

Governance of Rice Production
under Climate Change in Northern Vietnam

Institutional Change in Agriculture and Natural Resources
Institutioneller Wandel der Landwirtschaft und Ressourcennutzung

edited by/herausgegeben von
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Volume/Band 66

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**Governance of Rice Production
under Climate Change in Northern Vietnam**

Shaker Verlag
Aachen 2016

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

Zugl.: Berlin, Humboldt-Univ., Diss., 2016

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Printed in Germany.

ISBN 978-3-8440-4751-6

ISSN 1617-4828

Shaker Verlag GmbH • P.O. BOX 101818 • D-52018 Aachen

Phone: 0049/2407/9596-0 • Telefax: 0049/2407/9596-9

Internet: www.shaker.de • e-mail: info@shaker.de

Aim and Scope of the Series

„Nothing endures but change“. Heraclitus the Ephesian (ca. 535–475 BC)

Institutions, defined as “the rules of the game”, are a key factor to the sustainable development of societies. They structure not only the multitude of human-human interactions of modern societies, but also most of the human-nature interactions. Poverty, famine, civil war, degradation of natural resources and even the collapse of ecosystems and societies often have institutional causes, likewise social and economic prosperity, sustainable use of resources and the resilience of socio-ecological systems. Agriculture, forestry and fisheries are those human activities where the interdependencies between human-human and human-nature interactions are perhaps most pronounced, and diverse institutions have been developed in history to govern them.

Social and ecological conditions are, however, ever changing, which continuously challenge the existing institutional structure at a given point in time. Those changes may be long-term, like population growth or climate change, medium-term, such as new technologies or changing price relations, or short-term, like floods or bankruptcies, but all of them pose the question whether the rules of the game need to be adapted. Failures to adapt timely and effectively may come at a high social cost. Institutional change, however, face a principal dilemma: on the one hand, institutions need to be stable to structure expectations and effectively influence human behaviors; on the other hand, they need to be adaptive to respond to the ever changing circumstance mentioned above. Understanding stability and change as well as developing adaptive institutions and effective, efficient and fair mechanisms of change are, therefore, of central importance for societies and an ongoing research challenge for social scientists.

If we want to improve the effectiveness, efficiency and adaptability of institutions, it stands to reason that we have to develop a good understanding of the causes, effects, processes and mechanism of stability and change. This is the aim of the series “Institutional Change in Agriculture and Natural Resources,” which attempts to answer the questions “How do processes and mechanism of institutional change actually work? What and who are the main determinants and actors driving, governing and influencing these processes? What are the economic, political, social and ecological consequences? How can adaptive institutions be designed and developed, and what governance structures are required to make them effective?” These are the questions at the heart of the series. The works published in this series seek to provide answers to these questions in different economic, social, political and historical contexts.

Volker Beckmann and Konrad Hagedorn

Ernst-Moritz-Arndt-Universität Greifswald und Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Acknowledgements

This doctoral research would never have been completed without the advice and support of my supervisors, colleagues, family, friends, and sponsors.

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to Prof. Konrad Hagedorn, my first supervisor, for not only accepting me as a student of the Division of Resource Economics at Humboldt University Berlin, but also offering his fruitful advice, valuable recommendations for my study and research, as well as support for the administrative and financial issues of my stay in Berlin.

I am very grateful to Dr. Ilona M. Otto, my daily supervisor, who gave insightful comments, regular support, and timely encouragement to my research and writing.

I would like to sincerely thank Dr. Sergio Villamayor-Tomas who introduced me to and carefully instructed me in a new scientific method that I applied in the doctoral research.

My deepest thanks go to Ms. Sigrid Heilmann for all the work that she has done for me. Without her arrangement for my first phone call to Professor Hagedorn in the summer of 2011 about an invitation letter, I might never have had the chance to go to Berlin to study.

I am also very thankful to Prof. Uwe Jens Nagel for introducing me to Prof. Hagedorn; to Ms. Ines Jeworski and Ms. Renate Judis for their technical and administrative help; to Dr. Dimitrios Zikos for his advice for our collaborative article; and to Nguyen Minh Dao, Yuliana Griewald, Yu Lu, Eva Anggraini, Jens Rommel and other members of the Division of Resource Economics for their care during my time in the Division.

I would like to acknowledge the financial support of the Vietnam International Education Development - Ministry of Education and Training and Caroline von Humboldt Programm - Humboldt University Berlin for my living expenses in Germany.

I also want to show my gratefulness to the officials, farmers, and friends who assisted me with the fieldwork in Nam Dinh and Thai Binh provinces.

My study abroad would only have been possible with the agreement and support of my colleagues in the Department of Resource and Environmental Economics - Faculty of Economics and Rural Development - Vietnam National University of Agriculture. I thank you all for this.

Finally, allow me to give special thanks to my parents, life partner, and daughter for their endless love and unconditional support, not only during my studies but also in the whole of my life.

Berlin, May 2016

Pham Thanh Lan

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