

Urbanization and Land Use Change in a Peri-urban Village Community of Hanoi

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[*Abstract*]

Although much research has examined the correlation between urbanization and land use change in large-scale level, more study on local context is still needed to understand this relationship and dynamics of the change. Drawing upon field research on a peri-urban village of Hanoi, the article explores the impact of urbanization on changes in social relations around the land, shifts in villagers' perceptions of land, and political reaction from below to land appropriation. The findings suggest that urbanization had reduced the symbolic value of built-up land, which resulted in an initial evolution for women's land access but caused an increase in gambling activities and bankruptcy. It also excludes people from farmland by both the state policies and market forces, of which augmented by the regulation force, the market has been the primary force accounting for significant land use changes in the community.

Keywords: urbanization, land use change, land conversion, land policy, peri-urban area

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I . Introduction

Land use change can be seen as a process in which humans transform the natural landscape and utilize the land for socioeconomic activities (Paul and Rashid 2017). This complex process is driven by various factors, such as increasing human populations, rising resource utilization and expansion of urban spaces (Holdgate 1993). Over the past three decades, there has been a dramatic change in rural land use in Southeast Asia. Economic growth, industrialization, and urbanization have led to the conversion of a great deal of agricultural land to non-agricultural use. This loss of farm land is a core component of the “deagrarianization” (Hall et al. 2011: 1)—the processes of reducing the role of agriculture in national economy. Part of deagrarianization is peri-urbanization in which agricultural land is converted to industrial and urban land use (Hall et al. 2011: 120-121).

Vietnam has experienced rapid urbanization, especially since the mid 1980s. The population living in urban areas increased from just over 10 percent in 1950 to 34.4 percent in 2019 (United Nations 2014). The extensive conversion of agricultural land has accompanied this rapid urbanization process. From 2001 to 2005, the state appropriated 366,400 hectares of agricultural land; this rose to roughly 745,000 hectares by 2010 (Kerkvliet 2014). Hanoi, the capital, is one of the country’s two major cities where land conversion is concentrated. From 2000 to 2004, Hanoi converted 5,496 hectares of land for 957 projects (Hồng Minh 2005). In its 2020 Development Plan, Hanoi proposed appropriating approximately 6,500 hectares for almost 2,000 projects (Nhĩ Anh 2021).

Research on urbanization in Vietnam has highlighted a set of problems, especially land degradation, chaotic land-use practices, growing income inequality, dispossessed farmers unable to find jobs in the urban economy, and land disputes (Pham et al. 2013; Labbé 2014; Nguyễn Văn Sửu 2014; Pham et al. 2014). Some researchers have focused on the drivers of land acquisition, the processes and actors involved in land-taking, livelihood transformations, and farmers’ reactions to land loss (DiGregorio 2011; Labbé 2011 2015; Nguyen Quang Phuc 2015). Others have explored multiple forms of

resistance to land appropriation by farmers in peri-urban communities (Kerkvliet 2014; Nguyen Thi Thanh Binh 2017; Nguyen Quang Phuc 2023). While these studies identify the impact of land appropriation for urbanization, they do not pay attention at all the aspects of the relation between peri-urbanization and land use change in the affected communities.

This article, drawing upon recent fieldwork in a peri-urban part of Hanoi, uses the power of exclusion framework that shows how state policies and market forces deprive local people of land. This paper provides an empirically grounded analysis of specific land grabbing stories. It contributes to the literature on land politics by investigating how the four “powers of exclusion” are used in converting land in this particular case.

II. The Power of Exclusion Framework and Land Appropriation in Vietnam

In the “power of exclusion” framework, developed by Hall, Hirsch, and Li (2011), exclusion is not defined as the opposite of access but as “ways in which people are prevented from benefiting from things.” This approach highlights contention, conflict, and power relations among actors. Hall, Hirsch and Li posit four “powers” as most critical to determining exclusion from access to land: *regulation*, including legal and informal rules; *force*, including coercion and violence that can underpin the law; *the market*, prices for goods and services; and *legitimation*, including justifications of all kinds. When deploying this analytical framework to understand land conversions, especially in peri-urban zones, the authors find industrialization and urbanization have created new incentives for actors to mobilize the powers of exclusion to claim land. In the context of other actors using the powers of regulation, market, coercion, and legitimation, farmers themselves take up the offers of payment and quit their claims to land. In this process, the four powers of exclusion are interwoven (Hall et al. 2011).

