M-Nationalism? Mobile phones, youth, digital capitalism and belonging in rural Southeast Asia
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Mobile phone use has become a defining feature of what it means to be young. This is no less true in the relatively remote, ethnic minority spaces of the Lao-Vietnamese borderland area that is the focus of this study. Drawing on Benedict Anderson’s Imagined Communities, Huijsmans investigates the interplay between mobile phones, being young and digital capitalism and how this reconfigures belonging. In doing so, Huijsmans focuses on ethnic minority youth’s appropriation of the mobile services provided by Viettel, the most popular mobile services provider in the study area and owned by the Vietnamese Ministry of Defence. Huijsmans argues that the nationalism embedded in the digital capitalism of the corporate dimension of the post-socialist state (i.e. Viettel) enters young people’s lives and transforms ethnic minority spaces in profound ways and that a re-reading of Anderson’s work in the digital age offers new ground for understanding the formation of nationalism in a distinct generational fashion.