

From National Traitors to National Contributors: Contesting Place and Identity through the Voluntarily Repatriated Vietnamese

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the multifaceted repatriation experiences of Vietnamese individuals who voluntarily returned from Thailand to the upland region of Thanh Hóa province between 1963 and 1965. Utilizing a historical and ethnographic approach, with interviews conducted in February, March, and April 2019; January 2020; May 2022; December 2023; and January 2024, it examines the intricate interplay of political, social, and cultural dynamics that shaped the repatriation process. The study highlights the relocation and deprivation of rights faced by the returnees, emphasizing the political complexities of repatriation. Through a multi-level analysis, this study reveals the intricate relationship between capital management, everyday life practices, and identity contestation. Additionally, it examines the collectivization and nationalist policies of Vietnam in relation to the voluntarily repatriated people's commitment to work for the nation. In this case, transculturality served as a pivotal element in the construction of place and identity. The study analyzes the various forms of capital that shape individual and collective identities. By engaging in transcultural and localized processes of everyday life practices, returnees exercised various kinds of capital to enhance the efficiency of workers' cooperatives. This led to new regulations supplementing those of the state, resulting in a variety of efficient cooperatives. Consequently, the repatriated peoples' home village transformed from a symbol of national betrayal to a thriving cultural and economic hub. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of the multifaceted complexity of repatriation and its implications for identity construction, placemaking, and economic development.

Keywords: Placemaking, Capital management, Everyday life practice, Identity construction, Voluntarily repatriated Vietnamese.

INTRODUCTION

The place presently called *Làng Thái Lan* (Thai village), officially known as *Làng Vĩnh Long* (Vinh Long village), is a unique community located in Bến Sung Municipality, Như Thanh district, Thanh Hóa province, Vietnam. It is primarily inhabited by Vietnamese migrants and repatriates who returned from Thailand. During the collectivization era, *Làng Thái Lan* emerged as a center for innovation, producing specialized products such as bricks, buffalo carts, garments, and distinctive wines. The community also developed a blend of Thai and Vietnamese cuisine, language, and cultural practices, including Thai dance, attire, and housing styles. After resettlement in 1965, the village was initially known as *Làng Việt Kiều Hồi Hương Từ Thái Lan* (village of repatriated Vietnamese from Thailand). Within a decade, it gained recognition as *Làng Văn Minh Sáng Tạo* (Creative Civilization village) due to its economic and cultural achievements. In the early 1990s and early 2000s, the village became known as *Làng Lao Động Thái Lan* (village of Thai Laborers). Since the mid-2000s, it has been referred to as *Làng Thái Lan* (Thai village). This name reflects the significant cultural hybridization that has occurred in the community, with Thai influences permeating various aspects of life. *Làng Thái Lan* serves as a testament to the transformative power of cultural hybridity. The community's unique blend of Thai and Vietnamese traditions has constructed a vibrant and distinctive identity that sets it apart from other settlements in Vietnam. It offers a valuable case study for understanding the processes of cultural hybridization, placemaking and the formation of new cultural identities in a transnational world.

Six decades ago, the resettlement of some voluntarily repatriated Vietnamese (VRV, or *Việt Kiều Hồi Hương* in Vietnamese) to the area in question from Thailand led to the construction of a new economy, society, and culture. This new community was defined by its difference from the surrounding area and became a place of belonging for the VRV. The VRV returned home with diverse economic and cultural capital that they had gained during their residence in Thailand. They skillfully and effectively used this capital to respond to the government and local people's treatment of them, which included doubt about their loyalty and patriotism, and the branding of them as '*phản quốc*' (national traitors). These challenges brought the VRV closer together and ultimately led them to build social capital, resulting in an outstanding VRV community of patriotic, civilized, and modern Vietnamese with a strong local identity. *Làng Văn Minh Sáng Tạo* was imbued with a cultural identity from the every day life practice and articulation of cultural difference between Thailand and Vietnam. Thus, the Vietnamese state's new policies of '*nếp sống mới*' which means a new way of life and '*xây dựng vùng kinh tế mới*', which means building new economic zones, promulgated in 1980, as well as the construction of national identity, created challenges for the VRV but also opened up space for contestation.

Furthermore, since the implementation of the '*đổi mới*' (economic renovation) policy in December 1986, which marked the beginning of the marketization period, villagers have consistently migrated internationally in pursuit of improved livelihoods. Consequently, their town experienced increased cultural interconnectedness with other regions. Moreover, it has undeniably flourished under the implementation of new policies and the adoption of a novel identity. Subsequently, the maintenance of familial and social ties with Thailand led to the

establishment of a transnational social network that facilitated migration to Thailand for employment. Subsequently, some individuals from this village and neighboring areas emerged as brokers, facilitating the migration of workers to Thailand. During the 1990s and early 2000s, this village became known as '*Làng Lao Động Thái Lan*' (village of Thai Laborers), supplanting its previous designation as '*Làng Văn Minh Sáng Tạo*' during the collectivization era (Choowonglert & Ton, 2022). In addition to sending migrant workers to Thailand, the period of global market transition witnessed an intensification of cultural hybridization between regional cultures. This was manifested in the construction of houses incorporating Thai architectural elements, the establishment of Thai food shops and stalls, the adoption of Thai products and product shops, and even the widespread use of the Thai language.

The village was renamed to '*Làng Thái Lan*' (Thai village). The process of cultural hybridization and identity construction originating from *Làng Thái Lan* has been expanding to other parts of Bến Sung municipality. Then this place continued to face new and complex challenges. Since 1990s *Làng Thái Lan* has become a place of origin of a vast number of migrants working in Thailand. Their economic, social, and cultural remittances to *Làng Thái Lan* bring about continuous change there. Hybridizing cultures and identity construction continue; the site is constructed, rather than being essentialist (Escobar, 2001).

Incorporating this position, this article investigates the initial stage of placemaking that transformed *Làng Việt Kiều Hồi Hương Từ Thái Lan* (village of repatriated Vietnamese from Thailand) into '*Làng Văn Minh Sáng Tạo*' (village of civilization and creativity). These processes unfolded approximately between the mid-1960s and the late 1980s, due to the VRV as primary social actors contributing to placemaking through their practices. The cultural capital, notably in terms of habitus (Bourdieu, 1990; 2007), transcended national boundaries from Thailand to the local Vietnamese community, fostering significant changes in the economic, cultural, and societal spheres. Furthermore, it has contributed to the formation of distinct individual and collective identities within the community. The VRV have tended to reconnect with their past experiences in Thailand, leading to a coexistence of places and cultures, of both external and local influences. As Escobar (2001) contends, global forces often interact with local power and knowledge, facilitating the transformation of localized forces. The process of identity construction enables the preservation of local characteristics, as evidenced by the placemaking process.

