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However, apart from developing a market strategy, the production process of hospitality is not just a way to counter ethnic representations under the notion of post-modernism, in which authenticity is based on the meanings of commodity (even though it is negotiable). In fact, hybridizing hospitality leads to a blurred boundary between “things” and “relations”, and between “essentialistic ethnicity” and “modern facilities/ideas”. The White Tai hosts mostly provide the tourists with ambiguity in their newly invented culture, mostly blurring the boundary between such dichotomies. Hybridizing hospitality is the way in which the White Tai hosts negotiate their authenticity, meaning that the real White Tai is real White Tai life in the contemporary world. So, those tourists who see as authentic only as a fixed ethnic image or in relation to such dichotomies as traditionalism and modernism, will be disappointed by the relatively ambiguous authentic White Tai. But those tourists who accept the contemporary White Tai lifestyle will develop a level of acceptance, leading to the experience of new things in a space of negotiated authenticity.

Negotiating authenticity by blurring the boundaries and making White Tai authenticity ambiguous has led the White Tai hosts to free themselves from the control imposed by relations of domination, based on various discourses and relations with things, as well as ethnic hierarchical relationships. In practice, the more authenticity is blurred, the less able it is to be dominated by outsiders. In terms of constructing identity, I would say that, in the process of hybridizing their hospitality, the hosts have negotiated their ethnic identity in order to position themselves in the world beyond the nation state boundary, both as a part of global modernity and their own ethnoscape. In addition, the White Tai’s everyday lives are affected by the modern idea of quality of life. As stated above, they like to use modern (cleaner) toilets and bathrooms, eat clean food – with a good (modern) taste, dress in a modern style, send their children to university and consume other aspects of modernity, such as travelling to the beach and Ocean Park in Hanoi, and in this sense, they are trying

to position themselves beyond the nation state boundary, both as a part of global modernity and their own ethnoscape.

Secondly, it is “only” in the close/intimate relationships that have developed that I would argue the hybridity of hospitality has led to the experience of “authentic relations” in the consumption process. Only some normal host-tourist relations (the first visit is a transient business transaction) are able to bring about intimate relationships later on. That is to say, normal host-tourist relations can be transformed into “authentic relations” and then linked to “intimate relations” based on a long term cycle. This transformation is carried out through the process of the decommodification of hospitality, which the White Tai improvise during this process. So, hospitality in this sense is not a cultural commodity but the “relations” instead. For this reason, negotiating authenticity is not done through “objects” or “commodities”, but rather through relationships that go beyond commercial exchange. Thus, the boundary between things and relations during the process of decommodification is mostly clear-cut. Importantly, because the authenticity is based on relationships, no one can dominate the relations or control the meanings. Hence, within the decommodification process, the tourists and the hosts are free from control by the various ethnic and market discourses, as well as by the relations of domination. In addition, the ethnic hierarchical gap is narrower or even erased. Through these authentic relations, an “intimate relationship” allows the hosts to become part of modernity and global connectivity, apart from purely commercial tourist exchanges. Also, through this process, the White Tai have been able to construct their identity as ethnic people who are not dominated, but are instead self-determining people; “somebody” in Vietnam and the world.

Analytically, constructing intimate relationships is based on: (i) different situations, (ii) the categories of tourist-host relations, and (iii) how long the transactions are conceived by the actors. In addition, the transformed relationship at the study site reveals the moral embeddedness of the economic transactions taking place (Polanyi 1957, Sayer 2004). According to Bloch (1989), such a relationship is based on a long-term cycle, whereby the short term transaction is supportive of the long term cycle, to which a morality of exchange is always attached. However, market relations (host-tourist/tour guide relations) in Mai Châu assert that the market is the

site of moral conflicts between actors committed to different values, as well as the locus of political struggles between various interests (Fourcade and Healy 2007).

Another point I would argue is that the ethnicity engaged in the process of negotiating authenticity is undeniably seen as a double process of production and consumption, which constructs meanings of ambiguous hospitality (“blurred boundaries” between things and relations, and modern and essentialistic ethnicity), and of the “authentic relations” through both approaches – negotiating authentic representation based on commercial exchange, and negotiating authentic relations apart from that exchange. These processes are located as new relations redefined, where production is absorbed into consumption by the experience of new consumption (Achariya 2011: 48).

Finally the processes of the commodification (and decommodification) of culture seem to be “contradictory” in the context of a globalizing market. On one hand, globalization is considered as a threat to local culture, resources, and livelihoods, whilst on the other it urges a reconstruction of local identity – as being a part of the world (Friedman 1990) and a part of the tourist map in Vietnam. With hybridizing hospitality, globalization and localization are not contradictory modes of identity, since the White Tai’s identity and authenticity can be considered to exist within the contemporary world. This chapter will close then with some words uttered by my White Tai teacher, who said, mixing White Tai with Vietnamese: “*bào mi Mai Châu, bào mi Thái Trắng ở Hoà Bình*” – meaning “no Mai Châu (tourist place), no White Tai in Hòa Bình (province)”.