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Trading in broken things:

Gendered performances and spatial practices in a northern Vietnamese rural-urban waste economy

ABSTRACT

Through their deeply gendered performative and place-making practices, migrant waste traders take part in regenerating and revaluing urban space in Hanoi, Vietnam. Ethnographic research in the city and in their native rural district suggests that these practices are simultaneously strategic and contingent on the waste traders' gender and class positions. This positioning is defined by their marginalization as rural migrants and the social ambiguity of waste, which they creatively use for their own purposes. Alongside creating value for the waste they deal in, the traders turn marginality and ambiguity into social and economic spaces essential for communal life and economy, albeit with uncertain outcomes. These spaces are not locally bounded but part of shifting trajectories of power in the global market and the urban order of Vietnam. [*waste, rural migrants, performance, urban space, Vietnam*]

Spring District is situated in Vietnam's Red River Delta, about 130 kilometers from the capital city of Hanoi.¹ In one of its villages, a group of elderly people are chatting outside a village meeting hall in the midst of an immense green of paddy fields encircling residential blocks dotted with recently constructed houses.² As I ask about the local history of waste trading, a white-bearded man jokingly says, "Our village used to be specialized in shit collection, and now we are rich." He laughs and goes on to explain that during colonial times, some of his fellow villagers worked for the Hanoi Sanitation Company and were in charge of collecting night soil, which they sold to farmers in Hanoi's surrounding areas. After the French left, he says, some continued to work for the sanitation company under the socialist government. His story excites the others; each has something to say about their neighbors or relatives who also worked in sanitation, many of whom have now passed away.

These villagers pioneered the local trade in recyclable waste, which many in the whole district now specialize in. Although not directly employed by the sanitation company, some of them initially worked in the municipal dump, and their family members later established a niche in the trade, capitalizing on their relatives' access to household waste (DiGregorio 1994). The early small businesses and rural network that they initiated have become part of a waste trade that spans major cities, involving tens of thousands of people (Mehra, Du, and Nghia 1996; Mitchell 2008, 2009). This development was enabled by the economic reforms (*đổi mới*) in the mid-1980s, when Vietnam formally gave up its state-socialist model of central planning and social control, adopting marketization while retaining the party-state's political monopoly. Under the new model, known as market socialism, the country is now much more economically liberalized, urbanized, and globally connected, while its population is ever more mobile. Poverty has been substantially reduced, while inequalities among social groups and regions have grown. In this context, the urban waste trade has induced major changes in local family life and livelihoods, shifting the organization of care and increasing wealth differentiation (Nguyen 2014a).

In differing ways, women and men from Spring District have been appropriating urban space in the last several decades to make a living and generate wealth from their ambiguous social positioning as rural migrants who work with waste. Their creative potential “unsettles the associations often made between [waste and] garbage and marginality” (Millar 2012, 165), as they use the flexibility enabled by that marginality to advance socially and economically. In doing so, they exercise performative acts that draw on deeply gendered social meanings of dirt and labor (Douglas 1966). Such performances are simultaneously strategic and contingent on their class position, which they seek to transcend with varying outcomes, all the while helping to shape a vibrant waste economy linked to broader systems of production and consumption.

Viewing performative practices as spatially embedded allows us to recognize that gendered and classed subjects, although constituted by dominant discourses, can appropriate those discourses for their own purposes. In what follows, I link such performative appropriations to an ongoing process of class spatialization (Zhang 2010) in urban Vietnam, drawing on the work of scholars of performativity (Butler 1990, 1993; Morris 1995; Nelson 1999) and on Henri Lefebvre’s (1991) ideas about the production of space. I consider waste traders’ performances as part of a multitude of everyday place-making practices, for which the creative deployment of stereotypes is central (Herzfeld 2005; Nelson 1999).

According to Lefebvre, space is produced out of the dialectic of human beings’ spatial practices, how they live within spaces, and how the state and the elite conceive such spaces. Space, Lefebvre argues, is “politically instrumental in that it facilitates the control of society, while at the same time being a means of production by virtue of the way it is developed” (1991, 349). By producing space, people constitute hierarchical social and spatial orders, class structures, and spatial imaginaries, reproducing relations of domination in a society. Yet such relations are also continually reconfigured by human practices and shifting ideas about how social groups should and can live and use different spaces. Like migrants in urban China (Zhang 2001), the waste traders from Spring District inhabit space in ways that generate meanings for communal life while reproducing categories of class and gender through their performative practices. Such performativity, however, is neither simply an effect of dominant discourse, nor only a function of power relations, nor merely a process of subjectification grounded on an abstract subject (Butler 1990, 1993). Rather, it comprises a set of reflexive practices by purposive subjects who are embedded in social and cultural institutions in a particular time and space (Morris 1995; Nash 2000; Nelson 1999).

I conducted the fieldwork for this article from the summer of 2011 to the summer of 2012 in two communes

of Spring District, where I lived with one household in each, and in Hanoi, where I visited people from the district at their city lodgings and waste depots. I observed their movements between the country and the city and their interactions in both family and work settings, participating in various communal events and gatherings. In addition, I conducted 65 interviews and 15 life histories, met local government officials in the district, and carried out a survey with a sample of 300 households to explore local trends in family life and local livelihoods. The fieldwork gave me insights into the mobile nature of the waste trade and into how the rural-urban trope carries other meanings than normally assumed in Vietnamese public discourse and migration literature.

The waste trade is by no means unique to Vietnam. Around the world there are distinct waste economies that have been analyzed from the perspectives of material culture, political economy, political ecology, and livelihoods (Gille 2007; Li 2002; Masocha 2006; Wilson, Velis, and Cheeseman 2006). Below, I discuss the insights emerging from this literature before locating the practices of men and women from Spring District.

The waste trade as a migrant economy: Social constructions and spatial practices

Waste, junk, garbage, rubbish, trash—discarded and unwanted objects—are usually associated with uselessness, lack of value, and, above all, dirt. Yet dirt is never simply dirt. It represents social disorder, and its presence threatens the stability of established social patterns; dirt is, according to Mary Douglas, “essentially a question of matter out of place,” and removing it protects the social order (1966, 36). What counts as dirt in a society is determined by the particular social relations that define the appropriate social order of things, relations that “impose system on an inherently untidy experience” (4). Meanwhile, waste constitutes a stage in the “social life of things” (Appadurai 1986), when objects undergo a period of ambiguity in their value, as they are reassessed to be disposed of or re-created (Bauman 2004; Reno 2009). Waste is thus “part of an ongoing social process” involving “complex social arrangements that enroll a broad range of institutions, regulations and technologies in [its] circulation and transformation” (Reno 2009, 30–31). It concurrently constitutes objects moving between “regimes of values” (Appadurai 1986, 15) and is a site where multiple regimes of values coexist and are invariably related (Myers 2001).

