within the state [19, 829; 17, 102].

Concerning the economy, Vietnamese villages are typically organized around agricultural production (especially rice cultivation) and/or a particular handicraft. While the King nominally owned all land, the village was in fact the collective owner of agricultural land (public land). Village land was reallocated every three years, providing subsistence for the very poor and reimbursement to those who rendered service to the village [11, 29]. This lend tenure system was, as Jamieson argues, one of the pillars of village solidarity. However, public land underwent privatization for a long time. Shortly before the 1945 revolution, the majority of public land became private land. Therefore, traditional Vietnamese villages, especially villages in lowland and midland regions of Northern Vietnam had both private land (held by households in small scale) and public land [30, 19-29]. The village was a self-sufficient unit in its function of organizing and allocating agricultural land for households. Villages specializing on certain handicrafts would keep the production process secret to make sure that outsiders would not know the secrets of their trade (Popkin 1979: 89-90; [29, 241-242].

In addition to being closed, traditional Vietnamese villages were also defined as corporate due to their role in subsistence security and collective welfare for peasants facing "the specter of hunger and dearth, and occasionally famine" that occasionally came "to the gate of every village" [Scott, 1976: 1]. The subsistence of peasants depended on "pattern of reciprocity, forced generosity, communal land, and work-sharing" (Scott 1976: 3). That may explain why some peasants disliked the market, preferred common property to private property and resisted the village changes towards a more open village under the impact of capitalist development and the steering of the modern colonial state. In other words, the closed corporate village guaranteed the subsistence for peasants through moral arrangements that minimized risks [23]. Although viewing villages from other perspective in comparison to Scott, to a certain extent Popkin also acknowledged that traditional Vietnamese villages were closed villages. He emphasised the "hedge" of villages that "secured the village and displayed its sanctity to the outside world" (Popkin 1979: 88).

In the sphere of religion and culture of villages before 1945, the village had its tutelary god (*thành hoàng*), a communal house, temples and pagodas. It also

organized its festivities and was responsible for education matters [29, 241-243]. Trần Từ explores the role of village charter (*hương ước*) in village life. Nguyễn Thế Anh (2003) argues that the charters include village administrative rules, customary law, and religious guidelines. All these are mixed together, and aim at regulating the interactions and relationships within and between the villages. Trần Đình Hượu (1996) describes spiritual life of the village through tutelary god (*thành hoàng*), communal houses, temples and pagodas as well as village festivals. According to Trần Từ (1984) in traditional society, cultural and religious activities of villagers took place mainly in local pagodas, communal houses, deity temples, and literature temples. Before the 15th century when the Buddhism was the national religion (*quốc giáo*) in terms of official ideology, village pagodas served as the centers of social and religious activities of villages. Afterward, Confucianism replaced the position of the Buddhism as the official ideology and communal houses took over the position of village pagodas. In the late 19th century and the early 20th century, the activities related to village pagodas were like those of a religious club, mainly attended by older women.

The distinct world of village life not only depended on the autonomy of religious, social and political affairs and economic self-sufficiency, but also on population reproduction. Village endogamy was the predominant marriage pattern. The regulation of paying a fine by person who married outside the village (*nộp cheo*) confirms this fact [4, 89-90]. As a Vietnamese proverb says: "each village strikes its own drum and worships its own deities" (*Trống làng nào làng ấy đánh, thánh làng nào làng ấy thờ*) which suggests that every village is "a unique, distinct, compact and isolated community" [17, 102].

Tradition and transformation in the village: open characteristics

In contrast with the perception of the closed corporate village, the second perception argues for taking into account the open features of traditional villages. According to Breman (1995), the perception of the village as "a unique, distinct, compact and isolated community" has to be reconsidered. When mentioning Asian villages Breman notes that, there is no general conception that encompasses all Asian villages because the variety of Asian village is too large. Therefore, it is not warranted to simplify Asian village into inflexible model. The perception of closed characteristics of Asian village has to be reconsidered due to several reasons. Firstly, it is difficult to say that the village was isolated and autonomous when the village had to give up a large part of its production to the state. Secondly, the self-sufficiency in the village economy is doubtful because the village economy depends on the diversity of producing specific products, the role of money and the variety in land possession. Thirdly, the perception about political autonomy may be

questionable because the village's political life is linked with the broader political world outside the village gates.

The open characteristics of the village in lowland and midland regions of Northern Vietnamese can be perceived from two dimensions: the relations between the village and the state through socio-political affairs, and the relation among villages through economic activities. Gourou (2003) [1936], Nguyễn Văn Huyên, (2003)[1939], and Nguyễn Thế Anh (2003) discuss the relations between the state and the village. While Gourou and Nguyễn Văn Huyên argue that, after fulfilling its obligations to the state, the village could run its own affairs, Nguyễn Thế Anh opines that during dynasties in the past, the extent of village autonomy depended on particular circumstances. While the central government tried to control the villages, the autonomy of the village varied depending on the authority and policy of the state. The interventions of the state in the village were carried out by organizing the village authorities and maintaining their activities, controlling over private and public land, collecting taxes, population registration, recruiting of manpower for military service and corvée labor, etc. In 1242, under the *Tran* dynasty, a distinction was made between large villages and the small villages, and village officials were appointed accordingly. The supervisory role of the central government at the village level went up and down, depending on the circumstances that changed along with the dynasties in the past. The autonomy of village went up and down correspondingly. Under the French colonial rule, the colonized authorities tried to intervene in village affairs with new policies and reforms [17].

