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Remembering your Feet: Imaginings and Lifecourses in Northeast Thailand

Upton, Susan

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Remembering your Feet: Imaginings and Lifecourses in Northeast Thailand

Susan Upton

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Dedication

This thesis is for my mum, Mary.

Contents

TABLE OF FIGURES

TABLES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people that I would like to thank. Some of whom are no longer here with me and they are perhaps the most important. This thesis would not have been possible without them and I can never thank them enough.

It is with great pleasure that I am able to thank Professor Geof Wood. His contribution to my academic thought, advice, guidance, as well as personal encouragement has been graciously appreciated. It is with honour that I have been able to benefit from being his student. He has been the best supervisor I could have wished for and I am very glad that I have been able to finish this before his retirement. His thoughts and wisdom will be with me for many years to come and never forgotten.

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MAP OF THAILAND

Source: mapsofworld.com

MAP OF NORTHEAST THAILAND

Source: google.com

MAP OF MUKDAHAN PROVINCE

Source: WeD Project Thailand

N.B To protect the identity of the village, I have situated the village in the approximate area where the village stands, not the exact place.

MAP OF BAN DONG VILLAGE
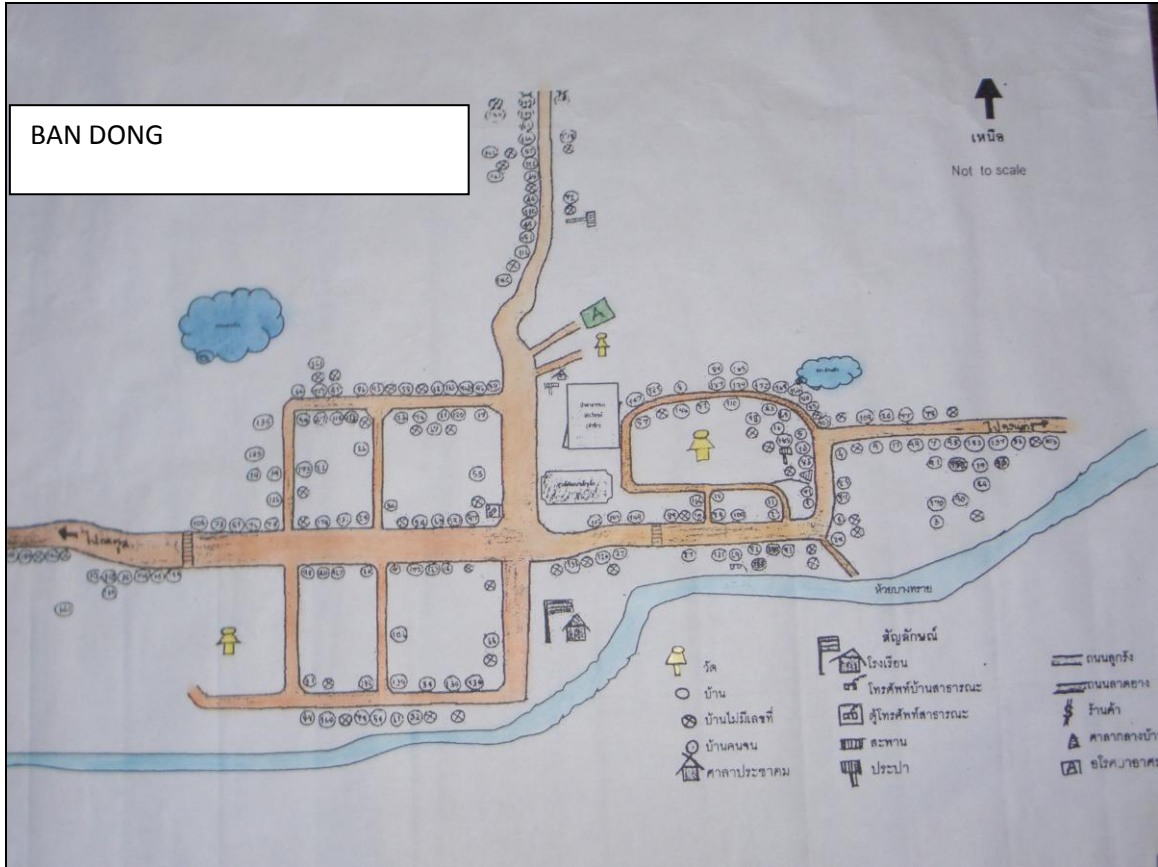
The houses to the left are Ban Dong Yai, the cluster of houses on the right are Ban Dong Noi, and the houses at the far top are Khum Pa Dong. See Chapter 4 for further explanation. This map was drawn with villagers during a focus group discussion with the Wellbeing in Developing Countries Project.

GLOSSARY

AOP – Assembly of the Poor

Ayutthaya – a province in the central region of Thailand

Baht- Thai currency

Ban Dong- the village where the researcher stayed and where respondents originated from

Bang Pa-In- a town in Ayutthaya province with a large industrial estate, just outside of Bangkok

Bun khun - a strong sense of obligation or duty, towards parents, for example.

Chanot tee din – title deeds/ land rights

Farang – westerner/foreigner

Gan-Pattana - development

Gik – informal partner, less formal than boyfriend or girlfriend.

Isan – the term used for the North-eastern region and people of Thailand

Jao Kao – spirit medium

Katanyu – Customary and dutiful kindness, gratitude, and reciprocation towards elders

Khon Paa – forest people

Long kheck – labour exchange

Loy Grathong Festival – a festival for river spirits.

Lueci Pa-dam – a spiritual leader, wearing black that founded Ban Dong village

Mia noi – second wife/mistress

Mor Yao – traditional doctor

Mukdahan – the province in the Northeast of Thailand where the researcher was based

Op-pai-yop- migration (permanently i.e to another country, resettlement, refugees)

Or-ba-tor- locally elected official

OTOP- One Tambon One Product scheme

Pai tam ngan – go to work

Pai thiaaw – travelling

Pasa Isan- Isan language

Patom – primary level education

Phuu mee bun – people with special merit

Phuu wiset – people with special powers

Plaa raa/ plaa daek – fermented fish

PPP – People's Power Party

Rai- a unit of land, 1 rai = 1,600 sq metres

RANQ –Resources and Needs Questionnaire, undertaken by the Wellbeing Project (WeD)

Saiyasat – black magic

Sanook – fun

So – ethnic group in Northeast Thailand.

Songkran festival- The Water Festival every April

Sufficiency economy- an ideology for a way of life made popular by the King of Thailand

Tambon – local district, usually comprising of 4 or 5 villages.

TAO – Tambon Administrative Organisation

TRT- Thai rak Thai Party

NGO- Non-governmental Organisation

UNDP – United Nations Development Program

Veuaa leum dteen – some cows forget their feet, popular saying in village

Wan son maai tao – day of the walking stick- a celebration in the village

Wat - temple

Wattanatam Isan – Isan culture

WeD – Wellbeing in Developing Countries Project

Yai-tin-tan – migration

Yor – ethnic group in Northeast Thailand/Lao PDR

ABSTRACT

This thesis takes examples from villager's experiences of change, how they perceive it and how they imagine their futures. The poor are often portrayed as passive recipients of change rather than agents of it and this thesis is a challenge to that. In-depth ethnography and life course analysis help us understand the meanings attached to people's own experiences of change and illustrate that villagers are not merely *'forgetting their feet'* (veuaa leum dteen- cows forget their feet, Thai proverb) in a teleological manner but are negotiating adverse structures to provide security and family wellbeing.

An actor oriented approach is used as it highlights experiences of change and reactions to it whilst also taking into account the adverse political economy and imperfect institutional landscape. Changes that have been happening in one village in North-eastern Thailand are described and the failure of collective forms of resistance to provide adequate security is analysed. The rest of the thesis then goes on to look at change through individual and household strategies. Cohort analysis is used to explore differences in generations. An individual life course approach is then used to show how people strategise for their present and future wellbeing. Intergenerational analysis is also used to understand the bargaining between generations. Findings show the intergenerational contract is not only flexible but is also being re-worked to better fit the changes in society, not necessarily breaking down. Families are evolving and are finding new ways to keep bargains whilst also taking advantage of new identities and lifestyles. Findings show the active negotiation of the rural poor as agents of change; this change is dependent on place and the life course and sometimes entails large tradeoffs but seen in the wider context is supporting the reproduction and survival of families and rural values.