Vietnam has experienced various regimes of land tenure throughout its history. After gaining independence, and while

implementing the principle “land to the tiller” in 1954, the government redistributed to farmers land previously owned by landlords. However, between the 1960s and 1980s, the farmland in northern Vietnam was nationalized and farmers were required to work on cooperative farms (Phuc To et al. 2019). With the economic reforms in the 1980s, the country switched from a socialist-controlled economy to a market economy, and collective farmland was allocated to private households through a system of long-term leases.¹

Starting with the 1988 Land Law then continuing through five rounds of revisions in 1993, 1998, 2001, 2003, and 2013, the state has clarified three key rights to land: ownership rights, controlling rights and use rights. Accordingly, the right to own land belongs to all the people, as represented by the state. The right to control land was also given to the state. The right to use the land belongs to households, individuals, and organizations. This land reform process has promoted agricultural development during the past three decades. However, conflicts related to land use rights emerged during the policy’s implementation for two main reasons. First, no clear distinction exists between ownership and use rights in the land laws. Second, the property rights of land-use holders, including agricultural land-use holders, are not fully recognized (Nguyễn Văn Sửu 2010). These conflicts have arisen in the context of industrialization and urbanization since the 1990s when the state appropriated hundreds of thousands of hectares of agricultural land for development projects.

The 2013 Land Law stipulates two justifications for appropriating land: the state can appropriate land for (1) defence and security purposes or (2) socio-economic development for national and public benefit. In cases where the state appropriate land for socio-economic development for national and public benefit, it can either stipulate the compensation or let the parties involved negotiate and agree to a compensation. The administrative mechanism is used to implement essential projects approved by the

¹ According to the 1993 Land Law, this land use term was 20 years for annual cropping and 50 years for perennial land. In the 2013 Land Law, this right was extended to 50 years without implementing the third round of redistribution.

prime minister and investment decisions and projects approved by the provincial People's Council; in these cases, the state will appropriate land and approve compensation plans for people whose land is appropriated. In cases of land appropriation by agreement, the investor in small-scale production and business projects agrees to a land use rights transfer in the form of a transaction. Then, the state implements the procedures for recognizing land use rights of investors and converting land use purposes for approved investment projects. The compensation set by the state is often many times cheaper than the market price for land use rights, giving rise to inequality and complaints among people whose land is appropriated (Mai and Lê 2023).

This paper examines factors that cause farmers to relinquish their land. The study will explore how the four "exclusion powers" interact to determine who is excluded, the varying justifications for exclusion, and the social and political consequences.

III. Research Methods and Site

The research was done in To² village, D. commune, Hoai Duc district, Hanoi City,³ between January and April 2014 and in April 2020, September 2021, and May - June 2023. In 2014, I used both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Using questionnaires across 100 households, I collected information on land ownership and transfer, other personal and productive assets, income, and consumption expenditures. More important for this paper are the 70 interviews I did with villagers about themselves, their families' socioeconomic situation, occupational changes, living standards, their views on urbanization and its impact on their lives and communities, and changes in land value and land use in the community. In addition, I collected local government reports and

² This is a pseudonym. The names of the villages and communes in this research have been changed to protect the informants.

³ From July 1, 2025 Vietnam no longer have districts. Since then To village belongs to An Khanh commune, Hanoi city. However, as this research was conducted before July 1, 2025, the author would like to use the old administrative units to ensure the research's originality.

statistical data on socioeconomic life, land use, and land administration in the village.

Located west of Hanoi, To village is about 18 km from the city center. By May 2023, the population of the village included 820 households with over 3,000 inhabitants. More than 600 households make up the original population, while the rest are newcomers who bought residential land to live in the village. To village is in a commune—an administrative unit—in Hoai Duc district, Ha Tay Province. In 2008, Ha Tay was merged into Hanoi City. For now, Hoai Duc remains a rural district of Hanoi; by 2025, according to the city's master plan, it will become an urban ward.

Before 2008, To was an agricultural village with no direct road access. More than 80 percent of people lived on farms. After becoming a peri-urban area of Hanoi and under the impact of the city's urban growth policy, big city roads were extended close to To village, and the 4th Belt Road opened through the village. Inside the villages, main roads and hamlet lanes were expanded and upgraded thanks to the city's investment. Approximately 8.8 hectares of the 66 hectares of the village's agricultural land were appropriated for road extension, public buildings, and related projects. According to the commune's master plan, most of the agricultural land of To village will eventually be appropriated for urban projects.

IV. Changes in Residential Land Use

4.1. Variations in Residential Land Area

Before 1954, the village's residential space was a narrow strip of land about 1 km long, surrounded by a bamboo grove separating the village from the fields outside. In the 1970s and 1990s, the village government implemented population expansion for about 50 families. In 1992, the village wanted to build a new concrete road but did not have the funds, so it asked the district and commune to sell some interspersed public land and farmland adjacent to the village's bamboo banks as residential land for households in the village. About 40 plots of land with a total area of about 0.8 hectares

were sold to 40 households. Thus, by 2008, when To village was merged into Hanoi, its total residential land area was about 17 hectares, more than double its size in the early 19th century.