This article investigates the multifaceted ways in which the VRV utilized various forms of capital acquired in Thailand and invested it in their homelands to fulfill their economic, social, and cultural aspirations. The study focuses on the evolving meanings of place from the mid-1960s to the late 1980s, preceding the migration of Vietnamese to Thailand. The analysis explores the transnational process of identity construction and placemaking, conceptualized as *progressive place* (Massey, 2001). It examines the interplay between capital accumulation, social capital construction, cultural management, and the emergence of new cultural and identity markers among VRVs. To elucidate the construction of place and individual identities, the authors consider the contexts of transculturality, collectivization, and nationalism. We argue that the constructed place provides a sense of recognition and security for the VRV, who occupy marginalized positions.

Drawing on Escobar's (2001; 2008) conceptualization of place as a site of contestation and negotiation, this article examines place as being inherently political. Escobar (2001, p. 139) posits that place-based struggles can be understood as multi-scalar, network-oriented strategies of localization employed by marginalized groups. Accordingly, this article focuses on the collective everyday life practices of the VRV, highlighting their creative and tactical responses to the dominant societal orders imposed upon them (de Certeau, 1984). These responses have resulted in the emergence of novel cultural and socioeconomic practices of collectivization, leading to a transformation in the meaning of place and people's identities.

STUDIES OF VIETNAMESE RETURNING TO VIETNAM FROM THAILAND

Studies on this phenomenon are relatively limited due to the politically sensitive nature of the topic and the emotions experienced by the VRV upon their return. These emotions include guilt, a desire for reconciliation, and nostalgia (Songkhramwongsakul, 2010), making them hesitant to share their experiences with researchers, particularly Vietnamese researchers. However, there are some studies on this topic, such as the aforementioned work of Songkhramwongsakul (2010), which examines the experiences of elderly VRVs, focusing on their deep-rooted ties to Vietnam, shaped by memories of war and exile. Cultural capital, including values of community, family, and religiosity, plays a significant role in their lives. The returnees navigate a complex interplay between Vietnamese traditions and American individualism, leading to challenges in maintaining familial and societal harmony. Despite residing in modern-style homes, they uphold traditional practices such as ancestral worship, reflecting a blend of cultural values in their transnational lives. Ultimately, the returnees' motivations to return to Vietnam stem from a desire to strengthen family bonds and reaffirm their sense of belonging.

Sriphana & Thin (2005) focus on the socio-political conditions in Thailand that pressured a significant number of overseas Vietnamese to return to their homeland. They examine the repatriation process, the role of the Communist Party in the repatriation, the establishment of associations and clubs that connected with many overseas Vietnamese, and the participation of the Viet Kieu Association in economic development. The study highlights the challenges faced by returnees in integrating into Vietnamese society and their continued preservation of Thai culture. The most recent study on VRV from Thailand in Vietnam is by Achariya Choowonglert and Le Van Ton (2022), which examines resettlement in Vietnam based on "othering" in the homeland, transnational capital, cultural capital, the creation of a new hybrid Thai-Vietnamese identity, and the establishment of networks with Vietnamese in Thailand allowing them to transform themselves into both Vietnamese migrant workers in Thailand and brokers for sending Vietnamese migrant workers to Thailand. Studies on returning Vietnamese from Thailand lack longitudinal data, as most studies have been cross-sectional, providing a snapshot of VRV experiences at a particular point in time. Longitudinal studies are needed to track changes in their experiences over time. While existing studies have explored various aspects of VRV experiences, they have often focused on specific themes, such as cultural identity or economic integration. A

more comprehensive approach is needed to capture the multifaceted nature of their experiences.

PLACEMAKING AND CAPITAL

THE CONCEPT OF PLACE IN HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

The concept of place holds paramount significance in human geography, providing a framework for exploring the multifaceted relationship between individuals and their surroundings. Place transcends mere physical location, encompassing a rich tapestry of dimensions such as location, locale, and a sense of belonging. As a central tenet of human geography, place enables researchers to elucidate how the physical environment both influences and is influenced by human culture and experiences (Cresswell, 2014). It represents a space imbued with meaning through symbolization (Juan, 2005; Kyle & Chick, 2007), reflecting an intricate interplay of architectural elements, physical features, cultural traditions, historical significance, and everyday activities (Shamsuddin & Ujang, 2008, p. 400).

Traditionally, place has been perceived as a static entity characterized by rootedness, fixity, and well-defined boundaries. However, contemporary scholarship challenges this notion, recognizing place as a dynamic product of human mobilities and the circulation of ideas and goods (Cresswell, 2014, p. 7; Massey, 2013). Massey (2001) contends that place should not be viewed as an impediment to mobility but rather as an evolving process shaped by everyday interactions and social dynamics (Kyle & Chick, 2007; Massey, 2013). Placemaking, therefore, is an ongoing process involving the construction and modification of place through cultural practices and power relations (Escobar, 2001). Place is not a fixed entity but a complex and multifaceted construct that is continuously shaped and reshaped by human practices and interactions (Hart, 2004). It emerges as a site of difference, connection, and social relations, arising from the co-presence of individuals and groups (Massey, 2013).

PLACE-BASED MOVEMENTS AND POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION

Escobar (2001) posits that places are not merely geographical locations but also possess symbolic and cultural significance. This understanding reveals the dynamics of multiple place-based cultures, power critiques, and the interplay between global capital and local economies. The meaning of a place is inextricably linked to the shared life experience of its inhabitants (Kyle & Chick, 2007). Escobar (2001; 2008) emphasizes the need to recognize the cultural and ecological diversity of localities and advocate for decentralized and participatory governance. He identifies two kinds of strategies employed by subaltern groups in place-based movements.

First are place-based strategies focusing on defending local territories and preserving cultural identities. By connecting to their ancestral lands and traditions, marginalized communities assert their autonomy and resist external impositions. Second are global strategies through meshwork recognizing the importance of global networks and alliances in supporting place-based movements. Through meshwork, social movements can connect with like-minded groups worldwide, share knowledge, and coordinate their efforts to influence policy and decision-making. In his later work,

Escobar (2018) emphasizes the need for design to be more responsive to place-based knowledge and wisdom. He argues that design should not be limited to creating products or solving technical problems but should instead focus on fostering conditions for the flourishing of life in all its diversity. Escobar's ideas on place and placemaking underscore the importance of respecting and celebrating the unique qualities of different localities. He advocates for more inclusive and participatory forms of governance and design that empower local communities to shape their own futures. By recognizing the interconnectedness of different places and promoting place-based strategies, we can create a more just and sustainable world.