The shifting and complex valuation of waste is inseparable from struggles over the value of the people who work with it, people whose existence is often constructed around tropes of the abject outcast or the dangerous social parasite (Alexander and Reno 2012a). Waste workers, traders, and trash pickers are commonly perceived as dirty and morally dubious, and as a menace to the public, and this perception

tends to be conflated with the depiction of migrants as a potential source of harm and pollution (Zimring 2004). For the workers themselves, however, the implications of waste and their personal and cultural relations to it are manifold, simultaneously offering and limiting the opportunity to creatively transform its value (Reno 2009).

In recent decades, waste collection and recycling have become one of the most important sources of livelihoods for millions of people around the globe, especially for rural migrants (Goldstein 2006; Medina 2000; Sicular 1991; Wilson, Velis, and Cheeseman 2006). Yet waste economies, rather than being insular systems that concern only the poor and the marginalized (Birkbeck 1978; Sicular 1991), are part of global production and consumption. The global waste trade has been rising sharply alongside the ever-greater demand for recyclable material in emerging industrial countries, especially China (Goldstein 2006; Tong and Wang 2012). In 2010 alone, China imported about 7.4 million tons of discarded plastic, 28 million tons of waste paper, and 5.8 million tons of steel scrap (UK *Guardian*, June 14, 2013). These numbers reveal, aside from the scale of the global waste trade, how much waste must be produced so that consumption can catch up with today's capitalist production (Bauman 2004), as well as the degree to which waste recycling has developed as an industry. Waste has indeed become a "prime fodder for privatization, an unregulated commons to which informal recyclers and larger firms struggle for access" (Alexander and Reno 2012b, 20).

Waste is both morally and politically contested, given that it can potentially form the material and symbolic bases for social relations (Gille 2007). Major economic categories such as labor, property, and value are reworked through global processes of remaking involved in recycling (Alexander and Reno 2012a). These processes are foregrounded by moral and political struggles among individuals, social groups, industries, and nations over the valuation of waste and waste work, struggles that are embedded in class and gender relations. The exoticized figure of waste pickers and their devalued labor often contrasts with the "surprising significance of apparently small and undignified acts of collection and revaluation" (Alexander and Reno 2012b, 19). People who work with waste reject the devaluation of their labor and personhood, demanding recognition for their contributions (Fredericks 2012; Millar 2012). Yet their practices also reveal moral ambiguities arising from their daily exposure to waste (Reno 2009). Thus, not only are waste objects and materials remade and revalued, but also the social relations that waste economies are part of. It is with such processes of remaking and revaluing that this article is concerned. For migrants from Spring District, these social relations evolve out of long-term iterative and reflexive engagement with the waste economy through spatial practices that cut across different places.

Household trajectories in Spring District

Because of the Red River Delta's high population density and limited farmland, labor migration within and from the region has long been important to local livelihoods. During the colonial era (1884–1945), peasants took up seasonal farmwork away from their villages or migrated to other parts of the country to work in mines or on rubber plantations (Gourou 1955). In the following decades of state socialism, labor migration continued, albeit on a smaller scale, even though the state strictly regulated mobility (Hardy 2003). Since the reform, labor migration has been increasing as restrictions on mobility have been eased, employment opportunities in urban centers have grown, and urbanization has accelerated. Although migrants from Spring District generally prefer Hanoi as a destination because it is relatively close, my household survey indicates that younger migrants are migrating to other urban centers as well, including the more distant Ho Chi Minh City and its surrounding industrial regions.

Since the 1980s, local people have embraced varying migrant livelihoods depending on market opportunities, household care needs, and the gendered structure of the labor market (Nguyen 2014a). Like most labor migrants in Vietnam and China, they engage in a householding process that spans the city and the countryside, both despite and because of the state's household-registration system, which formally ties people to where they are registered (Nguyen and Locke 2014). Table 1 summarizes their shifting livelihoods and specializations, showing that Spring District migrants have gradually expanded their niche in urban waste trading while continually rearranging family life. Over time, they have become predominantly specialized in the waste trade, although a smaller number of them do other migrant work, such as street vending and driving motorbike taxis. Their waste-related occupations range from itinerant junk trading (a predominantly female occupation) to operating waste depots (often a household business) to driving transport vehicles (typically male); a few households have become large-scale dealers. The time division in Table 1 suggests when a certain trajectory becomes popular rather than a linear development over time. This article focuses on the transition from itinerant junk trading as an individual activity to operating an urban waste depot as a household business.

Waste production and the waste hierarchy in Hanoi's urban order

With deep roots in the historical ecology of the Red River Delta, the urban waste trade in Hanoi has in recent decades been evolving alongside the city's enormous social and spatial transformations. Meanwhile, urban perceptions of waste and of the labor migrants who work with it indicate

Table 1. Trajectories of household livelihoods and migration in Spring District. (Reproduced by permission from Minh T. N. Nguyen, “Trans-local Householding: Care and Migrant Livelihoods in a Waste-Trading Community of Vietnam’s Red River Delta,” *Development and Change* 45 [6]: 1385–1408. © 2014 International Institute of Social Studies.)

	Up to mid-1980s	Late 1980s to mid-1990s	Late 1990s and 2000s	2000s onward
Role of migration	Migration not significant for household livelihoods	Circular migration significant for household livelihoods	Circular migration a major component of household livelihoods	Permanent migration by some households; circular migration still important
Popular migrant activities	Gold digging, manual labor, junk trading. Migrant income insignificant; main income from agriculture	Junk trading combined with cleaning (women), motorbike taxi (men). Migrant income significant	Running recycling depots, driving transport vehicles. Migrant income decisive for household economy	Running recycling depots or other small urban enterprises. Migrant income ensures welfare of elderly
Dominant household division of paid and unpaid labor	Husband joins the army or migrates; wife stays home to do agricultural work and care for children and elderly	Wife migrates; husband stays home to do agricultural work and care for children and elderly	Husband and wife migrate together; children live with grandparents. No agriculture—land is loaned or rented out	Whole households migrate to cities; elderly stay. No agriculture—land is loaned or rented out

a process of class spatialization within the urban order of Hanoi.