I argue that perceived ideological similarities between families and the state that families should provide their own welfare without dependency is lessening pressure on the state to increase state welfare. However, there are differences between state 'sufficiency economy' versions of welfare and what poor families need. Pressure is building for better welfare, but it needs to be done in a way that facilitates and strengthens family provision.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Rationale

The first main purpose of this thesis is to present the findings of an investigation into how poor rural villagers negotiate their livelihoods, so as to ensure their wellbeing within an insecure political economy and institutional landscape. In particular, the research setting of Thailand is chosen as a prime example of a nation undergoing rapid change over a very short period of time. That is, from being one of the poorest countries in the world in the 1960s it is now at the forefront of modernity in the global community. Moreover, along with this rapid change, there has been profound 'uneven development' between the different regions leading to the country having one of the most unequal societies in the world. Further in this regard, it has been highlighted that unlike the rest of Southeast Asia the gini coefficient has increased and with respect to this, in 2006 the richest 20% of the population owned 69% of the country's assets (Uwanno, 2010). There has been little effort to address these inequalities through redistributive actions. Consequently the poor have largely been left to fend for themselves in this insecure institutional landscape in the pursuit of their wellbeing.

The second key aim of this research endeavour is to consider these findings in the context of current fierce debates with regards to: social change, welfare provision and the role of institutions. These discourses have often become highly polarised with on one side those from the rural regions and the urban poor and on the other, the ruling elites largely based in Bangkok, belonging to the traditional bureaucracy and the business class. In response to the increasing deprivation of the former groups there have been increasing grassroots protests over the last decade which have been short lived because successive governments have bought them off with token gestures, thereby heading off the need to implement outright redistributive reforms. A significant area of these ongoing contentions is the consideration of the extent to which the gains from Thailand's recent economic development should be employed in social policy making aimed at creating benefits for the whole population.

With regards to most of the literature on Thai studies, three key strands can be discerned, those advocating a: developmental state, productivist or a liberal welfare regime. This perspective has been the dominant perspective since the 1960's in both business and government. However, a second perspective has been gaining increasing attention in recent years, especially since the 1997 economic crisis, that which promulgates the notion of community development. Supporters of this view include: NGO's, academics and some policy makers as well as some of the middle-classes, who argue that there has been too much development (*gan pattana*) which has led to a decline in traditional values and an increase in environmental problems. This narrative has fuelled the 'self sufficiency' outlook (UNDP 2007) which has had strong support from the King of Thailand and proponents of it are calling for a 'back to roots' development, claiming that families in rural areas typify simplified ideal moral units, thus conferring a romantic mantle on the peasantry (Rigg, 1994). Although supporters of this familial perspective have been exerting an increasing influence on policy making over the last decade they are increasingly being challenged by those academics and politicians who are advocating the creation of some kind of welfare state, the nature of which is still being contested. These debates will be further discussed in the next chapter of this thesis.

The thesis contributes to existing studies of social change and development which combine *emic* with the *etic*. Katy Gardner and Ahmed's (2006) study of Bengali migrants and Ben Rogaly, Massy and Rafique's (2006) study on the life histories of migrants in West Bengal are examples of this. They link development studies topics of social policy, migration and political economy with more classical anthropological discussions around informal institutions, relationships and cultural construction. Rogaly, Massy and Rafique (2006) use life histories from migrants to explore relationships and resources of households. They then link this to wider frameworks of international political economy and social protection policies. This is similar to the Wellbeing in Developing countries Project (WeD) vision at Bath University which also linked anthropological studies with development theory and social policy (see McGregor and Gough, 2007). The WeD framework involved subjective and constructed socio-cultural beliefs and linked these to wider structures. It is within this thread of studies that this research is situated. This research was conducted as part of the 'process research' of the WeD Project and so makes a contribution to

studies of socio-cultural change and wellbeing. This is explained further in the methodology chapter (Chapter 3).

1.2 Defining the parameters of the study

This thesis is not a study on wellbeing, nor is it a study on welfare regimes nor does it offer a comprehensive account of the Thai welfare regime. However, these concepts are engaged with so as to frame the environment and policy history to which people are responding in striving to achieve wellbeing. Moreover, although this research is not an investigation into migration, per se, this does provide one of the stages upon which it is based, in that this is a process that has become part of the life course of most members of Thai society. Further, the focus is not specifically on urbanisation, but this too forms an important backdrop to the sphere of interest. A key aim is to revise simplistic understanding of the urbanisation process, so as to account for its impact on rural communities. That is, this researcher would argue that what have been termed 'rurbanisation' processes (Wood, 1995) need to be taken into consideration with regards to their impact on remote villages, as these processes are changing the notions of rurality. In sum, this is a study that modifies romantic perceptions of rurality such as the sufficiency economy ideology, where peasant farmers are viewed as merely subsisting, by recognizing that these actors are adopting market values and urban themes within their choices.

1.3 Introductory Life History: The themes of this research

Pam's case study biography, as set out below, is used as an introduction to the themes and salient issues in this thesis. It acts as a background to migration decisions and life prior to migration, about: feelings when first arriving in the city, working conditions, aspirations, family obligations and the everyday reality of life as one of the thousands of Isan[1] migrants in Bangkok.

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[1] Isan is a reference for Northeast Thailand.

Figure 1: Pam's Life History

Pam was 30 years old when I met her. She had been migrating to Bangkok and Bang Pa-In since she was 13 years old. The first time I met her was in the village Ban Dong, Mukdahan Province, the week of the Songkran Festival[2]. Like all other migrants, she came back to the village for a week to see and be seen by friends and family. I also lived with her and her husband near Bangkok (in Bang Pa-In) for a longer period of time (one month and a few shorter visits), this enabled me to get to know Pam well and to understand what she had achieved in her life from her perspective and her aspirations for the future.

When Pam finished primary school (Patom 6, age 12) she wanted to study at a higher level but she couldn't as her parents were poor, she was female and the school was far away. She explained "I had to help my parents in the fields and clean the house". Pam wanted to work in Bangkok because she wanted to 'know and see the city' (yak roo, yak hen Krungthep). Her friends said it was 'easy to earn money' there (har ngern ngai) and in the city there are 'nice houses and beautiful women' (mee baan suay, poo-ying suay). Her father would not let her go, threatening that if she went then she would not be welcome back. She decided to go, with her mother's support only.

Pam went to the city with eight other people from the village. She remembered that they arrived in Bang Pa-In (just outside of Bangkok) at about 2am and that she felt very excited as she had never been that far away from her house before. The owner of the "cafe" was very kind and gave them 700 baht (more than a month's wages in the village) per person when they arrived and they could stay in a free room and all her friends could stay together. The "café" was a Thai massage parlour (อาบอบนวด- app-ohp nuaat[3]), restaurant and karaoke bar which was open from 5pm-2am.

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[2] The Songkran Festival is the Water Festival and Thai New Year in April.
[3] App-ohp nuaats in Thailand are frequently brothels.

Bang pa-in, where Pam lives and works is an industrial suburb of Bangkok in the neighbouring province of Ayutthaya. Pam remembered how excited she was when she saw the high buildings, "it had electricity with many people and they had white skin and they looked clean, different from people in my village as they had dark skin and looked dirty". She remembered how glad she was when she saw that she could stay in a nice room with a clean bed, table, chairs, cabinets and everything was new, stating that it was better than her house and her room in the village, "it was better 'dee gwar' because in the village I had a very old bed and blanket and my things were very dirty".

However, these initial feelings of the city were soon overcome with fear in less than a month due to different attitudes and behaviour in this new place. Pam told me of her discomfort when at work. When men she was serving touched her hand, she said she felt 'dishonoured' (tum lai gien dti) and homesick. When she spoke of these events, there was clear differentiation between people in the city and people from her home village. In her words and understanding "men in Bang Pa-in are different from Ban Dong, as men there honour women". This was enough reason to quit her job and go back to her village, she was not prepared to accept everything about modern city life. She lived at home again until she was 15 helping in the fields and feeding cattle for her parents. Short bouts of migration are common, especially for teenagers at the beginning. Every migrant that I spoke to started off this way, going to another province for a few weeks or months and then returning.

When Pam was 15 she decided to work in the city again. Her reason was that she had no money (mai mee ngern) and she wanted to support her family. It is illustrative of the obligations youth feel towards their parents, she has the role of provider, dutiful daughter and she was willing to accept these roles are they are symbolic of successful womanhood.