SOCIAL CAPITAL AND PLACEMAKING

Placemaking, as conceptualized by Pierce et al. (2011) involves the interplay between place, politics, and networks. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of individuals, institutions, and systems in shaping the production of place. Globalization and capital also influence placemaking, as local communities may leverage global forces to their advantage. Social capital, as a local force, a key aspect of placemaking, encompasses various forms of capital, including financial, physical, human, social, and cultural. These capitals are convertible and can be transformed into valuable resources (Aguilera & Massey, 2003). Social capital enables individuals to mobilize resources and acquire additional capital. For instance, Lin (2001) suggests that social capital can be converted into human and economic capital, and vice versa. Additionally, networks play a crucial role in fostering social capital. They facilitate the flow of remittances, ideas, and social capital, contributing to social and economic development in both the countries of origin and destination (Gold, 2005). Social capital embedded in migrant relationships fosters reciprocity, solidarity, and trust (Aguilera & Massey, 2003). It also supports the development of human capital by encouraging individuals to enhance their knowledge and skills (Lin, 2001).

Holtkamp & Weaver (2018) emphasize the significance of considering both associational and place-based dimensions of social capital. Their research demonstrates that social capital, encompassing organizational density and Appalachian place identity, exhibits a negative correlation with economic distress. Appalachian place identity, in particular, is strongly associated with enhanced economic wellbeing. By fostering social capital, particularly Appalachian place identity, communities can improve economic conditions and promote community development. In conclusion, social capital plays a pivotal role in placemaking by enabling individuals and communities to mobilize resources, develop human capital, and foster economic growth. Networks and globalization further contribute to the production of place, highlighting the interconnectedness of local and global forces. By comprehending and leveraging the transformative power of social capital, communities can create vibrant and sustainable places.

CULTURAL CAPITAL, PLACE, AND LOCALISM

Cultural capital, as defined by Pierre Bourdieu (2007), significantly influences individuals' cultural consumption and behavior. This influence extends to shaping interactions between different groups and the economy of specific geographical areas

(Patterson, 2008). Integrating Bourdieu's concept with the idea of natural capital, Patterson highlights the importance of the environment in tourism activities. Hanquinet (2017) similarly emphasizes the influence of geographical space on cultural preferences and activities. Cultural capital also plays a role in civic involvement, affecting how individuals interact with and contribute to their local environment (Lewicka, 2005).

Lewicka's subsequent research (2013) establishes a correlation between cultural preferences and place attachment, enabling individuals to develop emotional investments in a location. Cultural preferences and place attachment share underlying psychological mechanisms that facilitate emotional connections to new environments. Liberal arts education plays a vital role in fostering this sense of belonging, reducing the psychological costs associated with feeling alienated. The relationship between cultural capital, place, and localism is multifaceted and complex, influenced by both social and psychological factors. Understanding this interplay is crucial for fostering a sense of community and belonging, particularly in the context of globalization and increased mobility.

METHODOLOGY

This study examines the experiences and perspectives of VRVs through historical and ethnographic approaches. Employing oral history, documentary analysis, and structural analysis, the research explores the sociocultural context of their resettlement in Vinh Long village, Nhu Xuân district (later Nhu Thanh district after 1996), Thanh Hóa province. Adopting a life-course approach, the study examines the everyday practices of VRV within the specific research site. To capture the broader social relations that transcend the research site, the study incorporates communities in both Vietnam and northeast Thailand. This approach aligns with the concept of the *progressive place* (Massey, 2001), which posits that places are not isolated entities but rather interconnected through social networks. By examining the broader social context, the study endeavors to gain a comprehensive understanding of the experiences and perspectives of VRVs.

The research employs a multi-level analytical framework. At the macro level, it examines the Vietnamese government's repatriation policies and the ethnic prejudice prevalent among the local Vietnamese population. At the meso level, it investigates the VR's place in Vietnam, considering factors such as capital, economy, culture, and livelihoods. Finally and importantly, at the micro level, it adopts an actor-oriented approach, focusing on the everyday life practices and interactions between VRV, authorities, and the local Vietnamese. By examining the experiences and perspectives of individuals at different levels of analysis, the study aims to provide insights into the complex dynamics of practices, capital management, and the ways in which people negotiate their place and identity in their home country.

GEOGRAPHICAL, HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL SETTINGS

In the upland region of Thanh Hóa province, approximately 40 kilometers from Thanh Hóa City, lies a settlement established in 1963. The settlement's origins can be traced to a community forest belonging to the Tai ethnic minority of Vinh Loi

village prior to 1963. During the colonial period (1911-1945), French colonizers occupied the forest and exploited its resources and labor force. This exploitation sparked local resistance and uprisings. In 1945, under the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam, local uprisings successfully expelled the French colonizers and established control over the area. From 1963 to 1965, the area was allocated to the VRV from various Thai provinces. The repatriation was prompted by deteriorating interstate relations between Thailand and Vietnam (Khoa, 2016). Thailand's anti-communist stance and partnership with the United States from 1960 to 1976 heightened tensions with Vietnam.

Thai authorities harbored suspicions that overseas Vietnamese were covert agents of the *Việt Minh*, a nationalist and communist organization pivotal in Vietnam's struggle for independence from French colonial rule, and potential terrorists. Consequently, Vietnamese faced stringent restrictions in Thailand: prohibitions on trade, forced relocation to southern Thailand, incarceration, and the denial of education to their children (Huyen, 2015, p. 33). Moreover, their possessions were subject to destruction, and the practice of Vietnamese language, culture, and religion was outlawed (Sriphana & Thin, 2005). These oppressive measures rendered them destitute and deprived them of fundamental freedoms, compelling them to abandon their communities in search of alternative living arrangements in Vietnam (Khoa, 2016; Poole, 1970; Sriphana & Thin, 2005).

The repatriation of the Vietnamese residing in Thailand to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) transpired between January 1960 and August 1964. This initiative was facilitated by an accord between the Thai Red Cross Society and the DRV's Red Cross Society, signed on August 14, 1959. The repatriation aimed to bolster the DRV's nation-building endeavors. The leader Ho Chi Minh, revered as Uncle Ho, played a pivotal role in motivating Vietnamese overseas to return home and contribute to their nation's development and defense. Overseas Vietnamese communities responded enthusiastically, registering for voluntary repatriation. However, only 60 percent of the Vietnamese population in Thailand ultimately repatriated. Factors such as advanced age, travel difficulties with infants, and the uncertainties of starting a new life in Vietnam contributed to some choosing to stay in Thailand.