Đông nát: *The itinerant junk trader and changing urban waste production*

Đông nát means “broken things” in northern Vietnamese (the southern equivalent is *ve chai*, and recyclable waste is formally referred to as *phế liệu*). I translate it as “junk,” using the term “itinerant junk traders” to refer to people who go door to door to buy waste for resale to waste depots (“waste traders,” meanwhile, indicates a whole spectrum of actors involved in the waste trade, including waste depot operators and wholesale dealers). In Spring District, the term *đi chợ* (literally “going to the market”) is more frequently used for itinerant junk trading. In ways that never fail to attract attention, the itinerant junk traders make themselves known on their itineraries by singing catchy rhymes, which reveal the changing range of tradable wastes (see Table 2).

Itinerant junk traders are not new in Vietnam; they had operated long before the reform, albeit on a smaller scale. Because of shortages under state socialism, the state encouraged recycling, although it never reached such an ideological status as it did in socialist Hungary, as documented by Zsuzsa Gille (2007). Until the 1980s, the junk traders mostly bartered, exchanging a new pair of plastic sandals for some used ones or some rice or candy strips (*kẹo kéo*) for a kilo of waste metal or plastic; nowadays they offer cash. The waste they purchase varies over time according to consumption patterns and market demands, which before the reforms were largely driven by local and national industries. Today, it reflects the global demand for recyclable material, such as plastic, paper, and stripped metal. The waste also signals the national demand for secondhand household goods, for which Vietnam has a vibrant underground economy, which already existed during the central-planning

period. Until the 1990s many households, including better-off ones, sought imported secondhand household goods. Since the 2000s, as more and more Vietnamese consume electronic goods, the scale of electronic waste has rapidly increased, with traders purchasing it either to resell secondhand or strip for metal.³ Although imported secondhand items are still traded on the market, goods locally produced have also entered the secondhand trade, which has become geared toward low-income households.

In 2011, Hanoi produced more than 2.3 million tons of waste, and that amount is growing each year by 15 percent (MONRE 2011). About 8 to 20 percent of that waste is recycled, including ferrous metal, plastic, and paper (MONRE 2011; World Bank, MONRE, and CIDA 2004). Managing and treating waste in Vietnamese cities is largely performed by the state-owned Urban Environment Company (URENCO). Although URENCO has a subsidiary that trades and recycles waste, it tends to indiscriminately transport the material it collects to landfills on the outskirts of Hanoi, where scavengers make a living by retrieving recyclables from the trucks. Within the city, migrant trash pickers form patron-client networks with URENCO employees to access the waste containers of businesses and offices, often by performing some tasks for the latter without pay.

In recent years, private companies have become more involved in managing urban waste, especially in Ho Chi Minh City, where a multimillion-dollar private company has started operating. Because these companies have sorting and recycling facilities, they might affect the livelihoods of scavengers and trash pickers working at dump sites and landfills. Waste traders from Spring District, however, often buy the waste directly from households and businesses that separate it themselves. They then transport the waste to recycling facilities located in traditional craft villages around Hanoi that used to produce particular products such as paper, copperware, and work tools and have now

Table 2. Itinerant junk traders’ rhymes. Collected by the author, these rhymes were sung out by traders as they made their rounds in Hanoi. The first and second rows date from before the mid-1980s, and the rest appeared in the following years.

Vietnamese	English
Lông ngan lông vịt Các cụ ăn thịt còn lông	Goose feathers, duck feathers Meat already gone, feather left uneaten
Túi bóng ni lông Đồng chì nhuộm bẹp	Nylon bags Castaway copper, lead, and aluminum
Dép nhựa đứt quai Mang đôi kẹo đêêê!	Torn sandals Bring them here for candy, please!
Can lãn mũ nhựa	Plastic bottles, baskets, and hats
Dép nhựa đứt quai Mảnh kính mảnh chai	Torn sandals Broken glass
Chai xanh chai đỏ Chai bỏ từ lâu	Red and green bottles No longer to be seen
Chai rượu chai dầu Mang ra đôi kẹo kéo nào!!!	Old alcohol and oil bottles Bring them here for candy, please!
Bàn là quạt chấy máy bơm	Iron, electric fans, and water pumps
Tivi cát-sét nồi cơm đầu màn	TV, cassette players, rice cookers, and DVD players
Ắc quy loa bực mô hàn	Batteries, loudspeakers, and welding guns
Hông không dùng nữa thành hàng bán đêêêê!	Broken and useless, why don’t you seeeeell!
Ti vi tủ lạnh đầu đàn	TV sets, refrigerators, and stereo players
Dùng lâu đã hỏng thành hàng bán điiii!	Broken and useless, why don’t you seeeeell!

switched to recycling. Although some of the recycled material is consumed by local industries, a large part of it, especially plastic and copper, is exported to China via informal cross-border routes. They are therefore less likely to be affected by the privatization of waste management than by changing patterns of urban construction, consumption, and state regulation.

The waste hierarchy, migrant labor, and the promiscuity of waste

The varied forms of urban waste and their increasing volume provide ample opportunities for different waste networks with varying specializations. The itinerant junk traders are best known to the public through their frequent interactions with households, while urban waste depots are less publicly visible. Both are part of a complex, hierarchical waste system ranging from scavengers and trash pickers, who operate at dumps and waste-collection points, to itinerant traders, depot owners, transporters, and large-scale dealers (DiGregorio 1994; Mitchell 2008, 2009). This

hierarchy exists in most regions of the world as part of distinct local social relations (Hayami, Dikshitand, and Mishra 2006; Li 2002; Masocha 2006; Wilson, Velis, and Cheeseman 2006). My informants clearly distinguish between their relationship with waste and that with “waste harvesters” (Masocha 2006), such as the scavengers working in municipal dumps (*người bới rác*) and the trash pickers (*người nhặt rác*) operating around city collection points. They often emphasize that their activities require them to invest money and develop trading skills and a level of confidence that other waste workers do not possess. Below, Mai, a 45-year-old female junk trader, also stresses exposure to dirt as a central element that defines the differential relationship to waste:

Scavengers go for the trash bin wearing masks and poking wherever there is garbage. That would be too dirty for us junk traders. We just buy clean things. They [scavengers and pickers] don’t even know how to buy things, because they either are afraid of overpaying or do not have the money to buy. Occasionally a scavenger informs me that so-and-so is selling things. I’d go to buy them, and if I get a good deal, I’ll give something back to him or her.