In 2010, the commune's government decided to convert 2.9 hectares of rice land farmed by 43 households in To village to build a cultural house and sports area for the village. As the local government had no money to pay for compensation, these 43 households received "service land"⁴ as compensation. This meant that if a household lost one *sao* (360 m²) for that project, it received in return 50 m² of service land. This helps to increase the village's residential land area to about 20 hectares.

However, the village's residential space has expanded even more than that. From 2004 to 2008, about 30 families spontaneously built houses and workshops on agricultural land in front of the village and along the road, affecting an area of more than three hectares. Since 2008, after merging with Hanoi, the city government has stopped the construction of such illegal housing on agricultural land.

The Ring Road 4 project that began at the end of 2002 will take 0.53 hectares of residential land from 91 households in the village. However, these households will be fully compensated. Therefore, overall, during the past over 20 years, the residential space of To village has been expanding into farmland area. Nevertheless, in reality, built-up land area of many households in the village has narrowed. My survey of 100 households in the village in 2013 found that 22.5 percent of households had residential land area equal to or less than 150 m², 26.5 percent had an area of 141 - 230 m², and 51 percent had an area of over 231 m². Many families in To village have sold a portion of their residential land. From 2000 to 2013, over 14 percent of surveyed households had sold residential

⁴ From 2004 to 2016, Hanoi and some surrounding provinces allocated service land for households who lost more than 30 percent of their farmland for appropriation. This is a regulation policy to support for farmers who lost their land for appropriation when the state could not increase the compensation. In addition to financial compensation, local government allows farmers to retain 10 percent of the reclassified land, referred to as service land, for use or sale. However, since 2016, this regulation no longer applied given the shortage of land resource.

land to build or enlarge houses, pay off debts, buy living amenities, or invest in education and work for children. People partitioned between 50-100 m² from their built-up land for sale. The interview results showed that up to this time, at least 30 percent of families originally from the village had sold some of their residential land. As a result, so far, more than 200 households who are outsiders came to buy land and live in the village. Besides, various pieces of built-up land were owned by individual speculators.

4.2. Changes in Land Access and Social Relations Around Land

Because villagers' residential land was passed down by their ancestors or granted by the revolutionary government during the 1954 land reform period, by the end of the 1990s, most families were granted certificates of land use rights. However, 43 households compensated with service land for their rice land, which was appropriated to build public works in the village in 2010, and many households that bought land sold by the village to build roads in 1992 have not been granted these certificates because the conversion and transactions were not authorized by higher officials. This is a fairly common problem in the Red River Delta because more than ten years ago, many villages and communes needed to develop roads, schools, and electricity systems, but did not have capital. Thus, they arbitrarily sold or exchanged land on which to build those projects (Nguyen Van Suu 2010). Doing that now is infrequent because, according to the current Land Law, district authorities must conduct land conversion, appropriation, and compensation according to specific procedures. Moreover, in recent years, under the impact of the urbanization, land and land markets have been tightly controlled and forced to comply with procedures and processes for granting land use rights certificates and changing land use purposes.

In addition to changing perceptions about access to ownership rights, the urbanization process also affects land relations and women's access to land for a part of the local population. In the tradition of the Vietnamese people in the Northern Delta, land was mainly divided among, and inheritance rights were given to, men. Female owners are often widows or daughters of families without

sons. In the early 19th century, To village had a total of 195 hectares of farmland, of which about 105 hectares were private fields owned by 204 households, and the proportion of female owners accounted for 11 percent (Kleinen 1999: 34). After 1945, the revolutionary government paid greater attention to gender equality and expanded women's access to land. In 1993, household plots in To village were divided into arable land; each person was allocated 240 m² of field land and 144 m² of riverbank land.⁵ Because the land use rights certificate is issued to the head of the household, the proportion of men holding land use rights certificates at this time was about 80 percent, with women holding about 20 percent.⁶ The proportion of women holding residential land use rights certificates was even lower, 16.2 percent (2021 statistics). Also in this year, the rate of both husband and wife holding residential land use rights certificates was 6.5 percent.

Due to the Vietnamese custom of living with the husband's family, and the tradition of sons continuing the family line, houses are rarely sold. They are the sites for family and clan death anniversaries, ceremonies, and Lunar New Year festivals, so only men have inheritance privileges, and women are excluded from access to land. Only in cases where the children are in trouble, broken marriages, or parents having many assets is land given to the daughter (Tran Tuyet Nhung et al. 2013).