Secondly, besides the relations with the state, each village also linked with other villages through trading activities that relied on a system of markets. The system of markets includes village markets, canton markets, and district markets. Before August 1945, in the provinces of the Red River Delta (Northern Vietnam), there was on average one market for about three villages (Phan Đại Doãn 2001: 59). This connection between different villages can also be observed in the networks of the handicraft guilds such as woodwork, bricklayer, etc. The guilds were organized within a single village or extended to other villages [20, 68-69]. Yet, Ngô Thị Kim Doan (2004) argues that many handicraft products of villages were sold in far off places implying that villages were economically connected with the surrounding areas.

The features suggest that Vietnamese villages were not hermetically closed corporate peasant communities hiding behind a bamboo hedge. Lê Nguyễn Luru (2006) shows that there were constant movements of people leaving their own villages to form other villages or new settlements elsewhere under the pressure of village population growth. Furthermore, as Salemink (2003) states, while the old dynasties tried to pacify their border areas with China to the

North, they expanded their territory gradually to the South. Through the southward expansion in old dynasties, a large number of people from the North migrated to the South.

During the colonial period, beginning in lately nineteenth century, colonial authorities intervened in village affairs with new policies and reforms [17, 116-121]. The changes in the political, socio-economic spheres together with Western (French) influences had a deep impact on village life. Trần Đình Hượu (1996) found that the colonial administration, education, life style contributed to a transformation of the village. Some villagers – the educated or wealthy – welcomed foreign influences and started using Western soap and clothes, reading novels, imitating new lifestyles; some went to the city to learn, work, and play. Salemink (2003) emphasizes that during the French colonial period, many villagers from Northern Vietnam went to work at the rubber plantations in eastern Cochin China and other plantations in the Central Highlands and Tonkin. These developments contributed to the modernization of the villages.

The post-colonial time brought, however, even more social, political and economic changes to Vietnamese villages. Since the 1945 Revolution, a great turning point in Vietnamese history, Vietnamese villages experienced 30 years of war (1945-1975), 10 years of "High-Socialism" (1976-1985) and more than 20 years of "Renovation" (since 1986). Through all these years, diverse events and policies deeply transformed village life. During wartime, a large number of villagers left their home villages to fight at the front. Salemink (2003) sees the flow of troops and resources from the North to the South in the wartime as a modern-day *Nam Tiến*. After reunification in 1975, many farmers from rural areas in the North moved to live in the South, which could be seen as another episode of *Nam Tiến*, exemplified by the migration of many villagers from the North to the Central Highlands. In addition, others moved to the areas near the western border in a process which Salemink called *Tây Tiến* (March to the West). Moreover, the introduction of collective farming had a great impact on the economic and social organization of the village as it aimed at eliminating the power of the minority of people who owned land through vast land redistribution to peasants with little or no land [2].

In the 1980s, these collectives were gradually abandoned for the profit of household-based land allocation and production as part of the transition from a socialist to a market economy (ibid.). Kerkvliet (2005), Kleinen (1995), Tô Duy Hợp et al., (2000) demonstrate the changes in village life since the introduction of *đổi mới* that reflect the opening and transforming of the village in a wider new context. In the economic domain, the agricultural co-operative has systematically lost its functions and farming and artisanal villages have increasingly started to produce for the (export) market, thus becoming part of

trade networks that go way beyond the bamboo fence. In the political and administrative arenas, there has been a tendency of democratizing the apparatus of local government. In the socio-cultural field, there is a significant revival of religious and life cycle rituals and festivals with some villages staging elaborate ceremonies attracting people from all over the region.

One may thus argue that with the opening up of the country, also villages have (again) opened up. Regarding contemporary villages, Popkin (1979: 1) stated that "most (but not all) of the world's peasantry today live in open villages". Vietnamese villages in Northern lowland are no exceptions. Their gradual integration in the global market since *đổi mới* has led to new opportunities and challenges. More and more villagers move from the countryside to the cities, as well as abroad, to earn an income. Mass media, foreign movies, household appliances, motorbikes and cars have made their entrée. And traditional houses are slowly being replaced by colorful, three-storey houses. Yet, not all villagers profit from these new opportunities, leading to new inequalities.

We can thus observe two contradictory processes that impact contemporary Vietnamese village life. On the one hand, the renovation policies created the conditions for villages to revive their autonomy in economic, political, social and cultural organization and practices. On the other hand, the outlook of villages and their people have undergone rapid change due to the influence of the market economy, demographic transformation and the forces of globalization.