In this construction of difference, the waste traders come into human contact with their customers, unlike the waste harvesters, who work directly with dirt. Their relationship to waste is mediated not only by the capital they have at their disposal but also by the social ties they build through transactions. The exposure to dirt, associated with lowliness and destitution, largely defines the social and gendered boundaries of their place in the hierarchy. This is the case even though many people from the district themselves used to work as scavengers and trash pickers (or “shit collectors,” to go further back). The junk traders, in distancing themselves from “waste harvesting” and emphasizing the commercial aspects of their network, seek to redefine their social positioning based on distance from dirt, a theme I return to below. In this redefinition, Douglas’s (1966) conception of dirt as central to constructing the social order is relevant—by dwelling on the social implications of dirt, the junk traders themselves participate in consolidating it as an indicator of social status.

In so doing, they inadvertently reinforce the discourse underscoring the association of dirt with the waste they trade, and more importantly, with their personhood. As Douglas (1966) argues, dirt is not only socially but also morally meaningful—moral impurity is often internal to the construction of dirt. In northern Vietnam, people commonly perceive the junk trader as a cunning yet pitiable rural person, and urban parents sometimes use the junk trader as a negative example to discipline their children: “Do well in school, or you might end up being one.” Like the street hawkers who sell cheap goods in big cities elsewhere,

junk traders provide a service that responds to urban needs, yet people often consider them a nuisance to public space and a menace to household safety (Anjaria 2006; Milgram 2014). In Vietnam, itinerant junk traders are said to be light fingered and to pollute the urban space with their uncivilized habits. Such perceptions originate from their dealings with waste and their residence in slumlike areas of the city, spaces that urban middle-class people avoid and talk about with both disgust and pity.⁴

Waste, migrant labor, and the spatialization of class in Hanoi

Despite the growing significance of migrant labor for urban services and industries, labor migrants in postreform Vietnam have been turned into a residual category in the grand modernizing project of urban consolidation. Hanoi has become the primary site where the state realizes its developmental agenda; in the official rhetoric, it is to be “modern and civilized” with “green, clean, and beautiful” spaces. In a move similar to the creation of metropolitan centers in China and elsewhere, Hanoi was in 2008 expanded to incorporate outlying cities into a Hanoi Metropolitan Area, doubling its population to more than 6 million. This process creates new urban spaces where the spatialization of class is visible (Zhang 2010). That is, social status is externalized in the architecture and zoning of living quarters and in the establishment of public spaces where middle-class consumption is both conspicuous and exclusive (Douglass and Huang 2007; Drummond 2012; Harms 2012). Since migrant laborers are seen to upset urban order, in which the state-sponsored notion of beauty represents an instrument of social control (Harms 2012), their presence in the urban space is considered the antithesis of that beauty. Like street vendors, junk traders have been targeted by various municipal actions, the latest being a 2009 document to regulate street vending, banning it in 62 central streets of Hanoi.⁵ Yet, although junk traders have been occasionally evicted from the city center during beautification campaigns, their trade defies easy categorization. Unlike the street vendors, they pose a problem for police seeking to fine them since they do not keep their purchases for long—as soon as their baskets are full, they unload them at the waste depots. In addition, the waste they carry appears of little value, so there is little incentive to confiscate it, a common municipal measure against street vendors.

Unlike China, where urbanization has been more drastic and uniform, urban Vietnam has remained fragmented, allowing the popular sector to thrive in vast unplanned urban spaces. This has so far allowed the waste sector to expand, but the conditions in Vietnamese cities are changing. Urban waste depots are now explicitly regulated by environmental legislation as a kind of business, and owners must submit an environmental impact assessment and register if they deal annually in 3,000 or more tons of waste.⁶ Most depots trade a smaller volume, and their

turnover is in any case difficult to monitor. They therefore tend to operate largely without registration, quietly doing business and trying to maintain good relationships with local government officers and their neighbors. As one depot operator said, “As long as one knows how to ‘make law’ [*làm luật*, i.e., pay enough in bribes], there should not be much of a problem” (on bribes, cf. Endres 2014). There are, however, increasing calls for stricter regulations of waste depots for the sake of urban order and environment:

Most of the waste depots do not have business registrations. Many encroach onto the sidewalk, affecting the traffic. Some that are located in dense residential areas are creating environmental pollution due to failure to treat waste. Along the National Highway Number 5 from Hanoi to Hai Phong, there are more than 50 waste depots; along the 30-kilometer-long Highway 21A from Sơn Tây to Xuân Mai, there are more than a dozen of depots where waste and garbage are piled high, overflowing onto the sides of the road, which looks very unaesthetic. (*People's Army Newspaper* 2011)

Although the waste economy's informalized spaces represent a source of income for some local government and law enforcement agents, the waste piling up in urban depots is beginning to disturb the urban planners. The depots disrupt the urban beauty and hierarchical yet contested spatial ordering of market socialism, in which socialist control exists side by side with marketization (Schwenkel and Leshkovich 2011). Nevertheless, this spatial ordering can be as enabling as it is constraining for the performative strategies of men and women from Spring District. In blurring the legal-illegal boundaries and recharting the city's marginal spaces as productive for livelihoods and social life (Karis 2013; Milgram 2014; Rao 2013), their strategies simultaneously play into and undercut the process of class spatialization in Hanoi.

Gendered performance of class as access to urban spaces

The itinerant junk traders' transactions with urban people are underlined by a deeply gendered performance of class, in which men and women, in differing ways, emphasize their social inferiority as a way to mask the value of the waste. This performance corresponds to what kind of waste they choose to specialize in, based on gender norms that delegate to men the public and “big matters” of the household, which are distanced from dirt, and assigning women with the domestic and “small” details of homemaking that people see as dirty and impure.

The “miserable migrant”: Stereotype as bargaining chip

Imagine that you live in central Hanoi and call in a female junk trader passing by. You pile all your unwanted items

in front of the modestly dressed woman, who most likely wears a conical hat and has a carrying pole across her shoulders. She carefully examines each item, sorting the “goods” (*hàng*) from the undesirable items. Once the sorting is over, she asks your price. If you name an amount, she likely says, “But I myself can’t sell them at that price. You know I am just selling my labor [*láy công làm lãi*]. There is a profit of only a couple of cents per kilo of paper. And these unwanted things would just make your house messy if you don’t get rid of them.” If you hesitate or ask her why anyone would work for such little profit, she tells you there is no other work in the country than planting paddy (*làm ruộng*), which can at best provide enough rice to eat, and every cent she makes in the city is necessary to feed and school her children. It is “miserable in the countryside” and there is no other option for peasants like her than to come here to make a living. Otherwise, she says, “who would ever want to do this kind of work?” At this point, you might say, “OK, give me whatever you think is appropriate,” and she replies by stating her price, adding that you are certainly not taking a loss by selling your junk to her. Alternatively, you are so moved by the hardship in her life that you give her the items for free, and the subsequent feeling of having done something charitable leads you to do the same next time.