In recent years, urbanization has turned land into a source of financial capital for peri-urban villagers (Nguyen Van Suu 2014). Selling farmland or a portion of residential land to get money to build a house and cover living expenses has reduced the symbolic value of land and raised the issue of the rights of women in the family who have left home to get married. Traditionally, families in To village divide residential land among their sons. In cases where parents/brothers have a moderate land area and only sell a small

⁵ Riverbank land is made up of deposits from Day River which had a very large bed in the past, on which one can find trees, sugar cane, and cash crops. The riverbank land area of To village is located at the other side of the dike and about 4 km away from the village.

⁶ Similar to other localities in the region, female heads of household are often unmarried, divorced or widowed, or whose husbands are absent.

portion of the residential land area to build a house and cover necessary expenses, some families gift married daughters/sisters a small amount of the money gained from selling land inherited from their ancestors. However, in cases where the heir is a grandson, if they sell the inherited land or the family without a son now sells the land and divides it to give to their daughter, this raises questions about injustice towards the owner's daughters. In two cases where male heads of households without sons in the village sold land to share with their daughters, they were advised and pressured by relatives to give the sister a portion of the land—about 50 square meters—to ensure her rights.

In the past decade, about ten women in the village have married in distant provinces but still live in the village. Their parents gave them a 50 m² plot of land to build a house or farmland in neighboring areas along the edge of the village to build a temporary house. In seven cases, recently separated or divorced women were also given a small area of residential land or farmland near the village by their parents to build temporary houses.

Most interviewees said that changing views about discriminating between sons and daughters is an important reason why many families let daughters enjoy a portion of the family's land property.

Nowadays, girls and boys are responsible for their parents when they get old and weak. In addition to the residential land left by my grandparents, 20 years ago my husband and I bought another piece of land of more than 200 m² close to our house, so we decided to give our two daughters 50 m² each to have capital to do business or use in the future (Mrs. Nguyen T. Nh., 58 years old).

The current trend is for families to give or think about giving land to their daughters. For families to decide to do this, they must have enough land for their son and remaining land to consider giving to their daughter. However, a small group of people in the village still have mixed opinions, maintaining the traditional view that land inherited from grandparents is only for sons.

4.3. 'Land Fever' and the Increase of Bankruptcy

Studies on Hanoi's new peri-urban villages show that, after a decade, the land prices of the villages increased a hundred-fold (Nghiem Lien Huong 2007; Nguyen Van Suu 2014). Before 2000, very few families in To village sold residential or farming land. Since 2000, with the city's expansion, outsiders have begun coming to the village to buy land on which to live or to invest. In 2000, the price of residential land in To village was about 2 million VND/m². From 2009 to 2011, a "land fever" emerged in the area because some communes were converted into wards of Ha Dong district, and land prices in To village increased to 30 million VND/m². By 2024, land prices have increased to 60-80 million/m².

From 2000 to 2008, only a few families in the village sold agricultural and residential land to have money to build houses, pay debts, or spend on significant projects such as treating serious illnesses, organizing weddings, or investing in their children's studies. However, during the "land fever" of 2009 - 2011, more families in the village sold land to build houses and pay off debt. As of 2013, 30 households had sold the service land they received after their farmland was appropriated for the construction of joint village projects, and 50 households sold residential land. Households selling serviced land often sell all their plots with an area of 30 - 50 m². Households selling residential land often cut their family's residential land into one or two plots, 40 - 50 m² each, to sell. Of these 80 families, about ten had to sell land to pay gambling debts, while the rest sold land to get money to build houses. Up to four families had to sell all their residential land and move to temporary houses built on farmland. From 2013 until now, more families in the village have sold land to build houses and pay off their debts, including two that had to sell most of their land because of gambling debt. In the past six years, a man and a woman in the village, both 40, committed suicide because of gambling debt and underground credit.

For a long time, gambling has been popular among many Vietnamese peasants (Vu Quoc Thuc 1973). Some men in To village have long bet small amounts of money on coin tosses and lotteries.

More recently, when people have money, they have begun betting on soccer games and doing online gambling with larger amounts of money. Along with urbanization, there has been an increasing number and scale of money lenders and illegal lotteries in the peri-urban area. Interview results show that about 30 percent of families in the village have at least one member participating in gambling at different levels and forms during the “land fever.” Some people only play the lottery daily with small bets, while others participate in card games, football betting, or online gambling with large amounts of money. Previously, players were mainly middle-aged men, but recently, the number of young people participating has increased.