The repatriation process was interrupted in August 1964 due to the United States' invasion Vietnam. The U.S. military imposed a blockade on the Gulf of Tonkin, prohibiting vessels from entering or exiting Vietnamese territory. To safeguard the lives of overseas Vietnamese, the Hanoi government ordered a stop to the repatriation efforts. As a result, only 54,636 of the 70,038 overseas Vietnamese who had registered for repatriation actually returned to Vietnam, on 75 ships. The first VRVs were instructed by the government to reside in industrial zones in Hai Phong and Nam Dinh provinces. Subsequent VRVs were allocated to underdeveloped areas in Thanh Hóa, Nghe An, Ha Tinh provinces in the north-central region, and Hoa Binh province in the north-west. Some VRVs integrated with local villagers. In Thanh Hóa, three main villages had VRV arrivals: Bến Sung commune (Nthur Xuân district, later Nthur Thanh district), Thanh Van commune (Thach Thanh district), and Ngoc Lac commune (Ngoc Lac district). However today in Thanh Hóa only Nthur Thanh retains a significant VRV population, and is recognized as a distinct community.

The land allocation policy of Vietnam, implemented by the Như Xuân district People's Committee, granted each VRV household 1,500 square meters of land. This land was divided into square lots along both sides of a trail, now National Highway 45, first constructed by the French in 1929 to exploit natural resources. It served as the sole road connecting the delta area with the mountainous districts of Thanh Hóa province. The VRV community in total settled an approximate area of 47.7 hectares, 20 hectares of which was for hill cultivation, with the remaining area designated for residential houses and transportation.

For economic and social development, in the Vietnam context of socialism and reform, resolution number five of the third tenure of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam issued in May 1965 (Ủy ban nhân dân thị trấn Bến Sung, 2004, p. 2) instructed the population to actively contribute to the construction of a new cultural life and to promote economic, cultural, and social development (or '*văn hóa mới, nếp sống mới*' in Vietnamese). This directive came at a time when the population in the north was mobilizing for production and working toward national revolution and reunification with the south. The VRV community was located in hills belonging to the Tai ethnic groups, as well as Vietnamese domestic migrants.

During this period of collectivization and war, despite being free from the Thai government's mistreatment of Vietnamese residing in Thailand, VRVs still faced significant challenges. They grappled with severe hardships resulting from resettlement and starvation. The resettlement areas were often inhospitable forests, devoid of infrastructure, cultivation, public healthcare, and education, which are fundamental aspects of human security and freedom from want. The harsh conditions in these areas were exacerbated by the fact that they were previously forested regions. Through careful analysis of relevant literature, the government's placement of returnees in these areas was evidently a form of punishment and discrimination based on ethnicity. This prejudice stemmed from the fact that some of the VRVs originally fled to Thailand to escape persecution in Vietnam, which was perceived as an unpatriotic act. Furthermore, while in Thailand, some Vietnamese were accused of not contributing enough to the Vietnamese Communist Party's struggle against French colonial rule. Upon return, those who had actively participated in the Communist Party network in Thailand were given preference and placed in urban centers such as Hanoi and Hai Phong, which were economic hubs.

With little housing in Như Xuân (later Như Thanh), the VRVs settled there had to reside with Tai people at the nearby majority-Tai Vinh Loi village, taking shelter underneath others' stilt houses (i.e., no walls) for lengths of up to two years as they slowly constructed their own separate homes with natural materials and made ready their allocated land for cultivation. Their lives were not only difficult economically, but they also suffered politically from surveillance and the suspicion that they were not sufficiently loyal to the Vietnam nation. Due to the prevailing local sentiment during wartime, individuals who sought refuge abroad were often stigmatized as *phản quốc* (national traitors) or *đế quốc* (collaborators with the colonial occupiers), akin to criminals. Consequently, the locations of the VRV settlements were also chosen for their ease of surveillance control by the socialist state. Some VRVs, such as those who were born in Thailand, their Thai wives, or young VRVs with mixed parentage, were considered non-nationals and rarely accepted as being Vietnamese (Nguyen, 2018).

SHIFTING THE MEANING OF PLACE: FROM HUB OF TRAITORS TO CREATIVE CIVILIZATION VILLAGE

The transformation of *Làng Việt Kiều Hồi Hương Từ Thái Lan*, perceived by locals as a hub for traitors, into *Làng Văn Minh Sáng Tạo*, the creative civilization village, was attributed to the cumulative efforts of VRVs to accumulate capital, to build infrastructure, and their management skills, as is outlined in the subsequent sections.

CAPITAL ACCUMULATION IN THAILAND AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL CAPITAL IN COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT

During their residence in Thailand from the 1940s to the 1960s, the overseas Vietnamese community were a diverse group who migrated from various regions of Vietnam. They successfully integrated into Thai society through intermarriage, participation in daily life, and engagement in economic activities, similar to their Thai counterparts. The Vietnamese community in Thailand acquired a wide range of professions from the Thai, Chinese, and Indian communities and practiced various business cultures, trades, and professional skills, turning into valuable cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2019; Erel, 2010). They played a significant role in the development of various occupations in Thailand, including tailoring and fashion design, food and drink production, brick manufacturing, grocery retail, gold, silver and precious stone trading, goods transportation, rice milling, automotive repair cars and motorcycles, and fine art (Khoa, 2016). These occupations demonstrate that they were primarily entrepreneurs. Before migrating to Thailand many had lived and worked in Laos, where their occupation was vegetable gardening (Sriphana & Thin, 2005). The overseas Vietnamese played a significant role in the development of these occupations, accumulating both economic and cultural resources. The mindset of trade and business became a defining characteristic of the overseas Vietnamese identity.

As entrepreneurs in Thailand, overseas Vietnamese accumulated significant wealth. They played a pivotal role in the socioeconomic development of northeast Thailand by fostering robust economic networks. Furthermore, some actively contributed financial resources to the Communist Party of Vietnam's network in Thailand, providing substantial support for its revolutionary activities against the French colonial regime. However, the accumulation of economic and social capital in the future would prove increasingly challenging. Upon their repatriation, these individuals brought with them a wealth of invaluable resources acquired during their sojourn in Thailand, which they utilized to establish a new life in Vietnam. These resources encompassed not only tangible assets, but also intangible ones, such as their extensive knowledge and professional expertise considered as cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2019; Erel, 2010).