Whilst talking of how others around her changed, she portrayed herself as attentive to her work in order to achieve the reason she migrated in the first place, so save money for her family, " I slept on my day off and I didn't travel as I wanted to save money, I had to spend money if I went

out, my life was work and sleep" She didn't return money every month but saved it until she had "a lot of money". She earned 800 baht per month at first, she described herself as unhappy and homesick because the customers "didn't honour me" and "looked down on me like I was a prostitute, but I kept working because I wanted to save money and return it to my parents because they wanted to build a new house".

After a year, Pam quit her job and began job hopping around restaurants living with relatives in Bangkok. It was difficult to find a job because of her lack of qualifications. Pam only had a Patom 6 certificate (this is primary school, the lowest certificate offered in Thailand, most factories require a high school certificate). She told me that it was at this time she really started "dreaming" about her future "I wanted to work for a company or factory and study at a higher level, I didn't want to work in a restaurant anymore". Pam applied to many factories but kept being rejected; however one day she was lucky "I went to the interview in the early morning and worked in the restaurant during the day, and I got the job! I was so happy because there were 100 people that had applied and they only selected 8 of us! I was very happy, I only completed Patom 6 and didn't know a lot, but they still picked me". At this time Pam was 18 years old, old enough to get a job in a factory. Migration had offered her a way to start 'dreaming' of her future.

The factory she worked in was an electronics factory making spare parts for computers, "I was so happy because I got a high salary, 130bht per day, about 6,000 baht per month, it was my dream to save money and make my family better". Her duties were to inspect for defects on finished products. Her job was "sabai sabai" (meaning comfortable/good) "mai nak" (not hard) and "mai yark" (not difficult). She moved to live in a dormitory with a friend who worked in the same factory.

With the money she had saved Pam bought her family in the village a television costing 11,000 baht. This commodity purchase would be one of the first televisions in Ban Dong. For this important event Pam made a trip home to the village. "I saw Took (her younger sister) in the

neighbouring village on her way home from school and I stopped and picked her up, when she saw the TV she was so happy and hugged me and cried, it was winter and cold at that time, I will always remember it". This was an important symbolic event for the return of her obligations to her family and an important source of positive identity formation, where she can finally present herself back to the village as a successful woman. When she arrived back in Ban Dong, she told me of how her family "was better", because "they had a new house as my dad improved it with the money I had been sending, I was so glad when I went back because my family had everything, they were better than other families in the village". Her relationship with her parents had changed and she was now seen as an autonomous force within the family.

On return to Bangkok she got married to Dam, who was the owner of one of the restaurants she had worked in and Pam became a housewife. During the 1997 financial crisis his family went bankrupt and he now works as a waiter in a five star hotel in Bangkok. Pam also had to find extra work and has worked in a new factory for 10 months. The factory is a vendor for a larger factory again making spare parts for electronic equipment. Her duties are to checks for defects. She is now 30 years old and says she is in one of the happiest times of her life, because her family is "better, they aren't poor anymore and are better than in the past, I can support my younger brother and sister to study and now my family have a TV, electric machines and everything is more convenient for my parents". Pam also supported her younger sister Took for 2 years when Took decided to migrate to the city. Pam gave her a place to stay and found her a job.

With the money Pam had sent back her sister Took could finish high school and get a higher paid job in a good factory that Pam cannot get into due to her low qualifications. Once Took was in the city she was able to send home remittances and Pam was able to start saving for her future family. Both Pam and Took have donated large sums of money to the village temple and school, earning themselves a placard on the school grounds thanking them for their generosity. Once their brother Add was old enough to migrate he also joined them in the city and they found him a job in a nearby restaurant. Their hope was that he would be able to help them send home remittances and so their burden would be lessened. However he did not like it in the city and returned home after three months as he wanted to help his parents in their fields, go hunting

and look after their younger sister who was still at school. It is hoped that with the education they provided for the youngest sister called Nim that she would be able to enter into the local government. Therefore gaining security for the family and diversifying into the more formal sector.

From Pam's point of view "my life has just started, I started from 0 and I want 10 and I want to be successful, I want to have my own business, maybe a business renting out a car in the village and I want to do business with my relatives and live in a town near the village". "If I go back to Ban Dong, I can't work in the fields like my parents, when I go back I want to open a food shop and sell things. I will take new things to sell in my village". She sends less money to her parents now and saves for her future family. She strives to be successful and now feels more independent as though her life is now hers to live.

Throughout my entire fieldwork I noticed how people differentiated between people from home villages and people who lived in the city (khon nai muang- city people). For example, in Pam's words "people in the city, their minds are strange and selfish, but in Ban Dong you can ask to drink water from the jar in front of people's houses or eat food with anyone and people invite you to eat together but here the people race for everything, if you ask they think you are crazy and you need more money here because you have to spend money on everything". There is still high moral proximity to the village and village people, even after years spent migrating. Trust in family and villagers is strong. This attachment can be seen though Pam's feelings of belonging to the village in her last statement which was "Ban Dong is my home, Bang Pa-In is like the office for work".

The themes of interest in this case study taken from the above narrative are as follows. (i) migration and change; in particular, in terms of actors' agency and exit options from village structures. Pam's narrative offers an example of a young girl disobeying her parents to migrate, and then becoming very successful in helping her family. (ii) intergenerational bargains; this case study illustrates the obligations to family welfare and instances of institutional choice. Not only

does Pam fulfil obligations to her elderly parents, but she also strategizes for the future by helping her younger sisters and brother find jobs so that her own future is secure. (iii) Life courses; the case study ends with Pam's plans for the future which entails returning to the Northeast and investing in the village. By looking at Pam's life history as a constant process, this researcher claims to have managed to escape static explanations of migrating for money or fun, followed by eventual return to the village. Instead, it is contended that her life history illustrates that her identity and preferences have evolved over time with her performing a proactive role in a changing world, rather than one of passivity.

This research endeavour is aimed at eliciting comprehensive understanding of change, in the context of a society that is in great flux, namely Thailand. More specifically, by focussing on the behaviours of rural people in their milieu, both when being located in their village and where appropriate in the city it contributes to the current debates on social change and development in such societies. Moreover, the results of this study have implications for theories of rural change, in relation to whether contemporary shifts are damaging community bonds and family cohesion, and if so are undermining the moral kinship purpose of rural communities. This is achieved by drawing out the narratives to establish the nature of intergenerational bargains and deals between siblings. One further consideration is to use the outcomes of the thesis to test the robustness of current theories of depeasantisation and urbanisation in developing economies. Taking all of these contributions as a whole, the intention is to provide data that can effectively inform future social policy decision making in the Thai context. Of particular interest in this regard, is assessment of the degree to which traditional family institutions and support structures are changing, and consequently provide evidence for the levels of state intervention required in the future.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

This chapter has introduced the salient themes and issues addressed in this work and the rest of the thesis is as follows.

In chapter 2 there is a description of the institutional setting in which the actors covered by this study are negotiating. In addition, the conceptual framework is set out and there is historical analysis of welfare provision in Thailand. The methodology is presented and justified in chapter 3. In this regard, first the reasons are given for setting out the empirical findings through a chapter on cohorts, followed by one on life courses and finally integrating these in a chapter on intergenerational bargains. Next, the way in which the findings are laid out in relation to the epistemological considerations and those of time, as described above, are also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 4 contains an ethnographic study of Ban Dong[4], the village in Mukdahan, near the Thai border with Lao PDR, where most of the respondents came from. More specifically, it provides the demographic data and context with regards to the villagers' lives, and identifies those institutions that are being challenged and reworked in today's dynamic milieu. Collective action and protest has been short lived and examples from the communist insurgency in the village and association with the lobby group Assembly of the Poor are used to illustrate this. In effect this collective action has failed to reorganise the Thai welfare regime to any great extent. Villagers then opted for more individual action. In particular migration is singled out for detailed analysis, seeing as it is an ongoing activity that is having a profound impact on the contestation over rights and identity of the inhabitants. This more private, individual strategy is creating a different kind of welfare regime less dependent upon an overall political settlement and more dependent on market and urban opportunities.

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[4] Ban Dong is not the real name of the village; it has been changed by the researcher.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 are the findings. Both the context of time and actor oriented epistemology have been a great influence over this research and the way I have written about and interpreted my data. A concept of time has been influential because we all have a sense of living in a life cycle. We all have periods of dependency (i.e. childhood/old age) and periods of greater autonomy, where others may be dependent on us. Thus society is represented by vertical (intergenerational) dependencies over time, as well as horizontal (reciprocal intra-generational) dependencies over time (Wood, 2009). There is time preference behaviour, decisions and behaviour is about the future. This is why the term 'imaginings' is used in the title of this thesis. Actors are imagining their futures, and their behaviour is enabling them to meet obligations so that their futures will be more secure. This is interrelated to the actor oriented epistemology in order to bring poor people's agency into the centre of analysis. The findings chapters are very much about this and are why they are separated by time themes. 'Cohorts' (chapter 5) which are 'snapshots' in time, 'individual life cycles' which illustrates the processes over a long period of time (chapter 6) and 'intergenerational bargains' (chapter 7) which brings the previous chapters together.