Typically, lottery and gambling players can borrow from underground credit and large loan sharks in the area. When the payment is due, creditors come to their families to collect debt. Families often sell land to pay off the debt. Few with debts can delay repayment.

Children know that their parents have money from selling land, so they play around. They often borrow money to play, and when the debt is due, they notify their family. If you cannot pay on time, the creditor will come and collect it. Sometimes creditors even bring along gangsters with weapons or use tricks to throw shrimp paste into the debtor's house (Mrs. Van Thi Ph, 77 years old).

V. Changes in Agricultural Land Use

5.1. Changes in Agricultural Land Area

As of 2008, To village's total agricultural land area was 70 hectares. Since then, because the Hoai Duc suburban district has not yet officially transformed into a city district, the process of urbanization and agricultural land acquisition in To village has taken place slowly and on a small scale. In contrast, several neighboring communes have been transformed into wards of Ha Dong district, and over 90% of the agricultural land area has been appropriated.

In 2010, the commune's government converted 2.9 hectares of

rice land farmed by 43 To households into public land on which to build a cultural house and sports area for the village. In 2017, Hoai Duc district confiscated 0.77 hectares from 56 households in the village to develop land for the district's procurement fund. In 2019, the project to open road No. 6 appropriated about 2.1 hectares from 53 households. Since the end of 2022, the government has been working on implementing the Ring Road 4 project appropriated 0.53 hectares of residential land from 91 households and more than 2.5 hectares of agricultural land from 94 households in the village.

Thus, over the past ten years, about 8.8 hectares of agricultural land held by To village households has been appropriated. In addition, the people have turned 4 to 5 hectares of agricultural land near the village into residential land. According to local planning, 12.3 hectares of village land will be appropriated for an urban housing project for low-income people in the coming years.⁷ The district will reclaim the remaining farmland to develop as land for the district's procurement fund. The village's future agricultural land remains primarily in the 29 hectares area of riverside land planned



Map 1 and 2: Land use in To village in 2003 and in the masterplan by 2020

⁷ The commune's planning period ended in 2020, but so far, this planning has not been completed; thus, it will continue to be implemented over the next few years.

as the city's Green Belt (see Maps 1 and 2). However, in reality, half of households in the village had sold their farmland. The rice field land was sold for owner of the company which will invest on the urban housing project and some speculators at the villagers; while the riverside land was sold for people from the city who bought it to build eco-farms in the future.

5.2. Crop Structure Transformation and The Shrinking of Farming

In the late 1990s, people began implementing the local government's policy of converting crops grown on the riverside land from corn, potatoes, cassava, beans, peanuts, and sugarcane to apples. From 1997 to 2019, almost all of the village's riverside land area was used to grow apples. Since 2017, apple prices have decreased, and consumption has become difficult given that dried fruit production workshops halted to purchase this type of apple. Therefore, most of the old apple-growing areas have now been destroyed. People are switching to perennial fruit trees, such as longan, jackfruit, and oranges, intercropped with corn, beans, and vegetables. With these crops, in addition to providing fruits and other food for family use, each household currently cultivates land and only earns about 3 million VND per *sao* per year. Residents believe that the full value of the riverside land is not being realized. With a location right next to town and a large area (29 hectares) next to the Day River, fertile land and fields can bring higher economic returns to the local people if they are converted in an ecological agricultural direction. However, to do this, local authorities would have to focus on building infrastructure for the land: developing roads, electricity and water systems and setting up projects, or calling for investment from businesses in high-tech farming and animal husbandry.

Regarding the agricultural land not near the river, households requested in 2004 that the commune and district authorities convert three hectares at the village entrance from rice to fruit trees. After receiving approval from the government in 2005, the entire area was cleared to grow grapefruit trees. From 2008 to 2018, more than 20 hectares in front of and right next to the village was converted to growing grapefruit, guava, longan and other crops, such as peach blossoms and vegetables. Some families even built temporary houses

and workshops on these lands. The village's rice growing area is concentrated in a 17-hectare field across the Dao River. However, even in that area, some families have recently poured soil to grow peach and other fruit trees.