The effective utilization of resources by the VRV community played a pivotal role in fostering a distinct collective identity within Vietnam. In response to the implementation of a centrally planned economy, characterized by the collectivization of agriculture and industry and the concomitant development of a socialist state, some

VRVs established a specialized handicraft cooperative. This cooperative emerged as one of the few advanced cooperatives in Thanh Hóa province, distinguishing itself by producing value-added products derived from the processing of primary commodities, such as clothing and wine.

In contrast to most cooperatives, which focused on the production of primary agricultural commodities like rice and cassava, the VRV cooperative played a key role in collecting raw materials from other cooperatives specializing in low-level agricultural production, including sugarcane, cassava, maize, beans, and rice. These raw materials were subsequently processed by the cooperative's industries and distributed to district government trading cooperatives. This process enabled the provision of essential goods to the populace, who utilized stamps as a medium of exchange. Over time, the cooperatives underwent consolidation and expansion, evolving into a significant local economic force. This transformation contributed to the development of a unique collective identity among the VRV community, characterized by a shared sense of purpose and a commitment to economic self-reliance.

Within the realm of capital management, the overseas Vietnamese adeptly leveraged resources procured from Thailand, encompassing professional expertise, equipment, financial capital, and, most notably, an innovative comprehension system. This system entailed the cultivation of social capital, particularly the fostering of collective consciousness (i.e., solidarity, mutual aid, and trust). By prioritizing the wellbeing of the community over individual and familial interests, this social capital enabled the VRVs to establish a distinctive position. Moreover, collective identity served as a strategic response to the prejudice and neglect encountered from both the government and the local Vietnamese population. Drawing upon the knowledge and economic capital acquired in Thailand, the overseas Vietnamese ingeniously applied these resources in conjunction with the newly constructed social capital. The cooperative-based work culture of the VRV, emphasizing solidarity and community interests, starkly contrasted with the individualistic mindset prevalent among the local Vietnamese population, who prioritized personal and family interests (Bảo tàng Nhân học, 2010).

The implementation of the Vietnamese government's agricultural cooperative model in the 1980s encountered significant resistance from the populace (Kerkvliet, 2005). This resistance stemmed from a lack of support for the government's economic policies, which were perceived as stifling individual initiative and effort. Unable to openly oppose the government, Vietnamese citizens employed covert protest strategies. They participated in the cooperatives perfunctorily, attending only to mark their presence and displaying low work efficiency. This resulted in a significant decline in productivity. Furthermore, the Vietnamese people's lack of accountability was evident in the mindset of *của chung không ai khóc*, which implied that cooperative assets were public property and thus not subject to individual care and maintenance. This mentality contributed to widespread damage to production tools, livestock, and plants.

In contrast, the VRVs fostered a new culture of work that emphasizes solidarity, trust, mutual aid, and collaborative efforts. This approach prioritizes communal interests over personal and family gains, surpassing traditional Vietnamese values of family and clan. VRV's collective efforts have shaped a thriving community

embodying their commitment to transforming social capital by cultivating a sense of shared purpose and responsibility.

BUILDING CREATIVE COOPERATIVES FROM ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL CAPITAL

VRVs implemented multifaceted strategies to transform economic and cultural capital into assets of value within their cooperatives. First, they established a division of labor based on professional expertise. Utilizing the cultural capital (skill and knowledge) of their workforce, they categorized laborers into specialized groups. This division of labor aimed to optimize production output by aligning labor efforts with available resources. Specifically, VRVs structured their workforce into six professional groups based on the following criteria:

Group one: The rice vermicelli production group, consisting of 12 households. These households had prior experience in rice vermicelli production in Thailand. The quality of the rice vermicelli, including its taste, greatly depended on the brewing technique, ensuring that the rice flour was fermented just enough.

Group two: The tofu production group, comprising of ten households. These households had extensive experience in tofu production and trading in Thailand. They had previously operated shops and produced high-quality tofu for sale in markets in northeast Thailand.

Group three: The cassava wine and cane molasses production group, consisting of eight households. These households possessed expertise in cassava wine production from their settlement in the northeast region of Thailand. They had experience in selecting high-quality ingredients and utilizing yeast-making techniques to produce wine with special flavors and a suitable alcohol content.

Group four: Buffalo cart transportation group - the largest group with 20 households. Instead of seeking loans from government banks to purchase means of production like other cooperatives in the district, these 20 VRV households collectively contributed funds to acquire 40 healthy buffaloes for cart transportation purposes. They efficiently utilized these buffaloes to transport goods, materials, and ammunition for the army when required.

Group five: The brick production group, consisting of 12 households. This group brought together numerous young individuals who possessed experience in brick production in Thailand. Their expertise, strict discipline, and hard work resulted in the production of a substantial quantity of high-quality bricks.

Group six: The garment group, comprising of 20 VRV households, who brought Singer sewing machines from Thailand. The majority of these households had prior experience working in the garment industry in Thailand. The primary objective of this group is to provide clothing design and sewing services to supply stores within the state system, catering to officials and residents of Như Xuân district.

Secondly, the cooperative employed modern skills acquired from Thailand as an adaptive strategy. Each production group operated at maximum capacity, establishing a closed production line by dividing labor into specialized units. The Vinh Long Cooperative (VLC) manufactured secondary products such as tofu, rice vermicelli, cassava wine, and molasses. Raw materials for production were transported by buffalo carts from neighboring agricultural production cooperatives

located within a 5-20 kilometer radius of the VLC. These raw materials included rice, soybean, maize, cassava, and sugarcane. The cooperative also provided shipping services using their own buffalo carts (*xe trâu* in Vietnamese) to government shops and military barracks in Như Xuân district. At that time, only VLC possessed buffalo carts, as they had acquired the financial means to purchase buffaloes by selling their valuable assets. Additionally, they possessed the technical expertise, considered economic capital, to construct distinctive carts that set them apart from those used elsewhere in Vietnam. Consequently, their buffalo cart service was highly valued and frequently utilized by local authorities.