In greater detail, the first of three chapters in which findings are presented is chapter 5. Its purpose is to demonstrate the rapid nature of the changes that residents in the Northeast of Thailand have been facing and coming to terms with through looking at snapshots in time of each population cohort. Collard's (1999) model is used as the basis for illustrating the processes that have been occurring. Through this treatment it emerges that the changes that have happened to the different cohorts over the years, with regards to the importance of dependency ratios and intergenerational bargains over time has sometimes led to tensions between cohorts over their responsibilities. Moreover, from the evidence presented this researcher argues that because social transformation has been so rapid, even within one generation's older and younger siblings, this has impacted greatly on their opportunities and life prospects.

The second chapter in which findings are presented is chapter 6. The aim of this chapter is to present examples of narratives from each cohort and by examining the meanings that respondents give to their behaviours to consider those periods in the actors' lives in which they have experienced autonomy and dependency. In this regard, it is argued that autonomy is limited because actors exist within the patterns of the lifecycle, that is, they seek to plan for the future as well as heightening their current wellbeing. The findings suggest that actors strive to meet certain obligations that they sense towards their homestead whilst reconciling this with their own perceptions of achieving success.

The third and final chapter in which findings are presented is chapter 7, in which there is both an intergenerational and intra-generational analysis that draws together the data presented in chapters 5 and 6. The results of this process demonstrate that increased mobility has affected traditional obligations and the institution of the family, which has led to individuals bargaining with each other, within families and cohorts, in ways that trade off the fostering of their own wellbeing and that of the family as a whole. Perhaps of greatest importance from this synthesis of the findings is the revelation that most families appear to be keeping to intergenerational bargains, which has significant theoretical implications for the future of welfare provision in Thailand. That is to say, family: trust, identity and obligations are robust, in today's modern society, even though they are constantly being constructed, negotiated and subsequently reconciled. In other words, they are flexible and it is this feature that has been enabling their very survival at the research site.

Chapter 8 is the concluding chapter; it contains a discussion of the findings, with reference back to the theory and discourses regarding change in Thailand, in order to reflect on how well they can inform the future direction of this change. In this regard, it is argued that unlike some of the previous literature, the respondents' livelihoods and family strategies emerge as not merely comprising reactive behaviours to economic change, but they also play a significant role in shaping social institutions. Moreover, individuals and families have shaped their responses to the dynamic environment through various adaptive family strategies, which in turn are having an impact on the labour market, family reproduction and the country's future. The thesis claims

to enrich theories of social change as well as theories of migration and security. With regards to development theory and social policy the thesis claims that a wellbeing approach is a useful addition than a purely welfare one.

CHAPTER TWO: THE SETTING FOR CHANGE AND THAI WELFARE

2.1 Introduction

"*Being a [economic] tiger is not important. What is important is to have enough to eat and live, and to have an economy which provides enough to eat and live….If we can change back to a self-sufficient economy, not complete, even not as much as half, perhaps just a quarter, we can survive….We need to move backwards in order to move forwards"*. (King Bhumipol Adulyadej, Birthday Speech, 2 months into the 1997 economic crisis)

'Think new, act new, for every Thai' – Thaksin Shinawatra and TRT, 2001 election campaign poster slogan (quoted in Baker & Phonpaichit, 2004, p84)

The two quotes above illustrate the differing perspectives on the direction of change and effects of this change. The first encourages a renewed localism, whilst the second encourages new and increased liberalisation. Both are views on how best to manage change and both are ideological tools used to legitimate the existing political and economic institutions. This chapter discusses change, but departs from much social change literature. Instead it seeks to deconstruct the conceptualisation and discourses of this 'change' and what it means for different actors. I do not consider 'change' to be apolitical, nor something which merely 'happens' to people, but the meaning of 'change' is constructed and is itself a field of discussion and contestation. This chapter analyses changes in state-society relationships over who gets to choose the directions of these changes.

An understanding of wider structures and processes are needed to adequately understand this institutional landscape in which actors have to negotiate. In Chapter One I used the case study of Pam to highlight the rapidity of changes over a few decades and some of the decisions that everyday people have to make regarding their futures. I highlighted the shift in access to opportunities and the widening of aspirations for those people from rural areas of Thailand. These changes have meant the restructuring of once sharp boundaries between rural and urban areas and occupations and indeed the identities of the people who occupy these spaces. This has been widely illustrated in the Thai studies literature. For example Rigg and Ritchie's research on 'imagining the rural' in Chiang Mai (Rigg and Ritchie, 2002) and Ritchie's study of farmers who become construction workers (Ritchie, 1996). Both highlighted the hybrid and interconnected nature of rural and urban spaces. However, these changes are also seen as destabilising and morally corrupting by some and so this chapter also lays out these 'change discourses' in a theoretical discussion. The first section of this chapter will therefore provide a literature review of these change discourses within the Thai context.

The main purpose of this chapter is to present an analysis of this institutional landscape through an organised lens. For this I use the 'Wellbeing Regime' model (Wood, 2007) instead of a 'welfare' state or regime model. This allows for organised analysis as well as multiple trajectories of change and outcomes in a context where insecurity and poverty still prevail. An important aspect of this wellbeing framework is that it is an example of how to understand the negotiations and choices between institutions (largely informal) for the poor who struggle for their security, rather than just a review of (formal) government policy and practice. Firstly an outline of the wellbeing regime model is given, which is then used to go on to explain Thailand's experiences of the four components of this model (conditioning factors, welfare mix, wellbeing outcomes and reproduction consequences).

Finally I end the chapter with my own conceptual framework for understanding the strategies and meanings of these changes for families in providing their own wellbeing. It builds on the Wellbeing Regime, especially the notion that wellbeing is socially and culturally constructed. This framework highlights the negotiation between values and ideologies of institutions and in

turn their influence on behaviour and outcomes. I argue ideologies have been used by the state for its own purposes over the course of history, hijacking existing values of autonomy, freedom and family.

However this lack of consensus over core values and ideologies has not yet led to a mass protest or organised opposition by those at the lower end of the stratum (pre-2007[5]). Instead the State has given various benefits and concessions, developing a new kind of social contract to buy social peace at the cheapest possible price. Welfare has been given through charity based 'safety nets' or small loans[6]. Correlative duties from the state are weak with strong ideological arguments that welfare should be provided by the community and the private domain of the family or through economic trickle down effects rather than through increased state intervention. There are calls for the development of a Thai welfare state (Jon Ungpakorn, Bangkok Post, 12th December 2007). Therefore moving from permissive rights to protective ones and moving away from dependent clientelised security. However, in 2007 no political parties had the development of a welfare state as part of their manifestos[7]. Security for the time being at least must be sought through other, more informal institutions. The strategies of which are what the rest of this thesis illustrates, culminating at the end with a discussion on future security and scope for change for the poor.

2.2 A Background to the Literature

Debates within Thailand are illustrative of the uncertainties of the modern era. Until the 1997 economic crisis Thailand enjoyed high growth rates, declining poverty rates and large scale foreign investment. However after the crash the economy retracted. Hewison (1999, p 7) states

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[5] Since my fieldwork and since writing the majority of this thesis there have been rising street protests on these matters mainly from the 'Red Shirts' / UDD- United Front for Democracy against dictatorship.
[6] Universal pensions were introduced in 2009 (through the univerversal tax financed 500 baht scheme) after this research ended. However, the rate is 500 baht per person over 60 years of age who are classified as poor which is lower than the poverty line at 1,500 baht (ILO, 2009). There is also the (largely successful) universal healthcare scheme, which is mentioned later in this chapter (see F, Mee-Udon 2009).
[7] The current Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva has since talked of a 'welfare state', but vaguely.

the 'Bangkok Bank figures showed up to 9% contraction in 1998'. Investment declined 'especially in the manufacturing, property and construction industries, resulting in unemployment reaching 2 million, the highest ever recorded' (Ibid).Whilst there have always been voices critiquing the kind of development path Thailand was following (see Parnwell 1996, 2005) especially from environmental groups, these critical forces only became a dominant ideology after the 1997 crisis (Parnwell 2005, p 3). Many Thai and foreign academics reverted back to a constructed past, in this case a rural-idyll, and what Rigg and Ritchie (2002) call the New Localism or neo-localism (Parnwell 2007) discourse. The phenomenon of neo-localism is not unique to Thailand but is reflected in many parts of the world due to the emergence of post-developmental thought and movements. As Parnwell (2007) argues these 'constitute place-specific attempts by local…. communities to foster self-reliance, security, sustainability and social harmony whilst challenging many of the underlying ideologies and assumptions of modern development' (Parnwell, 2007, p995). Not unique to only Thailand, but Gandhism in India and the Bhoomiputra policies in Malaysia are also examples of this global-local tension.