Sugar grapefruit is the main crop in family gardens and converted land in To village because it is considered a local speciality. From 2009 to 2018, grapefruit trees brought a significant source of income to many households. At that time, each sugar grapefruit tree had an average income of 10 million VND/year, many families in the village had an income of 20 - 30 million VND/year, and some families with large areas had an income of 50 or 100 million VND/year. However, from 2018 to the present, grapefruit growing in To village has faced challenges. The process of urbanization opened roads and raised road foundations, affecting drainage systems in villages and fields, causing flooding in grapefruit gardens and damage to some grapefruit trees. Massive house construction and the process of pouring concrete in the village, combined with dust and light pollution, also put their particular grapefruit variety at risk of degeneration. In addition, in recent years, many northern provinces have invested in grapefruit trees, causing supply to exceed demand. The price of grapefruit on the market has dropped dramatically, and even precious grapefruit varieties, such as the sugar grapefruit of To village, have become difficult to sell. This has led to frustration among some grapefruit growers in To village, causing them to neglect their grapefruit trees or cut down their grapefruit orchards to build temporary houses and workshops for rent. By 2022, the grapefruit area in To village had been reduced to only two hectares of residential land in the village and three hectares of field land. Many residents and village officials want the city to plan and maintain an area of three hectares of grapefruit growing land to preserve the rare sugar grapefruit variety and the local agricultural farming tradition while creating an ecological environment for the village.

In addition to grapefruit and some fruit trees, such as longan and guava, about 20 households in the village each grow about 2 to 3 *sao* of peaches to sell flowers during the Lunar New Year. The village currently has about 40 households with labourers specialising

in growing vegetables for daily sale on village roads and local markets.

Hanoi's urbanization has had a substantial impact on the socio-economic life of the village. Since 2008, about 50 percent of To households have sold some or all their agricultural land. Villagers have diversified their economic activities. Among more than 600 original households in the village today, 55 households have opened small businesses and service shops, 15 have houses and rooms for rent and 36 have small factories for rent. Villagers and immigrants have opened workshops producing aluminium and glass, furniture, construction materials and garments, attracting part of the local workforce. In the village, 17 building contractors employ workers from about half of the village's households. Numerous young villagers work for factories and companies in the region and throughout the city. Middle-aged residents often are security guards, janitors or employees of tree-planting companies in the region. Some villagers also drive taxis, babysit, and transport children to school. In the early 2000s, over 80 percent of households work in agriculture; today only about 20 percent of villagers rely on farming.

When asked why most households and workers in the village have abandoned agriculture, all respondents attributed this to the low income from agriculture, especially from growing rice (only about 1 million VND per *sao* per year) and the difficulty of farm work. Therefore, young people and many middle-aged workers choose to work away from the fields and earn a more stable income. Many villagers who continue to farm say they are too old to try other work or have difficulty finding other jobs.

Here, middle-aged or older women who want to work as janitors for cleaning companies or maids outside the city must know the job and have someone to introduce them in order to go. Older men who want to work as security guards must have someone to guide them and must be able to withstand the constraints of the job to be able to do so. I'm old so it's difficult to find another job. I grow rice to have rice to eat during the year, and grow vegetables every day to sell to have money to spend (Mrs. Van Thi Ng., 58 years old).

Choosing to work in agriculture depends on each person's ability and

interests. Even though farming only earns 2-3 million VND/month, I still want to do it because my mind is comfortable. Not everyone can do jobs with a salary of 6 million VND. I will work until there are no more fields (Mrs. Nguyen Thi B., 51 years old).

Many respondents also state that they do agriculture because they feel it is a waste for the land to be left unused. Like farmers in other localities in the Northern Delta, numerous To villagers want to keep the land in case their children lose their jobs or need to use it in times of trouble, natural disasters, and epidemics like the recent COVID-19 pandemic (Nguyen Tuan Anh et al. 2020).

5.3. Agricultural Land Appropriation and People's Reactions

In To village, land acquisition has sparked various reactions of residents. In 2010, when the commune enacted a policy to appropriate 2.9 hectares of land from 43 households to build a cultural house and a village sports area and compensate the landholders by paying them 50 square meters of service land for each *sao* appropriated, the people of To village became excited because, calculated according to the market price at that time, the compensation was equivalent to about 700 million VND/*sao* (higher than the compensation rate for land appropriation to build government public works which is 360 million VND/*sao*). Furthermore, the construction of these projects would bring benefits to the village community. In 2019, when the project to open Road No. 6 reclaimed 21,710 m² from 53 households at a compensation rate of 360 million/*sao*, people did not object because they understood this was a national public works project. People only wondered why the project took more land from their village than the neighbouring village.