In addition to the utilization of buffalo carts, the garment cooperative exhibited sound economic capital management practices. During the period of Vietnamese migration to Thailand, local women gained proficiency in sewing through the widespread adoption of the Singer sewing machine, colloquially known as *Chak Singer* in Thai. This machine's popularity among Thai women facilitated their acquisition of sewing skills (Choowonglert & Ton, 2022). This skill was subsequently transferred to the VLC Group. In 1986, a transition occurred from cooperative-based garment production to household-based businesses, fostering the growth of household enterprises. Over ten VRV households transitioned to tailoring and fashion design for both men and women. Two distinct groups emerged:

The first comprised seven tailor shops specializing in tailoring and garment repairs for women, owned by Mrs. Mot, Mrs. Thanh, Mrs. Nguyet, Mrs. Tam, Mrs. Gai, Mrs. Huong, and Mrs. Phon. The second consisted of three tailor shops owned by Mr. Nhung, Mr. Ky, and Mr. Binh, specializing in costume design for government officials and garment repairs based on customer specifications. Notably, three tailoring households (Mrs. Tam, Mrs. Nu, and Mr. Binh) expanded their operations to Yen Cat town, Nong Cong district, and neighboring areas.

The VRV garment business established in *Lang Vãn Minh Sáng Tạo* gained renown for its exceptional sewing techniques and contemporary designs. The village's name evolved into a brand, synonymous with aesthetic appeal and superior quality. During its inception, VRV surpassed all local tailor stores in garment craftsmanship. Its fashion products seamlessly blended Thai modernism with Vietnamese tradition, featuring intricate embellishments. The garments were priced competitively, catering to the needs of district officials and local clientele. Post-2005, evolving fashion preferences prompted VRV to adapt its business model. It incorporated tailoring with garment imports from China and Thailand, introducing diverse designs at affordable prices to meet the evolving fashion demands of the region.

Moreover, VRVs became fabric suppliers for tailor stores in neighboring districts. Through these strategic adaptations, VRV garment businesses, established in 1986, flourished under the stewardship of subsequent generations. They constructed spacious and aesthetically pleasing shophouses, replacing the traditional thatched-roof and mud-walled structures. Beyond their tailoring expertise, which constituted economic capital, the business owners exhibited distinctive habits in their business practices. Their integrity, affability, and adherence to Thai customs in daily interactions (in line with Bourdieu, 2019) became defining characteristics of the VRV, and left a lasting impression on other Vietnamese.

DEVELOPMENT OF COOPERATIVE REGULATIONS BASED ON KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE GAINED IN THAILAND

For cooperative organizations to function effectively they must establish internal regulations. In Thailand, cooperatives have developed their own regulations based on accumulated knowledge and experience, ensuring alignment with national cooperative goals rather than conflicting with government regulations. One notable aspect of these internal regulations is the determination of labor contribution based on productivity, deviating from government-prescribed norms. While government regulations stipulate a uniform payment of 0.5 kg of rice or a coupon for an eight-hour workday, the VLC implemented a dual calculation method.

Firstly, the VLC adhered to the state regulations, recording work hours and converting them into the designated compensation. Secondly, cooperative leaders assessed labor contribution based on productivity, resulting in a parallel system of remuneration. This approach ensured that workers who exceeded the eight-hour workday were compensated through products produced by the cooperative. This deviation from government regulations highlights the flexibility and autonomy of Thai cooperatives in adapting their internal regulations to meet the specific needs and circumstances of their members. It also demonstrates the importance of member participation and self-governance in cooperative organizations.

To facilitate this process, VLC leaders and members agreed on a dual compensation system. One component adhered to government regulations, while the other involved overtime work compensated through the cooperative's production of essential items like clothing and cassava wine. These items served as mediums of exchange for stamps or money from black-market networks, allowing members to acquire additional goods. The determination of remuneration for individuals involved in the cooperative's production units was guided by VRV leaders, who combined Thai and Vietnamese wage calculation methodologies. This approach not only complied with government regulations but also motivated VRV members to enhance their labor efficiency and income. This strategy proved successful, unlike other cooperatives that failed to achieve this balance, which led to the collapse of the Vietnamese cooperative system in 1981.

'LÀM ĐẾN CHẾT' (DEDICATED TO WORKING): POLITICS OF RECOGNITION AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

The intertwined concepts of recognition and identity politics have emerged as significant themes in contemporary discourse, particularly in the realm of social justice and minority rights. Charles Taylor postulates that our identities are partially constituted through the recognition of others, and that a deficit of recognition can engender harm and oppression (Taylor, 1994). This premise has significantly influenced the development of identity politics, which entails struggles for the affirmation of specific identities and the acknowledgment of unique cultural attributes. On the one hand, identity politics is predicated on the principle that all individuals merit equal respect and that recognition should be accorded based on individuality. However, in the case of the VRVs, while emerging from experiences of grievance and exclusion, the politics of recognition did not lead the VRV to

disassociate from the local Vietnamese community. Instead, they sought to construct an identity that acknowledged the value of their particularity, namely their unwavering dedication to work (*làm đến chết* in Vietnamese) for the local and national economy, as a means of belonging to Vietnamese society. The following section examines the politics of recognition through the practices of constructing cultural capital (i.e., the everyday life practice of *làm đến chết*) that led to the foundation of the VLC's success and the VRVs being recognized as national contributors.

LÀM ĐẾN CHẾT: DEDICATION TO WORK AS CONTRIBUTING TO THE NATION

Although many cooperatives failed due to members' laziness, negligence, and the theft of produce (Kerkvliet, 2005), the VRV community exhibited remarkable unity and dedication, working tirelessly throughout the day and into the late evening. As noted, the VLC operated independently, establishing multi-industry cooperatives to maximize labor productivity. Through these efforts, they sought to demonstrate their patriotism and substantial contributions to the community and nation, surpassing those of other Vietnamese. The VRV community aspired to prove to the government and society that they were not national traitors or collaborators with the French. Ultimately, they desired recognition and equal treatment with those who supported the Communist Party of Vietnam. Despite facing physical hardships and social stigma, the VRV community embraced the cultural practice of *làm đến chết*. This concept of unwavering dedication extended beyond financial incentives, as they sought to establish a unique cultural identity amidst political distrust. Their collective efforts and commitment to working for the cooperatives, even outside of conventional work hours, reflected their desire to create a distinct community with a strong patriotic spirit and a positive impact on the socioeconomic development of their province.

During the Vietnam War (1970-1973), the American air force intensified its raids in the north, targeting Thanh Hóa city and Như Xuân district to disrupt the transportation of military goods (Ủy ban nhân dân thị trấn Bến Sung, 2004). In response, the VLC's buffalo cart played a crucial role in supporting the military by transporting thousands of tons of goods, food, and ammunition to military barracks in Như Xuân district and Thanh Hóa province. The VLC's fleet of buffalo carts, which were larger than local carts and pulled by two strong buffaloes, transported supplies to various military bases throughout Thanh Hóa province.

