THE ECO-FORTRESS AT THE FOOT OF BÀ MỤ PEAK

(When the Wisdom of Nurturing Nature Resolves Global Crises)

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Preface

Transcending rigid technocratic views within lecture halls, the answer to our global planet crisis has echoed for millennia in indigenous wisdom at the foot of the sacred Ba Mu Peak. This domain reveals a clash between two worldviews: on one side is the invisible hand of self-interest causing ecological rifts, and on the other is the karmic cycle of deep gratitude reviving life. It serves as a spiritual beacon for the young indigenous network (YIELDS-AGREE[1]) to awaken, collectively establishing sustainable ecological hubs along remote borders and islands to safeguard impregnable ecological fortresses amidst modern turbulence. (ttlanh@speri.org / www.co2justice.org)

I. Context

In the historical Huong Son region (now Son Kim 1 and Son Kim 2 communes, Ha Tinh province), the upstream Ngan Pho basin has practically demonstrated how to heal this rift for nearly three decades. While global scholars like *Kohei Saito*[2] struggle to find remedies for the "metabolic rift" *(Social Metabolism)* between society and nature left by capitalism, the vivid answer has been written here in flesh and blood.

The HEPA Ecological Fortress[3] gathers traditional masters and multinational youth from the Mekong basin and other continents such as Latin America, the Pacific, East Asia, and South Asia. They share environmental moral standards established since 2002, connecting indigenous generations across borders and continents. Within the HEPA fortress, ecological

[1] Young Indigenou Ethnic Leadership Development Strategy
[2] A young scholar with a highly acclaimed contemporary work (A philosopher &Economist, Japanese)
[3] Human Ecology Practical Eco-Farming School

anthropologist Tran Thi Lanh has conceptualized these values to actualize a major philosophical revolution: shattering Adam Smith's monetization of nature to replace it with the Theory of Nature Nurturing.

HEPA serves as a grand space transferring wisdom from "Traditional Masters" – village elders, matriarchs, and artisans relying on nature's masterpieces – to the young YIELDS-AGREE generation. A prime example is Giang A Su[4], who awakened his ethnic pride to shoulder the self-governance mission, preserving the pristine thousand-year-old ancient forests (Nao Song Forest) under customary laws in Can Chu Su village, Si Ma Cai district, Lao Cai province.

This process transforms ancient traditions into robust legal shields, driven by the Bio-Human Ecology (BHE) philosophy. The interactive pedagogy "Teaching by Learning – Learning by Doing" acts as an endogenous path rich in compassion and wisdom, allowing learners to witness the historical dialectics of human journey from primitive societies to socialism directly within the HEPA interface.

Here, youth witness a thousand-year-old traditional forest, through indigenous knowledge methodologies, sequentially engaging laws, decrees, and authorities to formalize and transfer collective land titles (Red Books) under the Village's name. They confidently assert their sacred rights secured by Article 53 of the 2013 Constitution and protected by the Forestry Law, alongside gender equality for indigenous women under Article 48. Decoding this unique co-governance structure, a true grassroots socialist fortress proves that saving the planet requires no technocratic fixes, but returning humans to be devoted children of Mother Earth through local conventions and customary laws in their own ecological paradise.

II. The Wisdom of Nature Nurturing[5] and the Invisible Hand[6]

The philosophy of 'Nature Nurturing' shatters the illusion of environmental commodification. Adam Smith's self-interest view and his "invisible hand" theory treat the universe as raw materials to maximize wealth, causing the past devastation of the upstream Ngan Pho basin where trees were priced by cubic meters and spiritual values stripped away. Conversely, indigenous people view the forest as a complete, living organism. Marx once

[4] HEPA Eco-Farming School's Student 2008-2013
[5] Indigenous Community Wisdom, Custom and Knowledge's Value
[6] Adam Smith's legacy: money, individual liberty, and the exploitation of nature

emphasized: *"Labor is the father, Earth is the mother of wealth*." Applying the Bio-Human Ecology (BHE) theory embedded with Buddhist karma, Mrs. Tran Thi Lanh demonstrates that capitalist exploitation sows selfishness to reap crisis, whereas nurturing sows gratitude and harmonious labor to reap revival. Living in harmony and respect with the ecosystem (soil, water, forest) grants humans ultimate inner peace – the core of BHE[7].

III. Pedagogy of "Transmitting the Breath[8]"

The philosophy of nature nurturing is vividly realized at the HEPA Ecological Fortress (Young Eco-Farmers Training School – YIELDS-AGREE network). This upstream basin, once depleted, has been revived through a revolutionary networking method: gathering traditional masters from various continents to transmit the breath of the forest to the youth. This interactive pedagogy sparks deep ethnic pride, allowing young individuals to confidently master their destiny through real-world lessons in the deep jungle alongside elders, herbalists, and cosmic artisans.

IV. Spiritual Echoes from Ba Mu Peak to Lao Cai Ancient Forest

Ba Mu Peak stands at 1,357 meters within the Giang Man range, facing East and backing the Mekong River in Borikhamxay, Laos. Amidst the foggy winter mist, a sacred energy continuously flows through HEPA and the Nao Song spiritual ancient forests.