Now consider the following narrative of Nam, a 19-year-old male junk trader, who bikes around Hanoi buying used and broken appliances. Nam, a cheerful, sociable, and respectful young man, tells this story during a family lunch that I attended, when the conversation shifted to the bargaining skills necessary for trading in electronic waste:

Once Hung [his friend] and I were called in by this middle-aged man who wanted to sell us two used air-conditioners. The conditioners were not really broken, and I was sure that they would fetch at least 1 million dong [\$50] from a secondhand appliance dealer. After having a look at it, I said to him, “Uncle, there is not much life left in your air-conditioners, and all we can do is to break them apart and sell the parts inside. So we can give you at most 300,000. We are not even sure if we could sell it for a profit at that price, so we are taking a risk [*liều*].” After some haggling, we got them for 350,000. Some hours afterward, I told Hung, “Let’s come back and try something!” So we came back, and I was putting on this crying face [*mếu máo*], saying to the man, “Uncle, we were mistaken about the price of your old air-conditioners. The dealer would give us only 300,000 for them. We are taking a loss, and we are not going to have anything to eat today. Please consider our circumstances.” In the end, he gave us 60,000 back. We sold the conditioners for 1.2 million that day.

Central to Nam’s narrative and the vignette of the female traders’ practices above is the performance of a naive and inferior persona that appeals to the sellers’ social status.

In referring to their lower-class position, the junk traders put a claim on the sellers’ probable compassion and their obligations as people higher up in the social hierarchy. By reminding the latter of the objects’ worthlessness, they subtly tell them that it would be unworthy of someone of their status to haggle. The purposiveness of such performance is highlighted through a contrast between their dealings with middle-class customers and those with customers of the laboring class, such as hotel housekeepers or office cleaners. The alley leading to my former apartment in central Hanoi faces the back of a midrange hotel, where I can observe junk traders’ daily transactions with the hotel’s service staff. They negotiate over a variety of items, including plastic water bottles, newspapers, cartons, toilet-paper-roll tubes, and large amounts of broken water taps or plastic items. Certain junk traders know the hotel staff, others do not; they come at intervals and wait at the fence around the time the hotel staff finish cleaning. These transactions, in which the junk traders do not perform the “miserable rural migrant,” invoke less social distance and are more focused on prices.

Similar accounts of performances shifting according to context and social relationships in urban Vietnam suggest that female traders tend to draw on gender as a naturalized category to facilitate their trading activities (Harms 2011; Leshkovich 2005, 2011). Under the guise of dominant assumptions about class and rural-urban identity, these women traders frequently invoke sacrifices for their children and their difficulties in maintaining family livelihoods as a bargaining chip in their dealings with customers and state officials. In these practices, the women instrumentalize, internalize, and thus sustain normative categories of gender and class (Nguyen 2014b; Ong and Peletz 1995). By juxtaposing the female traders’ performances with those of their male counterparts, we see more clearly that the class-based performance of gender is also a gendered performance of class. Both the men and the women refer to their rural and class-based disadvantages, but the men do not usually evoke the vulnerability of the selfless carer as much as the women do. As we shall see, these male and female practices not only mutually constitute and reproduce ideal categories of class and gender, but are also continually adjusted according to the junk traders’ differential access to space.

Appliances versus junk: Technology, gendered spaces, and value

While both male and female itinerant junk traders are called *đồng nát*, local people distinguish between *buôn đồng nát* (trading in junk) as a female occupation and *buôn đồ điện* (trading in electrical appliances) as a male one. Likewise, the women are said to “go to the market” (*đi chợ*), while the men “go electrical appliances” (*đi đồ điện*). Local people attribute male junk traders’ specialization in electronic waste to their technical knowledge, while they perceive female junk traders as lacking such knowledge,

which explains why they focus on seemingly trivial things such as paper, plastic, and other nonelectronic waste—a perception that aligns with the state-supported construction of women as inherently backward (Leshkovich 2005). This distinction also constitutes essentializing gender stereotypes that, like the Greek nationalist metaphors described by Michael Herzfeld (2005), social groups use to structure their self-representations. Although some contest stereotypes within such representations, Herzfeld argues, the stereotypes nonetheless play an important role for the meaning making of social actors who consciously deploy them to achieve their own goals.

Stereotypical distinction does more than just carry symbolic meanings, however; it is directly consequential for the men's and women's varying access to urban spaces and their differing sets of urban contacts. The male junk traders tend to deal with the predominantly male staff working in electronic repair and secondhand shops, and increasingly in the IT sector. The women's contact base is concentrated in the more feminized parts of the service sector, such as restaurants, hotels, and offices. Female junk traders commonly work as cleaners for urban households, whereas the male traders rarely do. This gendered distinction is not only linked to the association of men with the public sphere (the realm outside the home) and of women with the domestic sphere (inside the home), but also rooted in a differential exposure to dirt. Simply put, paid cleaning work is considered unsuitable for men. As male traders often say, "How can men as men [*đàn ông đàn ông*] clean other people's houses?" Meanwhile, cleaning brings the women into an intimate relationship with urban society. They often invest in cultivating a sort of pseudo-kinship with regular customers in certain neighborhoods, posing as the thankful rural relative who occasionally brings her "sister" or "brother" in the city some rural products as a gift. The more successful female junk traders maintain such personal networks of reciprocity that bind customers to them. These patron-client ties, together with the women's closeness to dirt through cleaning work, render their class status more visible yet allow them access to the urban domestic sphere, a potential source of waste. Their earnings from cleaning counterbalance the irregular junk-trading income, while the cleaning contacts sometimes help them find lucrative purchases.

The male traders' resistance to cleaning protects them from a combined injury to their gender and class identity, yet it practically excludes them from a sometimes-rich source of waste. Although they might earn greater amounts from the electronic appliances than the women from the more miscellaneous objects, the women tend to have a more stable income. A number of men have taken up driving taxis, including motorbikes; apart from being competitive, this requires driving skills and significant investments. Thus it is common for men from the district to return home to look after their children while their wives remain in Hanoi working as junk traders (see Table 1, sec-

ond column). Although there are many more junk traders nowadays than two decades ago, the proportion of men has fallen significantly, from more than 40 percent in early 1992 to 6.5 percent in 2006 (DiGregorio 1994; Mitchell 2008). The women assume a more ambiguous positioning in their negotiations with waste and dirt, yet this positioning affords them greater flexibility. Such gendered access to urban spaces suggests that the spatialization of class, rather than being just a matter of architecture and planning, takes place at an intimate level, encompassing both public and domestic spheres (cf. Nguyen 2014b).