Despite the challenges posed by American bombing, the VLC's buffalo carts operated almost continuously, delivering supplies as soon as bombing ceased. The carts transported rice, clothing, goods, and ammunition, and the VLC members often ate and slept on the carts during their journeys. Thus, the VLC's efforts made a significant contribution to the victory over the American invaders in north Vietnam, demonstrating the resilience and determination of the Vietnamese people in the face of adversity (Ủy ban nhân dân thị trấn Bến Sung, 2004).

By 1972, the buffalo cart fleet operated by the VRV and local fleets had transported in excess of 1,000 tons of goods and weaponry. Subsequently, by 1978, the baked brick production group had manufactured approximately 7.5 million bricks and nearly one million roofing tiles, which constituted the primary construction materials that facilitated the infrastructural development of Như Thanh district. This

resulted in the construction of numerous primary and secondary schools, as well as health stations (Huyện ủy, hội đồng nhân dân, ủy ban nhân dân huyện Như Xuân, Tỉnh Thanh Hóa, 2019, p. 360). The food production teams operated continuously in multiple shifts to guarantee the provision of sufficient food quantities as mandated by the district People's Committee. All production groups within the VLC dedicated their efforts to producing goods and food, adhering to the slogan *thóc không thiếu một cân, quân không thiếu một người* which translates to “ensuring an adequate supply of rice and personnel for the military force.” The group responsible for producing rice vermicelli, tofu, and rice milling had generated thousands of tons of products. Additionally, the cassava wine group produced over 1,000 liters of alcohol, which was supplied to local residents, officials, and military units within Như Xuân district.

Furthermore, the VRV demonstrated unwavering patriotism, with 71 individuals enlisting in the combat force and 23 youths joining volunteer groups to facilitate the transportation of supplies and weaponry. In collaboration with local residents, they undertook extensive road repairs in various areas, totaling 141 kilometers. Additionally, they rehabilitated 57 kilometers of Road No. 10, constructed four kilometers of inter-commune roads, and 2.2 kilometers of the *Dốc trâu* bypass. Eight bridges were repaired or newly built (Đảng bộ huyện Như Xuân, 1975).

Eight years since its establishment, the VLC had already made significant contributions to the production of food, construction materials, and garments, as well as the transportation of supplies to support both the civilian population and the military. In 1973, as the resistance war against the United States intensified, the demand for food, clothing, transportation, and construction materials surged. In response to this evolving context, the VLC was tasked by the local government to transition from a production cooperative to a specialized Handicraft Cooperative. Concurrently, the VLC was divided into three distinct cooperatives: 1) *Minh Tiến* tailoring cooperative (later merged with *Bến Sung* Garment Cooperative); 2) *Vĩnh Tiến* buffalo cart transport cooperative; and 3) *Vĩnh Long* lime brick and wicker cooperative. Each cooperative established its own management board (Ủy ban nhân dân thị trấn Bến Sung, 2004).

CONTESTATING THE MEANING OF PLACE THROUGH PRODUCT REPUTATION

Cooperatives in Vinh Long village played a significant role in the production of food, goods, and raw materials in Vietnam. The VLC's self-reliance, dedication, and access to local resources enabled it to produce unique and high-quality products. The cooperative's abilities to generate a wide range of products transformed Vinh Long village into a hub for food and commodity production and transportation. This had a profound impact on the local economy, stimulating growth. The cooperative's success was attributable to its reliance on local resources and the dedication of its members. This has allowed the cooperative to establish a competitive edge and produce goods that were not available from other cooperatives in the province. One VRV, (Mai Thị Tường, personal communication, 14 February, 2019) said that:

Every day, VLC used one to two quintals (200 kg) of rice to make vermicelli, one quintal (100 kg) of soybeans to make tofu, and hundreds of barrels of cassava wine were

processed and fermented. Thousands of meters of fabric were designed and used to make thousands of clothes every day; tons of milled rice and commodities were transported to many different places. Production groups became an important link in the food and commodity production system of the VLC. Bến Sung town could be said to become the center of food and commodity production in the period 1970-1986. Many commodity production and trading cooperatives were established in Nhựt Xuân district. However, there were four trading cooperatives in Bến Sung area alone. Residents of Bến Sung area could easily access a variety of products made by the VLC as well as a number of other products. The attracted many groups of migrants from neighboring districts to come and settle down.

Cassava wine, a product renowned for its distinctive flavor, garnered widespread acclaim from local communities and organizations within the district and neighboring regions. Leveraging their expertise in selecting premium cassava raw materials from local farms, coupled with their mastery of cassava brewing and fermentation techniques, the VRV community crafted an exceptional cassava wine product that surpassed the offerings of other cooperatives. The wine's allure lay in its captivating aroma of cassava, harmoniously blended with the refreshing sweetness of yeast, tantalizing consumers with each sip. Its unparalleled quality propelled it to become the VLC's primary revenue generator, boasting a remarkable profit margin of 40 percent. VLC cassava wine became indispensable at government agencies, military barracks, and local festivities such as celebrations and weddings. Its prominence extended beyond the district, as pharmaceutical companies in Thanh Hóa province chose it as a key ingredient for herbal tonics, catering to the health and wellbeing of the military and the community.

Fired bricks, the second most celebrated product of the VLC, became a required construction material for enduring structures, symbolizing stability and prosperity for families and government entities alike. Mr. Ngô Xuân Sao, a lecturer at Hồng Đức University, Thanh Hóa province recounted in an interview (personal communication, 20 October, 2019):

In the past, only significant projects in Nhựt Xuân district, such as schools, healthcare centers, the district People's Committee, or the residences of affluent families, could afford VLC's fired bricks. The cooperative possessed an exceptional ability to blend soils in precise proportions and employ specialized firing techniques, resulting in bricks of a vibrant pink-red hue and exceptional durability. Locals regarded these bricks as akin to stone in terms of their resilience. Owning a home constructed with VLC's fired bricks was a cherished aspiration for families, embodying the ideals of permanence and prosperity.

One more defining characteristic of VRV, renowned throughout the Nhựt Xuân district and beyond in Thanh Hóa province, was its extensive fleet of large buffalo carts. These carts, with their iconic wooden wheels and two robust buffaloes pulling at the helm, played a pivotal role in transporting vast quantities of goods. They hauled agricultural produce from production areas to the VLC for processing and delivered bricks and lime to construction sites in the region. Moreover, these buffalo carts were indispensable in the transportation of rice, commodities, and ammunition to military

installations across Thanh Hóa province. Their presence became deeply etched in the memories of officials and civilians alike, symbolizing the unique identity of the VRVs.