Beneath centenary canopies where giant roots anchor deep into mother earth like exposed veins, a unique educational space for the YIELDS-AGREE network[9] unfolds. Free from blackboards or projectors, the lecture hall is the carpet of decayed leaves and the murmuring Ngàn Phố stream. At the circle's center, a silver-haired elder sits cross-legged, transmitting wisdom to the youth including Giang A Su, Ly Seo Vu, Leng Van Suong, Ha Van Viet, Vi Van Thanh, A Chat, Hoang Van Duoc, Y Que, and dozens of bright-eyed indigenous youths. He lectures not on economic indicators or timber volume, but uses a fallen leaf and a sacred canopy to teach: the forest is a cyclical living organism, and cutting a branch without reason cuts into ancestral flesh, hurting Mother Nature.

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[7] Biological Human Ecology Theory

[8] Indigenous wisdom across the planet champions "nurturing nature" over exploiting it.

[9] Standard-bearers selected by their own communities participate in the YIELDS-AGREE program to bolster their confidence, self-esteem, and national pride. Upon completing their training at HEPA, they return home to carry forward the ancestral mission of nurturing nature.

Beside him, herbal medicine master Trieu Thi Khang[10] opens her bamboo basket to pass around medicinal leaves, reaffirming that the forest is a wall-less hospital and a free market, yet it only bestows remedies upon devoted children who show gratitude, never tolerating exploiters. This transmission penetrates the youths' consciousness through hands-on practice, sparking profound ethnic pride and transforming the great wilderness into a living museum, an intimate space, and a sacred tribal cultural space echoing with gratitude.

V. The Legal Shield and the 10 Criteria[11]

The fruits from HEPA have flourished in nearly 300[12] villages practicing nurturing missions under the 10-criteria Livelihood Sovereignty system initiated by Mrs. Lanh. This framework seamlessly integrates 5 ecosystem traits (Diversity, Specificity, Interactivity, Adaptability, Sustainability) with 5 human prerequisites (Legitimacy, Faith in Mother Earth, Indigenous Knowledge, Native Seeds, Intergenerational Voluntary Co-governance). Crucially, 'Legitimacy' was successfully lobbied by SPERI[13], transforming customary laws into supreme legal provisions in Article 86[14] of the 2017 Forestry Law, recognizing community forest ownership and benefit-sharing. Coupled with wife and husband co- land titles and joint spousal land certificates, this model secures absolute stewardship and substantive gender equality[15] for indigenous women.

VI. Grassroots Socialist Fortress and Substantive Democracy

A vibrant proof of this model is Giang A Su in Can Chu Su village (Lao Cai). Following 6 years of training at HEPA, he returned to lead his community in preserving the thousand-

[10] The Dao people of Ba Vi Mountain, inheritors of Dao traditional knowledge, who have accompanied Ms. Tran Thi Lanh throughout the journey back to the HEPA Ecological Fortress.

[11] The five core characteristics of the Ecosystem and the five prerequisite prefixes of the Human System within the Livelihood Sovereignty Doctrine -"Land is Mother, Creative Labor is Father" -were repeatedly emphasized by Marx throughout his lifelong scholarly pursuit.

[12] Those ethnic groups who healed Mother Earth's bleeding wounds, the great minds of the forests, have forged a Tran Thi Lanh who stands confident and resilient, following their footsteps from the 1990s until today without ever faltering.

[13] The Social Policy Ecology Research Institute (SPERI)

[14] The patient process of analyzing and contributing to Article 86 of the Forestry Law by members of the LISO Alliance.

[15]The initiative rooted in indigenous philosophy, successfully contributed by the TEW (Towards Ethnic Women) Center to Article 48, Sections 3b and 3c of the Land Law No. 13/QH11/2003. This was pre-applied in 1997 for the Xinh Mun ethnic group in Phieng Khoai Commune, Yen Chau District, Son La Province, where District Chairman Hoang Chi Thuc signed the Land Use Right Certificates for the entire commune; marking the first time in Vietnamese history that Xinh Mun women held names on Red Books for Land Use Rights in Vietnam.

year-old Nao Song ancient forest intact. Holding 6 core[16] grassroots responsibilities (Party Secretary, Village Head, Security officer, Veterinary officer, Farmers' Association head, Fatherland Front head), this structure reflects optimal integration to eliminate administrative fragmentation of modern power. It represents the pinnacle of merging the Party-State system with customary self-governance, establishing a robust closed autonomy that shields livelihood sovereignty from urbanization and capitalization waves under elders' supervision.

Unlike modern judicial systems that guard forests with specialized ranger barriers and legal penalties, the Hmong protect the green canopy through an immortal 'spiritual fence' woven from Forest God rituals and sacred vows. This cultural depth and unwritten customary law transform Si Ma Cai into impregnable ecological fortresses, where humans do not exploit nature but stand within its heart to nurture and receive protection.

VII. Lessons from the Wisdom of Nature Nurturing

While young Japanese scholar Kohei Saito searches for a new social structural model to rescue the planet from the "metabolic rift", a practical answer dynamically exists in the remote villages of Vietnam through the quiet practices of traditional masters, indigenous youth, and Mrs. Tran Thi Lanh. The intersection of the legal shield, customary laws, spiritual chromosomes, and the self-governance capacity of the young YIELDS-AGREE network marks the genuine path of socialism — where labor transforms into creative nurturing, returning humanity to eternal serenity alongside nature./.

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[16] A pedagogical regression equation from the HEPA Fortress, Giang A Su, after 6 years of Studying, Contemplating, and Practicing (Van - Tu - Tu), has returned to the Can Chu Su Ecological Fortress to preserve the ancient Nao Song forest left by his Ancestors.

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