As the King's speech at the beginning of this chapter illustrates this localism is an inward looking movement calling for the re-establishment of self reliance, critical of consumerism and commercialisation. After the King's speech the popularisation of localism led to self-reliance, or *setakit por-pieng* 'Sufficiency Economy' becoming the 'new mantra of politicians, planners and practitioners' (Parnwell, 2005 p3). The UNDP used it in both its 2003 and 2007 reports extensively, the 2007 Report named 'Sufficiency Economy and Human Development' (UNDP, 2003, 2007). Reynolds (2001) argues that this neo-localism is rooted in cultural imagery and representations that were popularised in the 1970s and 1908s by Thai intellectuals such as Chatthip Nartsupha (1984, 1989), Prawase Wasi (1998, 1999) and Sulak Sivaraksa (see 2005, he is a Buddhist social critic). For example, in his reinterpretation of modernisation in Thailand, Chatthip Nartsupha (1999) highlights the shortcomings of modernisation by comparing village life in the past to that now (his book is entitled 'The Thai Village Economy in the Past'); this inspired what is called *Wattanatham Chumchon* or the 'Community Culture' school of thought within Thailand. This school of thought perceives once undifferentiated, class-less rural people

forced into capitalism, powerless to resist and they are now feeling the effects of exploitation, culminating in the 1997 financial crisis.[8]

Parnwell (2005) argues that the driving force behind this new localism, such as the Community Culture school of thought was from urban, middle class intellectuals and NGO activists rather than from the poor rural masses themselves. He also identified the role Buddhism and Buddhist monks play in localist ideology. Kitahara (1996) also explains that localists such as Prawase (1999) see greed inherent in modern development and that the solution is grounded in Buddhist teaching. The principles of moderation, wise consumption, sufficiency and self reliance are based on a 'moral community' (J.C Scott, 1976, see chapter 4 of this thesis for a discussion) which is in turn derived from Buddhist principles. Parnwell's study goes on to illustrate the difficulties to operationalise this using a case study from the Northeast of Thailand (Parnwell, 2005).

Walker (2008) goes further than this and argues that neo-localist ideas have been hijacked by elites and the state and have been used to fundamentally 'misrepresent' the rural poor for the state and elites' own benefits. He illustrates the embeddedness of rural livelihoods with modern industry and agriculture and the lack of rural people's commitment to what is a largely constructed and idealist 'traditional past'. Pasuk (1999) also writes of the misconception of rural lives and livelihoods. She argues that localism is based on a rural-urban dichotomy and implicitly privileges agricultural production and assumes capitalism is an imposition on, and external to rural areas. Rigg and Ritchie (2002) illustrate this with a detailed study on the production, consumption and imagination of rural Thailand. They highlight the construction of an idyllic rural past, but also the assumption within localist studies that development undermines 'community' and the rural way of life. This shift from community to individual is seen to be the root cause of problems in society such as environmental decline, rising inequality and social decay (Rigg and Ritchie, 2002). They ultimately argue that these visions are not truly a realistic alternative to the present trajectory of change in Thailand. Thai scholars such as Giles Ungpakorn also see neo-

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[8] Rigg & Ritchie 2002

localism as essentially utopian and naïve and argue that it misunderstands the rural populace in the provision of labour in the Thai political economy (Ungpakorn 1999).

The Thai studies literature highlights the 'unsettled' nature of debates over the values and priorities in Thai development. Alongside neo-liberal 'hyper globalisers' there is an increasing critique from neo-localists. This is no way unique to Thailand, as Arce and Long demonstrate there are multiple modernities and alongside these there are new and increasing avenues for voice and interpretations of development (Arce and Long, 2001). Technological and institutional change has allowed the advancement of human and material conditions. However there are struggles over values, meanings and rights behind these and increasing counter-tendencies which can be illustrated in Thailand by neo-localism. These counter-tendencies re-imagine and appropriate what is 'tradition' rather than offer realistic development alternatives. I argue that it is necessary to view these discourses as social and cultural 'battlefields' of meanings and knowledge (Long and Long, 1992), whereby there are multiple voices and struggles over meanings, values and directions of social change. The next section will offer a way of viewing these debates through an organised lens of a 'Thai Wellbeing Regime'.

2.3 A Wellbeing Regime Model and the Thai Wellbeing Regime

A 'regime' as Kaleck (1976) denotes implies a degree of system stability from the reproduction of power arrangement between major interest groups. Esping-Andersen's (1991,1999) 'welfare state regimes' was the notion of a political settlement between major interests and core values in settled OECD societies with liberal, conservative and social-democratic typologies. Gough and Wood (2004) continued this regimes approach with an international comparative analysis. Their study included developing societies which captured instances whereby there was a lack of consensus over these core values and priorities and thus were termed more 'unsettled' societies.

Following a welfare regimes approach Gough classified Thailand as a 'productivist informal security regime' (Gough, 2008). This was because social policy was seen to be subordinated to economic policy and concentration was on basic needs and education rather than social security, as in many developing countries. Thai people's access to welfare was primarily dependent on their level of access to material, social and cultural resources, rather than having any formal institutionalised access to state welfare as did OECD countries with more 'settled' regimes (Gough, 2004).

Esping-Andersen (Ibid, p21) illustrates how East Asian countries have a hybrid of existing welfare state characteristics. They share similarities to Continental Europe with an emphasis on familialism and an aversion to public social services. Social insurance systems follow a European tradition of occupationally segmented plans which favour particular privileged groups such as civil servants, teachers and the military. Asian models of social security are not comprehensive. In the case of Thailand this conservative social policy regime has thus far helped the 'developmental state', allowing the state to pick and choose its own correlative duties.

For example, welfare expenditures and benefit levels are relatively low; the state is a regulator rather than a provider. The main focus of state policies is economic development, education and health services and these are well developed in the welfare schemes. In particular, as in much of Asia, the emphasis is on the family as a social welfare strategy (Goodman and Peng, 1996; Jacobs, 1998; White and Goodman, 1998; Holliday, 2005; Walker and Wong, 2005). Indeed in Asia, the 'family oriented' welfare system has been prominent in many East Asian societies (Sheu, 1998), whilst the governments are not traditionally obligated to get involved. It has been argued that the heavy reliance on the welfare role of the family creates an 'oikonomic' social policy area (Jones, 1990), and imposes an extra load on top of women's double burdens (White and Goodman, 1998). Walker and Wong (2005, p215) argue that the East Asian governments 'prefer to assign a greater role in meeting the need for social welfare to the "welfare society" - that is, the family (women effectively) and third sector'.

In light of this, Copestake and Wood (2007) point out some of the limitations of the Esping-Andersen model of welfare regimes and argue the need for a 'wellbeing regimes model'. The wellbeing approach takes account of broader social and cultural domains in society, provided by the institution of the family and other social networks, rather than solely focusing on the policy and political economy analysis that the welfare regimes approach takes. This is particularly suitable for the case of Thailand where the family and local institutions are more relevant for the lives of ordinary people as they cannot rely on state welfare. In particular the wellbeing approach is relational and subjective, rather than focusing on welfare outcomes such as literacy or employment, which are still important. It realises they do not directly equate to wellbeing outcomes, which are more subjective and thus rely heavily on cultural factors and the experiences and processes through which wellbeing is achieved rather than just the end product. In this thesis I focus on the domain of the family, this has been a conscious choice in order to provide depth of data. The domain of community and wider socio-cultural norms are also very important. I have made reference to them in this thesis and investigated them during fieldwork, especially through observational techniques. However during the process of analysis and writing up, I chose to focus only on the domain of the family for the purposes of this thesis, to keep results focused and themes clear.