While these performative practices reproduce normative categories of gender and class, over time they help to reconfigure both their meanings and structure (Ong and Peletz 1995). The junk traders' performance of the "miserable junk trader" is so effective that urban people are often surprised to learn how much income they earn from trading in seemingly worthless objects. Media rags-to-riches tales of waste traders are common, and they often marvel that people doing such "dirty" work became rich.⁷ While female junk traders do not get rich overnight, they normally make between 3 million and 6 million dong (\$150–\$300) per month, depending on their skills; male traders sometimes earn more from the used appliances. Their income is irregular; according to the junk traders, who like to compare their trade with fishing, it depends on their "good fortune" (*lộc*), which may befall them only in certain months of the year. Nonetheless, such income has made a difference to household economy and living standards in Spring District. Over the years, these "miserable junk traders" have earned and saved enough to build houses, purchase major consumption items, set their children up with businesses in the waste trade, and maintain a robust calendar of family and village festivities.

The social mobility is even more visible among the operators of urban waste depots. Compared to itinerant junk trading, running a waste depot is riskier, requiring greater investment, but is ultimately a more lucrative undertaking that only people with sufficient experience, funds, and social connections are ready to engage in. In the depot, people rework class and gender in ways that correspond to a changing form of spatial appropriation. As we shall see, men assume a central role in its gendered division of labor, regardless of their spouses' contributions, while hired laborers shift the waste traders' relation to waste and dirt, and thus their social positioning. Such dynamics are integral to creating urban spaces that are concurrently domestic and public, urban and rural.

In the urban waste depot: Place making, gender, class, and precariousness

In the local language, the practice of operating a waste depot is called *mở bãi*, literally "opening a site," a term that implies expanding to new frontiers. Thousands of

households in the district and beyond now practice *mở bãi*, which has assumed the importance that paddy production had in previous decades. Whereas itinerant junk trading is individual work mostly done by women, *mở bãi* is a household venture, often undertaken by married couples and sometimes involving their children or parents. If parents previously sought to give a newlywed couple a piece of residential land or a house, many now try to provide their children with the funds necessary to set up an urban depot, often after years of saving incomes from migrant work. Families with several siblings running separate depots in different cities are now common in the district. The main requirement for a depot is a storage space accessible from a major road, such as undeveloped residential slots or empty or rundown houses, that can be rented cheaply from urban land owners or government institutions. In the early 1980s, there were only a few depots in central Hanoi, concentrated in the Ô Chợ Dừa area; they can now be found close to almost every residential quarter and along busy roads (DiGregorio 1994; Mitchell 2009).

Place making in an ambiguous space

Let us visit the depot (*bãi*) of Mr. Phúc, 38, a former appliance dealer, and Ms. Hằng, 34, a former itinerant junk trader. From a beautiful wide, tree-lined street lit at night with bright street lamps, one takes a turn into a smaller street, then another quick turn into an alley off the right-hand side. About 20 meters farther in is Phúc's and Hằng's depot, nested under a bamboo bush behind some tall buildings. The plot of over a hundred square meters is centrally located and was priced at about \$7,000 per square meter in 2012. The land belongs to a state organization that does not yet have any plan for development. With the help of a distant relative who works for the organization, Hằng and Phúc have secured a six-year lease, paying a monthly rent of 3.5 million dong (\$170) in 2012. "More than that would be unprofitable for us," Hằng says. The rent is low for its location—it could easily be twice as much from a private landlord. They can keep the plot until the organization needs it, provided that they maintain a good relationship with the relative sponsoring their tenancy.

Their makeshift house is built from recycled material such as sheets of tin, cement tiles, and wooden bars. It has a common area, a separate bedroom, a kitchen adjacent to the washing area, and a flush toilet. Their furniture is a jumbled set of new and secondhand pieces; yet, as Hằng likes to point out, they have "everything" that belongs to an urban household: refrigerator, washing machine, microwave, gas stove, and a huge flat-screen television. Parked beside the entrance is the minivan of a friend, who transports their waste and others' to large-scale dealers or recycling villages. They have six-month-old twins, who will live with them for one or two years before being sent to the paternal grandparents in Spring District, where their 10-year-old son is

living. They employ a female cousin of Phúc and her two teenage sons, all of whom live together with them; the cousin takes care of the babies while her sons help with manual tasks in the depot. The boys came together with their mother to work for their uncle after failing their entrance exams for secondary school. Hằng's mother, 63, still works as an itinerant junk trader, living together with her eldest son and the latter's wife in a migrant lodging, occasionally spending a week at the depot to help with the babies.

The depot's daily operations involve a wide range of transactions. Female junk traders, who tend to lodge within a radius of one or two kilometers, come and go, unloading their purchases and weighing them under Hằng's supervision. Each junk trader makes several trips to the depot daily, often lingering for a chat about the success or failure of certain depots, people's land purchases in Hanoi, and the daily life of their children in the village. The women take great interest in the twin boys, often commenting on how precious boys are, taking them into their arms and enthusiastically proclaiming, "My little breeder!" Young men from the district sometimes come to watch a soccer game with Phúc and the two teenage boys. Occasionally, a male junk trader drops in to check if there are any used appliances he can buy; a local resident comes in to look for construction material for small repairs. A state sanitation worker, who sells the recyclables she collects at work, visits frequently. Street vendors selling fruit, clothes, and vegetables also come by to offer their goods. Female workers at a construction site nearby regularly bring iron pieces, which they hide underneath their clothes from the security guards. In this depot, people re-create village sociality and establish a distinct social space for people with diverse connections to the waste economy.

Inside and outside, again

The practices of class and gender in the depot play out differently from those of the itinerant traders, yet similar logics underlie them. The division of labor in Phúc and Hằng's depot is foregrounded by a gendered hierarchy between husband and wife and among the couple, the junk traders, and their hired laborers. Phúc stays on call for bigger loads of waste to buy at construction sites or factories, keeping track of the waste prices. He goes out to obtain the bigger loads, either with his motorbike or with a rental minivan, sometimes accompanied by the two teenagers. Hằng is in charge of the domestic tasks and the smaller transactions with the female junk traders. While the cousin takes care of the babies, Hằng takes breaks to breastfeed them, instructing the cousin what to cook for the family meal. Thus, Phúc deals with the more distant outside world, whereas Hằng operates closer to the depot to best perform her domestic roles. Hằng says, "He does more demanding things. I just take care of lighter tasks and the children. Whatever we do, women have to be managers of the home

[*tê gia nội trợ*] so that men can focus on work.” With the hired labor at her disposal, however, Hằng focuses less on housekeeping and child care than on money-making activities, and her work is by no means less essential to the depot’s operations. Her insistence that she has a marginal role in the household economy points to the same gender norms underlying how people categorize the work of male and female itinerant traders, as discussed above.