In 2014, Hoai Duc district appropriated about 11,000 m² of agricultural land from 40 households in To village to develop as land for the district's procurement. According to the new policy from Hanoi City at that time, service land would no longer be given as compensation; instead, they would be given a monetary compensation of 351 million VND per *sao* (in addition to rice and job change support). Initially, not all households agreed to this

because, as in their opinion, the compensation was too small. Although the government explained that the proceeds from auctioned land sales would be used to invest in infrastructure and socio-economic development of the city and the villages, the people said they do not see the benefits. Instead, they only see that the land, after being auctioned, is worth up to 16 - 17 million VND/m². After a period of campaigning, 30 out of 40 households agreed to sign the agreement. Ten households disagreed on the grounds that their land was converted land that had been planted with perennial crops for a stable income, their confiscated area was large, and agriculture was their family's primary source of livelihood. The households that disagreed wrote a petition to Hoai Duc district. They also contacted individuals in the neighboring village who had fought in a protracted land struggle to learn from their experience how to conduct the resistance. However, because of their small number, with their representatives being elderly, disabled and vulnerable women without the support of the village community, their voices carried no weight. Furthermore, they had no basis to fight because even though their farming area was converted land, in 2004, the commune and district authorities only agreed to the conversion based on policy without an official document. Therefore, after a period of continually going to the district and city to submit petitions, the struggle of these households ended in a minor clash, with the authorities carrying out the forced eviction in 2018.

In 2022 and 2023, a collective reaction emerged in To village regarding the government decision to appropriate the village's cemetery, needed for the Ring Road 4. According to planning before 2022, the cemetery would be expanded by 1.3 hectares. However, in mid-2022, the People's Committee of Hoai Duc district proposed to put the To village cemetery close to the village's residential area instead of on the other side of the river as previously planned. This proposal was met with fierce reaction from the people. Immediately, many villagers held a meeting and flocked to the commune chairman's house to question the planning change, which they argued was unreasonable. According to them, cemeteries have always been far from residential areas; the fact that the local government wanted to change the plan was due to group interests.

The people believed that the land on the other side of the river, close to the new urban area, had a higher value than the land on the edge of the village, so businesses that were taking land nearby wanted to acquire it to make their urban area more beautiful. From August 2022 to October 2023, representatives of 450 households in the village signed a petition twice. They sent representatives to meet directly with the district leaders to propose moving the new cemetery in accordance with the plan. Faced with the determination of the majority of the village's residents, the People's Committee of Hoai Duc district agreed to the people's requests in November 2023.

Villagers have expressed various reactions regarding the appropriation of residential and agricultural land to open Ring Road 4. For the 91 families whose residential land, covering an area of 5,300 m², was appropriated. The city government initially planned to arrange a common resettlement location for residents of the entire commune, about 2 km from To village. The households responded by petitioning the district and city to resettle next to their old residential area for three reasons. First, the land fund of To village was still available. Second, people wanted to continue residing near the old community to maintain customs and social relationships. Third, the people in the neighboring village did not want to accept resettled people from outside. The district and city authorities approved this request.

For the 94 households whose agricultural land was confiscated so the road could pass through, people initially wondered about the different compensation amounts for fields on their side of the river and the other side of the river. For farmland in front of the village and on one side of the Dao River, the compensation was 950,000 VND/m². On the other side of the river, because it borders a ward of Ha Dong district, the compensation was 1,450,000 VND/m². After the city's specific pricing mechanism was clearly explained, people accepted this compensation amount. Although the compensation for the agricultural land area crossed by Ring Road 4 is low, about 342 million/sao, equal to the compensation level for the state's public works more than ten years ago, people did not react because they understood the purpose of the recall. However, to find the 1.4 hectares of resettlement area mentioned above, the Hoai Duc

district government plans to appropriate agricultural land from 41 households in the village. Immediately, the 41 households affected by this plan wrote a collective application requesting the government to compensate them at a higher level than the project had promised (960,000 VND/m²). They believe that their land belongs to the converted land area; in fact, more than half of the households have built temporary houses on it, so they requested government compensation in the form of service land at a rate of 50 m² per *sao* or 5 million VND per m² based on the local market price. The government has yet to implement its plan to use land for resettlement areas, and the above recommendation has not been resolved.

When asked whether they agree or disagree with the policy of land appropriation, respondents said that people in the village are often divided: 50% of people agree and 50% disagree. Those who agree are often members of households who have changed occupations, no longer farm or have sold all their farmland. Those who need capital to change their livelihoods, and some young people who are playing around and in debt, even want their farmland to be appropriated quickly so they can receive their compensation money. The villagers who do not want to lose their fields include those who still practice agriculture or want to keep their fields as a source of capital for their family's future. Most people in the village agree with the appropriation of 12.3 hectares farmland across the river for the urban project of a private company because few people grow rice, and that area is far from residential areas. They also saw that their neighboring villagers could negotiate with that company for a reasonable compensation (over 500 million VND per *sao*). However, many people wanted to retain a part of the converted land in front of the village to maintain agricultural livelihoods, create an ecological corridor for the village, and retain land so that people have an opportunity to extend the residential area in the future. Therefore, the people may react strongly if these areas are appropriated for auction according to the current plan.