Figure 2 displays the basic wellbeing regime model (see Wood, 2007) the four components of which are: Conditioning factors; the institutional responsibility matrix or in short welfare mix; wellbeing outcomes and lastly, reproduction consequences. Each component of this model is relational to the other components. The Institutional Responsibility Matrix (IRM) is shaped by the conditioning factors or social structures of a country: the pervasiveness and character of markets, the legitimacy of the state, the extent of societal integration, cultural values and the position of the country in the global system. This in turn has an effect on the wellbeing outcomes, which are both the classic social policy and development objectives through state welfare assistance and human investment. Also included in this wellbeing analysis are other outcomes including identity, security, freedom from fear and subjective wellbeing. Finally, in the bottom left-hand corner, we see the reproduction consequences of these outcomes and either their reinforcement or change and therefore a change through mobilisation of different groups

and fractions to challenge existing inequalities in power as set out by the welfare mix and conditioning factors.

This 'wellbeing approach' can be seen as part of the wider development of global social policy and its conceptualization, application and evaluation in a developing country context. It is particularly helpful when it comes to countries such as Thailand undergoing rapid change which in turn creates uncertainty, political instability and anomie.

Figure 2: The Wellbeing Regime Model

CONDITIONING FACTORS:

- Societal integration and cohesion (Identity, social closure, adverse incorporation)
- Differentiation in cultures and values
- Location in global political economy (influence of globalisation)
- Framing of policy agendas & priorities (universal vs local)
- State form: legitimacy & competences
- Labour markets
- Financial markets

+/-

REPRODUCTION CONSEQUENCES

(-)**Simple reproduction**: Reproduction or reinforcement of stratification outcomes (inequality, exclusion, exploitation, domination). Mobilisations of elites to maintain status quo to buttress own power resources

(+)**Extended/expanded reproduction**: New alliances established between poor and different actors within IRM (e.g. middle class) to enhance agency to negotiate IRM and manage resource profiles, starts a virtuous circle to improve wellbeing outcomes and mobilise the poor

+/-

Mobilisation of elites and poor to reinforce or change reproduction consequences

Stratification

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY MATRIX

RESOURCE PROFILES ←→ ALLIANCE BUILDING

	Domestic	Supra-national
State Market Community Household	Domestic Governance Domestic markets Civil Society, NGOs Households	International Organisations, national donors Global markets, MNCs International NGOs International Household Strategies

POLICY intervention: improve resource profile to enable alliance building and sharing of wellbeing agenda amongst different actors within IRM

WELL-BEING OUTCOMES
- HDI
- MDGs
- Need satisfactions
- Subjective well-being
- Security of Agency (avoidance of alienation)
- **Freedom to** + freedom from: i.e. capabilities, rights and citizenship
- Universal sense of wellbeing to overcome negative diversity but allow local conceptions of well-being.

Source: Copestake and Wood, 2008

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Copestake and Wood (2008) point out that the 'wellbeing regime approach' goes further than social policy models by recognising the importance of empowering poor and marginalised people. This is in order to overcome some of the simple reproduction consequences in countries such as Thailand where there is unequal access to welfare and rising socio-economic inequalities. The configuration of power in Thai society and its social reproduction have remained relatively unchallenged due to the co-option of any kind of political mobilization from the poor.

2.4 CONDITIONING FACTORS

In this section I illustrate the historical trajectory of change in Thailand, highlighting the significant factors contributing to the current wellbeing regime and its reproduction. This is important because it situates this study within the wider dynamics of change and institutional choice within contemporary Thailand. Rather than provide a normative analysis of change and conditions in Thailand, I will provide a more phenomenological analysis of what actually exists and critique normative versions of this reality. As previously discussed, normative discourse in Thailand such as the 'Sufficiency Economy' or 'Community Culture' schools of thought simplify the complexities of contemporary rural life and I argue for the need to incorporate aspects of power and cultural domination in any analysis of change in Thailand.

The Thai economy had achieved record levels of growth exceeding over 10% per annum between 1984-1996. This economic growth was coupled with increased state intervention in rural areas, and legitimated by powerful dominant ideas of progress '*kwarm charoen'* and development '*gan pattana'* under a highly nationalist agenda. This meant poverty dropped dramatically with 25.2% of the population living on less than $2.00 per day (1990-2005). Human development has also benefited from high 'productivist' welfare policies in education. However, this rapid economic growth has caused stark inequalities. The UNDP (2005) estimates the Gini co-efficient in 2002 to have been 0.42 Poverty is also concentrated in rural areas, particularly in the Northeast.

In addition to this there are also structural problems in both the economy and the state. This was most recently highlighted by the 1997 financial crisis and the 2006 coup d'état. Recovery after the financial crisis was swift, and as Gough states "the combination of renewed capitalist bonanza and an unstable state fuels a new money politics" (Gough 2001 p4). The framing of Thailand's policy agenda and priorities can only be viewed with historical hindsight. The rest of this section is divided up historically to give an illustration of the development of ideas and discourses that have shaped the current landscape of today. I start from the 1800's which is the beginning of large scale reforms and modernisation until the mid-1900's an era of nation building and solidifying the power nexus of 'Nation, Monarchy and Religion' and clamping down on any form of resistance. The next era from the 1970's until the 1990's is one of increasing democratisation and globalisation and along with it rapid economic development and growth of civil society (albeit under conservative authoritarian regimes until the early 90's). The era culminates in the economic crisis which not only raises questions on the development path Thailand is following but also brings into the limelight a multitude of values, ideologies and actors who exist in a diverse and highly segmented country.

The last era I discuss is from 2001 onwards whereby a highly popular party (TRT *Thai rak Thai* 'Thai love Thai') was able to bring diverse segments of Thai society together, poor farmers, petty traders and large business conglomerates. Some call this a 'new social contract' (Hewison, 2004). However, the era culminated in the 2006 coup d'état, lead by the military and monarchist sections of the State and society and backed by NGO's and civil society organisations. This led to a military installed regime and short-lived elected and non-elected governments and political turmoil ever since. I conclude that Thailand is a 'politically unsettled' wellbeing regime (see Wood 2007 and Copestake and Wood 2008 on the case of Peru) because of the lack of political consensus over core values in society which are illustrated in these historical developments.

1850's to the 1970's: Nation Building and Development

From the mid-1800's both King Mongkut (r. 1851-1868) and King Chulalongkorn (r.1868-1910) imposed large administrative reforms modelled after European bureaucratic institutions. The Thai economy was growing by trading with the British, French and Chinese in agricultural products, and Dixon (1999, p26) argues this meant Thailand became the most powerful state within Southeast Asia at that time. King Mongkut instigated administrative reforms and opened up the Thai economy to the world by signing the Bowring Treaty in 1855, and whilst remaining independent was subservient to the interests of the British Empire (Parwell and Arghiros, 1996).

By the early 1900's Thailand had undergone substantial political and economic changes. Under King Vajiravudh's rule (r. 1910-1925) a scholar Phya Rajadhon (once president of the Siam Society) produced a genealogy of the Thai peoples and it is still widely seen as the unquestioned official history of the country. Pasuk and Baker called it "a race history (which) fortifies a….race myth" (1996, p172) which has now been naturalised. Thongchai in 'Siam Mapped' (1996) wrote a groundbreaking critique of this naturalisation process, highlighting the strategic power games between powers over a long history and the geo-politics of mapping and socially constructing what is now Thailand. Barme (1993) also pointed out the construction of *kwarm pen Thai* (Thai-ness) was essentially from the 'Central Chao Phraya basin upper class officials' (meaning the central provinces of Thailand). Prescriptions were based around correct speech, appearance and behaviour which were deemed to be pure 'Thai'. These discourses are still around today.

In 1932 a bloodless coup led to the formation of a constitutional monarchy and the newly formed modern nation state of Thailand was created. This was illustrated by the name change from 'Siam' to 'Thailand' in 1938. This name change created the concept of a collective national identity and a unified populace. It also carried implications of a single history of 'Thai' people, rather than a diversity of peoples under Siam, and a modern and progressive nationalism (Barme 1993). This shaping of a national identity is common for newly formed modern nation states, and was particularly strong in Thailand under the military government led by General Phibun Songkhram who led the Coup in 1932. The 'others' within Thailand, such as the Chinese,

Malays and other minorities were subject to economic discrimination (Dixon 1999) and a strong national Western-style education system was introduced teaching only Thai language, solidifying 'Thai' cultural hegemony.