Compared to the district’s common household trajectory, in which men stay home and women migrate for urban work (see Table 1), Phúc and Hằng’s gendered relation to space is clearly shifting. Now that the couple are away from their rural household, both are operating outside; the depot for them is thus concurrently inside and outside in varying ways. Yet sustaining these spatialized categories is important for them, because they carry both practical and symbolic significance in the rapidly changing social conditions (Harms 2011; Leshkovich 2011).

Moving up: Matters of dirt and labor

Another tangible shift in the depot is the changing relation of the two former itinerant traders to dirt, now mediated through the hired labor and the capital they can command, which indicate emergent class processes in the waste economy. In most cases, Phúc instructs the cousin’s two teenage boys to sort, bind, and load the waste onto trucks. Although Hằng negotiates with the itinerant junk traders, she hardly touches the waste. The junk traders weigh it themselves, sometimes with the help of the two boys, as Hằng sits on a chair next to the scale with a notebook, calculator, and pen, recording the sums she pays for each purchase. The junk traders can receive payment immediately or keep the note until the sums have accumulated. The waste comes in all forms: iron bars from construction sites, used plastic heat-proof sheets, cartons, paper, books, plastic bottles, plastic sandals, cement bags, plastic doors, chopped-off parts of an iron gate, electric wires, and so forth. Out of concern for her babies’ health, Hằng has a keen eye for the cleanliness of the waste; she refuses to buy anything that appears to have been retrieved from general garbage. Compared with working as itinerant traders, Phúc and Hằng’s new role as depot owners minimizes their exposure to dirt, and although waste continues to be their line of work, they do not perform “the miserable migrant laborer.” Even though Hằng emphasizes her domestic roles, she hardly cleans, washes, or cooks in her urban home; these tasks are done with their cousin’s paid labor.

While I am not suggesting that they have become middle class, their economic and social status has been visibly transformed. Their gestures and the way they command their employees suggest their superiority. During Hằng’s near-constant negotiations with the junk traders, she often justifies her offers by referring to the market fluctuations and their small profit margin. Yet in our chats, the junk

traders told me the couple are doing well. Some call them “Master and Madam” (*ông chủ, bà chủ*) in a half-joking, half-admiring way, referring to the potential wealth they may have accumulated, as evidenced by how much they purchase every day. Although the profit margins on their purchases may be small, they add up significantly. Their depot is midrange—on a good day they “weighed” (*cân*) between 5 million and 7 million dong worth of waste (\$250–\$350), and the depot had an annual turnover of 120 million to 150 million dong (\$6,000–\$7,000). Hằng proudly tells me that they had set aside 400 million dong (\$20,000) in the previous five years and were building a new house in the countryside.

A number of other households from the district have made greater fortunes, being able to purchase transport vehicles and land in Hanoi or to build modern houses in the village. As the urban public looks on the waste traders with skepticism, many have been able to significantly transform their relationship to waste. The move from itinerant junk trading to waste depots turns them into small-scale capitalists, making use of others’ paid labor for accumulating wealth and generating value. The further they move up the waste hierarchy, the less exposed they are to dirt and to its implications for their social status. In particular, the village of “shit collectors” in the colonial time has become the richest commune in Spring District, with almost every other household operating a waste depot. Although their success is often associated with parental neglect of children and “social evils,” such as gambling or drug addiction (Nguyen 2014a), they are credited with pioneering the waste trade as a viable livelihood for the whole district. According to the formal criteria of the government’s new rural-development program, the commune is now an “example of new rurality” (*điển hình nông thôn mới*) because it has superior infrastructure and high standards of housing, which the income from urban waste largely enables.

Precarious spaces: Uncertainty, ambiguity, and contingency

Such social mobility is, however, uncertain: market fluctuations mean that many waste depots fail and end up indebted (for a breakdown of price fluctuations for typical wastes over six months in 2006–7, see Mitchell 2009). Depot owners often deal with price fluctuations by scaling down or hoarding a particular sort of waste when it fetches a low price. Yet as with other commodities, global markets and state regulations on imports, especially in big markets such as China, sometimes render these strategies ineffective. With the global economic downturn in 2008–9, for instance, prices for waste metal went down by 80 to 90 percent worldwide, affecting millions of recyclers and trash pickers all over the globe (BBC News, January 17, 2009). As a result, many depots in Hanoi were closed, with owners who hoarded large amounts of metal losing thousands of US dollars. The depots’ operations, and those of

individual junk traders, for that matter, are thus integral to the dynamics of the global waste trade and world economy.

Market conditions aside, depot operators' uncertainty also originates in their unofficial residential status, which hinders them from owning property, maintaining long-term land tenure, and formally educating their children (Karis 2013; Nguyen and Locke 2014). Unstable tenure and rental prices mean they frequently have to move around the city in search of affordable and profitable locations. Phúc and Hằng have been lucky with their tenancy thanks to their inside connection, yet newcomers to the business now struggle to find suitable locations in Hanoi, having to look for opportunities in other cities, especially farther south. Competition has been increasing among the rising number of depots, as Carrie Mitchell (2009) notes. Existing depots have to be moved around often, because the rent increases make the business unprofitable, because the landowners want the land back, or because new municipal developments displace them. In short, the social and economic space they are creating is not locally bounded but produced within global and national trajectories of power, encompassing fragile market relations and the contingencies of socialist control.

Meanwhile, their moving is not always a result of being evicted or priced out; in many cases it is a strategic response to Hanoi's changing topography, which corresponds to its pattern of waste generation. The central districts have more consumer waste, while construction waste is more abundant in the outlying districts, where new developments are concentrated (cf. Mitchell 2009). Depot owners thus consciously choose to stay either close to major construction sites or residential areas. Numerous New Urban Areas (*Khu đô thị mới*), as the government calls them, have been recently developed on the edge of Hanoi, where former farmland has been converted into residential, service, or industrial premises (DiGregorio 2011; Labbé and Boudreau 2011). Together with private housing, these developments have practically turned parts of Hanoi into giant construction sites, which are ample sources of waste for the depot operators. Some operate specifically near a construction site until the building is complete before moving elsewhere.