The above events show that people react differently depending on the specifics of each land acquisition project. In overall, villagers accept land appropriation for public works even though the

compensation is low as they understand that it is regulated by law and state policy. The process of appropriation becomes more comfortable when half of households in the village have already sold their farmland and quit agriculture. People agree and are even keen to give land for projects which have reasonable compensation. Ten households reacted to their land appropriation for the district's bidding land fund as the legitimation of its purpose for the city's socioeconomic development did not convince them. However, they did not receive support from other co-villagers as people understand that there is no basis from regulation to keep that land. Majority of villagers only joined together to collectively resistance to claim for the village cemetery land when they surely knew that local government had violated the rule. These illustrate that, regulation and market are two powers played significant role in excluding To villagers from farmland, rather than legitimation or forces.

VI. Discussion and Conclusion

After two decades of urbanization, To village community has experienced a dramatical transformation on land use and social relations around land. Although the village's urbanization process has been slower than that of neighboring villages, still the expansion of the Hanoi city has impacted the socio-economic life of residents in the village.

Regarding built-up land, along with the process of natural population growth, urbanization leads to the appearance of outside residents buying land in the village, further expanding the residential space of the village. In the past, people only lived in the built-up land area of the village. During the process of urbanization, many people spontaneously moved to live in agricultural lands near the village. Moreover, the rising price of land prompted villagers to sell a part of their built-up land, and changes their views about land. Today, families are no longer heavily influenced by the view that their residential land is ancestral land; instead, they consider it a source of financial capital that can be partly sold to serve consumer needs or household economic development. Therefore,

selling a portion of residential land and using that money for other purposes has become common in the village. This shift has also led to an initial evolution in women's access to land, as people have begun to consider giving their daughters family land, even if just a small part, as a source of physical and financial capital. However, due to this change in the concept of land, a segment of the people, mainly young men, are enticed to participate in problematic social behavior and rely on the sale of land to earn money for debt repayment, leading to many bankruptcy cases.

So far, not much agricultural land area has been appropriated. However, a significant change in productive land use has occurred due to several factors. First, in converting the country's common commodity crop production, rice production land in the village gradually decreased, and the land was converted for cultivating fruit trees and ornamental plants. Second, the new employment opportunities created by urbanization has made villagers increasingly diversify their careers, and switch to non-agricultural jobs with higher incomes. Given that and along with the need for financial capital for development, without land appropriation, about half of households in the village have sold their farmland, and the proportion of agricultural workers has decreased to about 20 percent. Also, peri-urban agriculture tends to be scattered, fragmented and underinvested, so agricultural production in the village faces various difficulties.

Overall, the most striking change in land use of the village during the last two decade and in the coming years is the conversion of agricultural land to non-agricultural use. This loss of farmland in To village is relevant to the four powers of exclusion framework. The state's Land Law and other regulations determine the land area of each household, the kinds of land use in that area, and the kinds of ownership and usage with different areas of land. In the process of urbanization, the regulations shape land appropriation by decision to appropriate land for public works and for bids as part of the city's fund. It can be made by zoning and rezoning of land through the state's approval of land use masterplan. In addition, the power of legitimation was exercised by the state in supporting the regulation to convince local people to

agree to conversion. The main argument was framed in terms of the purpose of appropriation for socio-economic development for national and public benefits. In cases when some villagers did not accept the compensation and relinquish their claim to land, local government had carried out the forced eviction to appropriate land, as the small case of land protest in 2018.

Along with the above three powers of exclusion, pieces of evidence from the village also suggest that the market created an enormous incentive for landowners to sell up and exchange their land use rights for compensation. Like farmers elsewhere in Southeast Asia, many To villagers facing severe problems sold land, excluding themselves by choice (Hall et al. 2011: 122-123). Market force, augmented by the State regulations, plays a significant role in land use change. Villagers converted rice land into long-term tree growing land. People also built illegal houses and workshops on agricultural land. They also took advantage of job opportunities during urbanization process to diversify their economic activities and leave agriculture. Despite villagers lost farmland with a low compensation, they have taken advantage of rising price of land market to sell some residential land to improve their lives. The market force was so strong that it changes the symbolic value of land, giving women the initial chance to access land, but also increase gambling and gambling debts which in turn contributed to some villagers' decision to sell land.

The dynamics of land use change in To village have illustrated how both market force and state policies were interwoven in excluding people from their land use. In this case, market and regulation, rather than legitimation and coercion, played the most significant roles in land exclusion.

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