Ideas of national unity and progress were heightened during the military regime, building on the concepts of '*arayatham*' (civilisation) and '*wattanatam'* (culture). These concepts were carefully managed by the government and those who did not conform to the standard behaviour of what was accepted were branded 'backwards' or 'unprogressive'. For example in a school text book called *Wattanatam* (Culture) published in 1962 Phya Aunuman Rajadhon explains that culture is similar to an evolution from simple societies to complex, passing through three stages: savage culture, cultivation culture and civilised culture (Brody 2001, quoting Rajadhon, p42). As Brody highlights, "these ideas helped to naturalise the idea that a specific culture, or Culture, was intrinsically linked with being civilised, sophisticated, and progressive" (Ibid, p43) and these evolutionary ideals can still be seen in Thai school textbooks today (Brody 2001). In 2008 the 'Thai Social Etiquette' book from the Culture Ministry is another example of this. Those not embodying these practices are thus 'not Thai'.

General Phibun introduced 12 cultural mandates requiring that all Thais were to salute the Thai flag, know the National Anthem, and speak the national 'central Thai' language. The mandates also encouraged Thais to work hard, be educated, and to dress in a western fashion. The mandate 'also influenced fine arts, highly nationalistic plays, films and other propaganda that were sponsored by the government' (Brody, 2001, p43). Phibun was overthrown in 1957 in a coup by Field Marshall Sarit Thanarat and General Thanom Kittikachorn. Many perceived the period of Field Marshall Sarit as 'the beginning of the modern economic growth of the Kingdom' (Dixon 1999, p 77). The first Five-Year Plan by the NEDB (National Economic Development Board[9]) was initiated during this time placing primary importance on economic growth. Thus the development project dominated the economic and social nation building agenda from this period into what Connors calls the 'military-bureaucratic-palace state apparatus' (Connors 2003, p3).

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[9] Now the NESDB, National Economic and Social Development Board.

The military governments of Sarit and Thanom rejuvinated the monarchy which had been dwindling in power after the assassination of King Ananda Mahidol (the elder brother of the current King Bhumipol) in 1946. The current King Bhumipol has been head of State ever since. This new era for the Thai state changed from a highly nationalistic regime to one that went back to the three 'pillars' of 'Monarchy, Buddhism and Language'. With a more unified state and better relations with the US, Thailand's economic growth averaged around 7% per year during this period. Major investment was put into crushing opposition, especially the Communist insurgency. A lot of investment by the USA was used in building roads and military bases employing over 40,000 Thais. Phongpaichit and Baker (1995) estimated American aid reached 3 Billion US Dollars over 2 decades.

With the expansion of infrastructure and increased income, the government was able to expand its development initiatives. Prior to the 1950's the countryside was left to its own devices. However with the growing participation of rural farmers in the Communist Insurgency in the Northeast, North and Southern parts of the country, the image of rural life being apolitical and closed off from the wider world was uprooted. Suddenly rural people were the target of 'development' which would bring security to the nation. This line of thought can be seen in various publications by the Thai government at the time, for example:

'In the more depressed and remote rural and border areas…security factors are of prime importance; high priority programmes are specifically designed to improve local living conditions and outlook in order to reduce the population's economic and social vulnerability to subversion'

(Brody, 2001, p55, quoting Office of the PM 1967:12)

At this time, change for the rural population was seen as necessary, being 'depressed' and 'remote' from the capital Bangkok they were 'vulnerable' to 'subversion' and thus rural people were not considered rational actors but as victims of outside powers that had to be stopped

(Brody, 2001). With the rural populace now framed as a threat to security and as backwards (*la sut*) this put them in direct opposition to concepts of civility (*ariyatam*) and progress (*kwarm chareon)*. Change was needed and it was framed in the interests and for the benefit of the rural populace who were perceived as needing 'saving'. However the ideas behind this change 'were not from the rural populace, or from the grassroots but from those in government and academia' (Brody, 2001, p55).

In summary this period was one of nation-building and the solidification of cultural hegemony and power over citizens. Under these military regimes the bureaucracy grew and rapid state-led economic development gave way to a new more liberal regime (Connors, 2003). This regime was one in which capitalist forces grew within the State apparatus and were able to steer the State in its policy of rapid economic advancement. These factors are important as conservative, liberal, royalist and military elements of the Thai regime are still influential in political debates today.

1970's-1990's The rise of democratic governance, globalisation and new forms of dissent

As economic growth took off, the cities expanded especially Bangkok, large scale social change occurred such as large scale rural to urban migration and a new middle class emerged. However, not everyone benefited to the same extent and there was increasing inequalities between regions and rural and urban areas. During the 1960's many rural poor became dissatisfied with these increasing inequalities. Many villagers were subject to harassment from military police and corruption from local bureaucrats (see Chapter 4). Also, increasing numbers of educated students and middle class were dissatisfied with the increasing inequalities and lack of government action and military rule. The democracy movement was formed and many protests were held by student activists. This ended in thousands taking to the streets of Bangkok in protest in 1973 in and around Thammasat University which ended in bloodshed, but led to the fall of the military-led government (Pasuk and Baker, 1995).

The Democracy movement did not dissipate with many students and activists continuing their fight against military rule by joining the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) associated with the insurgency. Increasing tensions led to general elections in which General Prem won in 1983. This decade was one of economic growth and Prem was both democratically elected and yet still had links with the military. This period saw the collapse of the CPT along with other left wing and socialist parties and groups (see Ungpakorn 2006). This left a political vacuum for socialist political space and effectively ensured the continued political domination of a right wing liberal regime. This regime relied on the legitimacy of the military and monarchy and the nation's security, and was dubbed 'the security state' (Connors, 2003, p3 quoting Chalermkiat Phiu-nuan, 1992)

Between 1988-1992 military led governments were elected under General Chatichai, Anand and then coup leader Suchinda Kraprayoon. This era saw a centralized bureaucratic military state come under increasing attack from growing capitalist and business leaders as well as the middle classes. As Connors (2003) argues it took large scale protests to force the political change in the State. The Democracy protest of 'Black May' 1992 in which hundreds lost their lives when government troops open fired on protestors ended the military strong hold over government and their legitimacy. Thus the liberalising democratic regime (or a 'bourgeois state') replaced the 'security state' (Connors, 2003).

Chuan Leekpai and the Democrat Party were elected as the new democratically elected government in 1992. Thailand enjoyed rapid economic growth, one of the highest in the world. The NESDB five year plans were 'primarily focused on economic growth and structural adjustment, and not on social justice or welfare' (Schmidt, 1996, p69). The liberal ideology underpinning the regime or as Connors calls it 'the hegemonic liberal project' (Connors, 2003, p3) ensured legitimacy was based on the democratisation process. During this time period, civil society grew with NGOs filling the political vacuum. It was these liberal democratic forces based on social justice and participatory democracy that led to the adoption of the 1997 Constitution.

Economic growth continued until 1997 when Thailand was badly affected by the economic crash. Chuan Leekpai made agreements with the IMF on structural adjustment and public opinion was weary of economic gain at any cost. Therefore the liberal regime saw the contradictory forces of domestic and global imperatives clash and the tensions between local and national sovereignty, identity and globalisation increase. New forms of dissent and protest have enabled 'voice' within the political arena, including the large anti-globalisation protests and neo-local discourses. These contradictory forces are lasting conditioning factors within the Thai regime today.

2001-2006 Changing Welfare Regimes and Rural Populism

In 2001 Thaksin Shinawatra and Thai Rak Thai (TRT) won the election with policies that appealed to the mass electorate. His power network incorporated 'several large business conglomerates, political parties, the National Assembly, the military and the police all intricately linked to Thaksin and certain members of his family' (McCargo and Pathmanand, 2005, p214). This was a change from past practices, of political power lying within the military and bureaucracy. Instead 'Thaksin's power network was based on a new kind of power structure, that of business' (McCargo and Pathmanund, 2005, p214).

Thai Rak Thai's (TRT) economic and social welfare policies posed an alternative vision for the future of Thailand. The party's platform of 'think new, act new' won the popular vote and it posed itself to be the party for both small and medium enterprises as well as big business. These policies appealed to rural voters, especially north easterners and a large amount of money was spent on Thaksin's election campaign. Populist policies included a 3 year debt moratorium for farmers, the 1 million baht fund, One Tambon One Product (OTOP), the People's Bank and the 30 baht healthcare scheme (now the Universal healthcare scheme[10]). To attract small businesses, TRT also promised development of SMEs, arguing that local expertise was needed to move the country forward. However, as Hewison (2004) argues, 'with hindsight those that benefited most were large corporations, including Thaksin himself'.

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[10] See F. Mee Udon (2009) on how the universal healthcare scheme has been used by villagers in Ban Dong, which is where this research was also based.