As a result, it may be more correct to say that villages in the lowland and midland areas of Northern Vietnam were and are not absolutely closed or open but relatively closed and open. It may here be of relevance to consider the argument of Skinner (1971) concerning the cyclical trend whereby peasant communities in China changed from relatively open to relative closed and back again in response to the opportunities or threats within the wider environment. As Skinner (ibid.: 280) argues, "in the course of the dynastic cycle in China, the rural communities to which peasants belonged went through a characteristic cycle from an open structure during the dynastic heyday to closure during the period of interdynastic chaos." This means that the relative openness and closed-ness of Vietnamese villages will need to be analyzed against the background of the changes in the country at large, whereby periods of colonization, independence strive, high socialism, renovation and globalization have most certainly accelerated the cycles of relative closure and opening.

Vietnamese villages in a time of globalization

The term globalization has become part of our everyday vocabulary. Although hardly used before the late 1980s, it is now almost impossible to open a

newspaper without encountering the term [6, 1]. Globalization has become a popular catchword used to refer to a range of processes and phenomena but of which the exact meaning remains vague and fuzzy. For Robertson, globalization is a concept that refers "*both* to the compression of the world *and* to the intensification of the consciousness about the world as a whole" [22, 8]. Globalization theory departs from the premise that more and more parts of the world are drawn together in a global system and are thus affected by what happens elsewhere. While this is not a new process, it has become more pronounced and rapid during the past fifty years due to the growth of a global market and the integration of people and communities into this market. These processes have, however, been intrinsically uneven, unequal and unstable, causing the empowerment of some, while increasing the vulnerability of others (ibid.).

While often linked to the global economy, the complex connectivity established by globalization encompasses various dimensions: the economic, the political, the social, the interpersonal, the technological, the environmental, the cultural, and so forth [28, 13]. The "intensification of global interconnectedness" [14, , involving an increased flow of goods, information, people and practices across national boundaries raises important questions regarding their impact on cultural identity [28]. Despite earlier fears of Western cultural imperialism, most globalization theorists now agree that there is no such thing as global cultural homogenization (ibid.). Instead, authors have emphasized the different adaptations and meanings of cultural imports in processes that have also been called "creolization" [9], "indigenization" [1], "domestication" [17] or "hybridization" [28].

It is this tension between the local and the global that has become the focus of most sociological and anthropological research during the past two decades. Culture, authors like Tomlinson (1999) and Appadurai (1996) argue, is becoming less tied to a fixed locality, to geographic and social territories, and increasingly "deterritorialized". As a result of the influence of, amongst others, migration movements, mass media, communication technology and consumer goods, more persons in more parts of the world consider a wider set of possible lives than they ever did before [1, 53]. In such a context, the meaning of the village, as a geographic and social space, becomes increasingly contested. So, what does this all mean for Vietnamese villages? Do increased mobility, extended trade networks, the introduction of new products and ideas – all features of a more open village – mean that villagers do not feel attached to their rural home anymore? Does the opening up of village life correspond with a loss of what Wolf called a "structural identity"? Or do these features allow villagers to create new

networks and new ways to keep a sense of village community alive?

As we have seen in the discussion above, Vietnamese villages were not statically hiding behind the bamboo hedge until modernization, socialism and globalization knocked the boundary fences down. Their relative openness and closed-ness of Vietnamese villages differed in time and space. In the present context, open features have become more evident as Vietnamese villages have embraced and experienced the market economy, technological innovations in production, improved transport and communication, and increased migration. But, as several studies have shown, this does not mean that modernization and globalization inherently lead to the demise of the village, or a village sense of community. In fact, as Luong (2010) argues in his analysis of a rural village in North-Vietnam, local traditions have played a major role in shaping villagers' responses to colonialism, socialist polices and the global market economy.

Indeed, despite profound social changes and political and economic developments Vietnamese villages have kept their important place within Vietnamese society, physically as well as symbolically. Đỗ Thái Đồng commented that regardless of many changes, Vietnamese villages always exist in terms of maintaining a village mentality, village behaviors and relations [4, 91]. Although the village is – and probably never was – neither economically nor socially an autonomous, self-sufficient entity, most Vietnamese still live in villages and make their living from agricultural production. But the village is not only important for those residing there. Also for city dwellers, migrants, and *Việt Kiêu* (overseas Vietnamese), the village is, as Tessier [26, 3] writes, "much more than a place; it is the symbol of the original, real or imagined, it is the earth, the 'homeland'." Schlecker [24, 510] states that urban Vietnamese lavish on the 'home place' as a locality or area that is essentially rural, more specifically the ancestral village, and which has become into "a specific ideal of belonging and relatedness". It is important to realize here that this sense of belonging is not about being either rural or urban, about living lives that are either local or global in outlook, but about a "mosaic of possibilities" (Nguyen Tuan Anh et al. 2012: 1128) that allow Vietnamese villages to be (re)created and also "re-territorialized" in times of rapid change ❑

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