To capitalize on consumer waste, depot operators settle near residential areas, where itinerant junk traders are concentrated, as Phúc and Hằng do. Some take advantage of the central plots belonging to state organizations, which put them on the rental market until they are further developed. Private land awaiting development or with unclear tenure rights can still be found in many parts of central Hanoi. Despite the rental instability, these plots are ideal for waste depots; they are central and accessible, while their "waiting" status means that the local authorities consider the activities taking place on them temporary and thus do not strictly monitor them. Similarly, junk traders are no longer clustered in enclaves of migrant lodgings as before; temporary residences are scattered throughout the

city as migrant rental properties, a lucrative business for urban landlords. Such elusiveness and transience in the spatial practices of both depot owners and itinerant traders align with their ambiguous social status. Yet they also indicate purposive actions that are inseparable from the performative strategies they use to construct themselves as outcasts, strategies that partly hide the monetary value of waste from the public (Goffman 1956).

Performance, space, and uncertain value transformation

Through gendered practices of place making, the female and male waste traders from Spring District drive a vibrant urban waste economy, thereby creating distinct social and economic spaces vital to their mobile livelihoods and integral to urban society and economy. Their practices are both shaped by and, over time, help to shape Hanoi's urban space. Responding to the fluid geography of urban waste, many have effectively captured waste while fostering social ties in their rural networks and urban society, a process aptly captured in the metaphor of *mở bãi*, that is, expanding to new frontiers. Denied equal participation in the city's space, such spatial practices help them accumulate wealth and reclaim particular urban spaces to "gain control over communal lives and economy" (Zhang 2001, 9, 253). Nevertheless, they also entrench the precariousness of their urban existence as migrants working with waste. Their practices thus both undermine and consolidate Hanoi's spatialization of class.

In helping to shape the value of waste, the female and male traders also reconfigure their value as social beings. Contrary to the humble and naive image they project, they are often savvy tradespeople with considerable negotiation skills who build profitable connections to urban people and businesses. The seeming cheapness and dirtiness of the waste they trade in disguises and thus enhances its real value for their livelihoods. If the urban pity for the rural migrants is part of a class-based structure of feeling, the junk traders effectively game the system by performing the "miserable migrant junk trader." Yet these performances are complicated by men's and women's differing relation to dirt, which is deeply rooted in the Vietnamese constructions of gender and labor and the differential social value of men and women. The men are dissociated from the implications of waste by working with technology and in the outside world, thus retaining greater value for their labor and personhood, albeit with uncertain outcomes. Remaining closer to household waste and the domestic sphere, the women have a double-layered relationship to dirt, with consequences for the social value of their personhood, which they, however, deftly make use of.

As such, space in Vietnam today is not just a means of production, of generating livelihoods and accumulating wealth (Lefebvre 1991; Zhang 2001). It is also a

mechanism through which people construct gender and class (Leshkovich 2011; Nguyen 2014b; Nguyen-Marshall, Drummond, and Belanger 2012). When purposively highlighting the stereotypes into which they are categorized, waste traders perpetuate them for both practical and symbolic purposes (Herzfeld 2005). Yet over time, they also render them malleable to changes on both terms. What we witness here are not just repeatedly performed roles in the theater of social life (Goffman 1956) or reified effects of social discourses (Butler 1990, 1993), but spatially and socially embedded performative strategies of gendered subjects negotiating with power from a weaker position (Morris 1995; Nelson 1999). As these strategies reproduce the discourse that casts the migrant waste laborer as the rural and class Other—dirty, out of order, and at odds with the civilized urban—they latently produce social mobility and gendered meanings across rural and urban locations. That said, waste traders' precarious conditions, underscored by their institutionalized marginalization and the instability of the global waste trade, fuse a great deal of uncertainty into this spatialized process of value transformation. This in turn produces winners and losers, with consequences for communal life and the waste economy itself.

Notes

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1. I use pseudonyms for all people and localities, except the larger cities and regions.

2. In Vietnam today, the commune is the lowest formal administrative unit in a hierarchy comprising the national, provincial, district, and commune levels. The commune is further divided into villages or hamlets whose governance structure is semiformal, with the village leaders working on a primarily voluntary basis. Half a century ago, the communes of Spring District were still villages, which over time grew into communes. Thus people in the communes nowadays often say “our village” when referring to their commune as whole.

3. From 2002 to 2006, selected appliances among Vietnam's electronic waste increased, in tons, as follows: discarded televisions, 190,445 to 364,684; computers, 62,771 to 131,536; mobile phones, 80,912 to 505,268; refrigerators, 112,402 to 230,856; air-conditioners, 17,778 to 49,782; washing machines, 184,140 to 327,649 (MONRE 2011, 25).

4. Such attitudes are exemplified in online articles about junk traders, such as the following: Duong Dinh Tuong, “Lao xao tiếng ai đồng nát” [The voices of the junk traders], June 13, 2011; Minh Yen, “Xóm ổ chuột với xứ ứ giữa đất vàng thủ đô” [The slum in the golden land of Hanoi], *Khampha*, August 8, 2012, <http://khampha.vn/tin-nhanh/chuyen-ve-nhung-nguoi-nhoc-nhan-bam-rac-c4a14955.html>; Truong Phong, “Nát oi” [Hey, Junks!], *Tien*

Phong, July 9, 2012, <http://www.tienphong.vn/xa-hoi/phong-su/583987/Nat-oi-tpp.html>. All accessed February 20, 2013.

5. *Quy định về quản lý hoạt động bán hàng rong trên địa bàn Thành phố Hà Nội* [Regulation on street vending activities within the city of Hanoi] 46/2009/QĐ-UBND. Hanoi People's Committee (January 15, 2009).

6. *Nghị định về sửa đổi, bổ sung một số điều của Nghị định số 80/2006/NĐ-CP ngày 09 tháng 8 năm 2006 của Chính phủ về việc quy định chi tiết và hướng dẫn thi hành một số điều của Luật Bảo vệ môi trường* [Decree on amendments to a number of articles under government decree 80/2006/NĐ-CP dated August 9, 2006, on guidelines for implementing some articles of the law on environmental protection] (February 20, 2008).

7. Van Hai and Ha Ngoc, “Giàu bên bãi rác” [Becoming rich next to the waste dumps], *Laodong*, July 20, 2013, <http://laodong.com.vn/lao-dong-doi-song/giau-ben-bai-rac-128579.bld>; Xuan Ngoc, “Thu mua đồng nát, tậu nhà Hà Nội” [Trading in waste, buying a house in Hanoi], *Vnexpress*, March 22, 2011, <http://kinhdoanh.vnexpress.net/tin-tuc/vi-mo/thu-mua-dong-nat-tau-nha-ha-noi-2711235.html>. All accessed October 25, 2013.

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