These VRV garment products were distinguished by their contemporary style, appealing not only to locals and officials but also gaining recognition for their modernity. Tailoring, a craft that demands both technical proficiency in operating sewing machines and artistic creativity, played a significant role in the VRV's success. The company designed and produced 100 percent of the official attire for district officials, ranging from everyday wear to formal shirts and vests for office work. The VLC tailor brand became synonymous with modern, aesthetically pleasing designs and exceptional quality throughout Thanh Hóa province. The VRV's fashion-forward image set it apart from the local community, creating a distinct cultural identity.

During the period from 1970 to 1980, as a result of sustained efforts, the VLC emerged as a leading entity within the cooperative economic development movement in Thanh Hóa province. The Thanh Hóa Provincial People's Committee recognized the VLC as an exemplary cooperative, a beacon of success in producing goods, food, and foodstuffs throughout Như Xuân district, serving as an inspiration for numerous other cooperatives. In recognition of the VLC's exceptional contributions to overall economic development, national security, and defense, the cooperative received numerous certificates of merit from the head of the Thanh Hóa Handicraft Cooperative Union. These accolades acknowledged VLC's achievements in goods production and its role in transporting food, goods, and ammunition to the army. Moreover, the VLC was bestowed with various valuable and meaningful gifts celebrating their patriotism, a testament to their significant contributions to the overall development of Như Xuân district (Ủy ban nhân dân thị trấn Bến Sung, lang Vinh Long, 2004).

The success of the VLC in a context where most other cooperatives in the province failed acted as a beacon of hope. This achievement reflected the community's unwavering solidarity, its ability to mobilize and utilize capital resources efficiently, and its creation of a distinctive brand for the VRV village. It underscored the crucial role of human capital quality as a determinant of a nation's economic prosperity. Furthermore, it showcased VRV peoples' diversified capital sources, coupled with innovative perspectives on economic development and national contributions. Infrastructure projects within the community were consistently implemented by VRVs with remarkable harmony and consensus. Consequently, the VRV established a reputation as *Lang Van Minh Sang Tao*, characterized by its diverse culture, progressive mindset, innovative production practices, and unwavering community spirit.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This paper examines how the village *Làng Việt Kiều Hồi Hương Từ Thái Lan* (village of the VRVs) turned into *Làng Văn Minh Sáng Tạo* (the creative civilization village) and underwent significant transformation over the decades. It explores the transcultural hybridization between Thai and Vietnamese traditions, the shifting identity from national traitors to contributors, and the role of economic, cultural, and social capital in placemaking. The study highlights the significance of understanding

local contexts, different kinds of capital, and everyday life practices in shaping community development, placemaking, and identity construction.

The VRVs and their descendants engaged in a multifaceted process of capital accumulation, construction, and management within a framework of transculturality and localism. This has resulted in the emergence of a distinct and self-defined identity for the inhabitants of *Làng Văn Minh Sáng Tạo*. Initially perceived as national traitors, the VRVs and their cooperatives have successfully integrated into local society, with their contributions to the nation becoming recognized. Consequently, *Làng Văn Minh Sáng Tạo* has changed from being seen as a foreign enclave to a vibrant center of economic and cultural production. In this way, this article contributes to the understanding of the complex processes of identity transformation and placemaking in the context of Vietnamese communities and Vietnam's collectivization structure and regulations. It highlights the role of local actors, capital, transculturality, and everyday life practices in shaping the development and transformation of place and identity.

This article's key findings are as follows.

FIRST: THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN TRANSCULTURALITY AND LOCALISM IN PLACEMAKING

The interplay between transcultural flows and local power dynamics exerts a profound influence on place-based movements and cultural identities (Escobar, 2001). This dynamic relationship is exemplified in this article's case study. The genesis of the VRV involved a complex interaction between transculturality and local forces. While seeking to reconnect with their Thai heritage, VRV people simultaneously adapted to the new Vietnamese context, resulting in a dynamic construct shaped by everyday life practices and interactions. This site of contestation and negotiation became a crucible for the interplay between transculturality and localism. Transculturality empowered the VRV to transcend the constraints of collectivization. By leveraging economic and cultural capital from Thailand, and constructing social capital and capital management in cooperative production in Vietnam, the VRV engaged in localized processes with their transnational capital flows. This process facilitated the construction of a unique identity that reflected both Thai and Vietnamese cultural influences, embodying a blend of transcultural influences and local experiences.

SECOND: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL ACTORS IN CONTESTING THE MEANING OF PLACE

Social actors play a pivotal role in shaping the meanings and identities of places. This study examines how the VRV contested the dominant narratives and associations of their village. Through their everyday practices, VRV members actively engaged in placemaking, modifying the state's collectivization policies and asserting their autonomy. They established their own regulations and practices, *làm đến chết*, which prioritized collective labor and cooperation. This negotiation to dominant structures, particularly in the economic, political, and cultural spheres, exemplifies the tactics of creative and resistant actions employed by marginalized groups (de Certeau, 1984). The transcultural influences of VRV people allowed them to transcend societal

norms and the cooperative form's structures and regulations, becoming agents of change.

Through their persistent innovation, the VRV have gradually transformed the meaning of their place, standing in contrast to the findings of Kerkvliet (2005), who attributed the collapse of collective farming in Vietnam to factors such as insufficient trust among peasants and poor governance. The success of the VRV in developing a thriving village amidst the failures of other cooperatives highlights the crucial role of human resources, capital, and creative practices in socioeconomic development. This study suggests that the agency of social actors can significantly influence the meanings and identities of places, challenging dominant narratives and fostering alternative visions of community.

THIRD: CAPITAL ACCUMULATION, MANAGEMENT, AND THE ROLE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL ON SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The accumulation and management of diverse forms of capital, encompassing economic, cultural, and social domains, exert a profound influence on the trajectory of social and economic development. The management of economic capital, such as skills, material assets, and technological advancements, as well as cultural capital, represented by knowledge, values, and attitudes, facilitates cooperative production. This process necessitates the establishment of social capital, comprising trust, collective consciousness, and positive interpersonal relationships. Social capital serves as a catalyst for resource mobilization and the acquisition of additional capital, fostering reciprocity and trust. This virtuous cycle supports the development of cultural capital, which shapes individuals' cultural consumption and behavior, fostering a sense of community and belonging.

By leveraging social capital, communities can enhance economic conditions and promote community development. Furthermore, cultural capital influences individuals' cultural consumption of new values and behaviors (Bourdieu, 2007), shaping interactions within a geographical place and fostering a sense of place and belonging. This dynamic interplay between different forms of capital contributes to the overall social and economic development of a society.

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