TRT's dual track policies were particularly appealing to the poorer rural voters as they emphasised inclusiveness for 'all Thais' and promised help for those suffering from the slump and economic hardship. Help was not only offered economically. Social platforms were introduced as 'wars' on poverty, corruption and drugs. This made social welfare an important part of the new social contract. A contract whereby TRT promised the electorate 'enhanced social protection and economic prosperity for the majority of the population in return for their support' (Hewison, 2004, p515).

TRT's populist platform and electoral success may appear to have 'settled' the regime with the agreement over some values. However these quickly collapsed because of corruption and the power of Thaksin and TRT which posed a challenge to dominant institutions. Although Thaksin has been branded a populist, his regime became increasingly authoritarian (Connors, 2003, Ungpakorn 2006). Problematic state legitimacy exists still today. There is widespread distrust of politicians and institutional legitimacy and narrowly regulated labour markets and human rights. On top of this there is a highly unequal socio-economy along regional, ethnic and class lines resulting in social exclusion, and problematic inclusion. This all adds up to make Thailand an 'unsettled' society in wellbeing regime terms.

Since the downfall of the Thaksin government by the 2006 coup there has been increasing debate over the future of national ideology and values in Thai society. It is important to remember however, that whilst internally the State is conflicted, it manages to use the ideology of the 'nation' to ensure its continuity and to re-articulate opposition. Since the 1950's this continuation has been in the form of unified nationalism of the three pillars of 'nation, monarchy and language', all regimes have articulated these pillars to suit their own causes and policies.

2.5 Negotiating the Institutional Responsibility Matrix

The State

This section deals with state-society relations and the perceived legitimacy of the state by the public. Thailand has followed an export orientated industrialisation and this had led to social inequalities causing economic dislocation and social problems. The state has deliberately pursued this development model by emphasising the benefits of competitiveness in the international political arena, and has therefore been able to avoid large welfare programs. The state has managed to manipulate even orthodox social policy, as it has managed to 'manipulate the social contract by espousing anti-entitlement attitudes, arguing that social welfare spending and programs would interfere with productivity and threaten competitiveness' (Schmidt, 2000, p159). The state also promoted and used 'Asian values' as part of its 'anti-welfare ideology' (Schmidt 2000, p159). Many leaders in Southeast Asian nations used these 'values' as part of a backlash against the individualisation, social breakdown and anomie of what they see as 'westernization'. According to Schmidt (2000) they have used these 'values' to justify 'authoritarianism and the repression of political and social rights of citizens' (Ibid).

The highly paternalistic political culture in Thailand has meant that social policy has been limited to charity and low expenditure. Social security schemes are only available to formal sector workers in the civil service and large businesses. There is little protection for informal sector workers or farmers (although in 2009 a universal pension scheme has been introduced for poor informal people aged over 60 but as yet is inadequate, see ILO, 2009). This had let social exclusion worsen and inequalities rise. The state has also created a legal framework since the 1970's to limit the power of trade unions, and particularly the power of workers to participate in wage negotiations, in the setting up of the National Wage Committee. Labour groups and farmers have had little political voice until fairly recently. One of the attractions of the TRT (and their successors) is their perceived willingness to uphold some kind of social contract, not just to those in the formal sector but to those in the lower echelons of Thai society.

Historically it has been the military and bureaucracy that has held legitimacy, as the conditioning factors illustrated. Political parties until the 1990's were not viewed as avenues for mobilisation, or of legitimacy. As Hewison states, before this 'Thailand's developmental social contract amounted to a deal between the military leadership and domestic capital that demarcarated their hegemony over the working and peasant classes' (Hewison, 2004, p513). The 1997 constitution gave rise to popular involvement in all arenas of political and social life. This was one of the reasons why TRT was able to command such huge support from rural areas which had otherwise been denied any kind of political voice. This and the 1997 financial crisis destroyed the developmental social contract. TRT effectively struck a new deal with the electorate and as Hewison states 'the new deal was that if the electorate supported TRT, then TRT promised that its government would ensure enhanced social protection and economic opportunities for the relatively poor majority of the population' (Hewison, 2004, p515).

Although TRT was a party of big businesses, it recognised the need for a new social contract if domestic capital was to re-establish economic power after the crisis and to curb any social unrest that plagued countries such as Indonesia after the crash. TRT's main election policies such as the universal healthcare scheme and the village fund and farmer's debt suspension amongst others cost more than $3.6 billion (Hewison, 2004, p516). Most of these policies were funded from the government budget. These were the basis for the new social contract. However, the private sector was concerned over their long term viability and funding. In order to curb criticism, Thaksin argued that he would never allow the formation of a 'welfare state'. Instead he argued that his party was creating 'social capitalism' whereby the states' role would be reduced once inequality had reduced (Bangkok Post 2 October 2003, quoted in Hewison, 2004, p 517).

The huge electoral majority gave TRT considerable power and corruption and abuses of this power occurred. As Ungpakorn (2008) notes, the war on drugs resulted in 3,000 people being shot dead without any trial. There was a 'campaign of violence' in the three most southern provinces. The government was linked to the murder of a prominent lawyer on the issues dealing with the Southern insurgency amongst numerous other accusations. Thaksin's tax

avoidance caused large public scrutiny, especially after he made 70 billion baht from the sale of the mobile phone company in which his family were involved.

In 2004 the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand reported the country as 'regressing towards a culture of authoritarianism, instead of progressing to a culture of human rights'. This is because there is no culture to redress grievances through existing courts. The UN also highlighted the lack of accountability the Thai government has towards it citizens. The need for independent investigation and judicial inquiry was highlighted (NHRC, 2004).

Protests against Thaksin and his party became more organised by the end of 2005. The 'Peoples Movement', a working class group were critical of electricity privatisation, human rights abuses and the pushing of Free Trade Agreements. However, more powerful were the right-wing critics led by the rich media tycoon Sondhi Limtongkul, and the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) was formed with many middle class supporters. Without the support of those such as PAD 'the 2006 Coup could not have taken place' (G. Ungpakorn, 2008). The Coup removed TRT from power and with Royal consent, a military government was installed until a new election could be called. There has been political unrest ever since. The coup in 2006 seriously undermined both state legitimacy and also judicial power. The military interim regime replaced the 1997 constitution with one that restricted the powers of both the executive and judiciary. A result of this was widespread disillusionment and a loss of confidence in the ability of the law courts and judiciary to act on behalf of the public. Privy Council President Prem Tinsulananda, the ex military Prime Minister, was one of the orchestrators of the 2006 Coup. Also the military-appointed Prime Minister in 2006, General Surayud Chulanont, has since been appointed as a Privy councillor by the King in April 2008. Thus in reality politics has infiltrated members of the judiciary and their roles in political interventions are increasing (Handley, 2008).

What events-to-date have illustrated is that there are on-going debates within Thailand on the role of the state and future directions of social change. They also emphasise the question of social responsibility. As Ungpakorn (2008) argues, "the problem of the State is, who is it responsible for?" Pasuk Phongpaichit, a leading Thai academic in an interview with Fa Deaw Kan magazine (Oct 2006) stated that the ruling class has 'always had a purely elitist tradition

opposed to equality in society' (Phongpaichit quoted in Ungpakorn 2008, p21). Ungpakorn argues the state is run by and is responsible to the rich. He also argues that 'the coup effectively disenfranchised the poor electorate, the majority of Thai voters who had responded favourably to TRT pro-poor policies' (2008, p 28).

The popularity of Thaksin and his successive election victories illustrates the power of the electorate and their favour of pro-poor policies. Also, calls for a more responsible state, fulfilling their correlative duties are also increasing, particularly though mass protests and increasing union activity. State-society relations are therefore changing. No longer can the state afford to rely on trickle down developmental social contracts. The state is internally divided, between elements of the military, bureaucracy, big capitalists, liberals and conservative elites. Although these factions all have their own agendas there is still a political vacuum of representation for any left wing political parties. Connors (2003) argues most dissent has been 'co-opted into the state apparatus' by the acceptance of global development initiatives of participatory democracy and good governance as well as national ideologies of what is good for 'the nation' (i.e. 'sufficiency economy'). If this is the case, then the State as an institution is one that is fragmented. Whilst it facilitates and regulates, it is not an institution on which the poor can rely for their own wellbeing.

The Market

Next on the Institutional Responsibility Matrix (IRM) is the Market. I argue that for the poor in Thailand market institutions do not provide adequate forms of security, especially post-1997 crisis. I highlight three different periods leading to the current institutional set-up. Firstly, the period from the 1980's to the 1997 financial crisis, which was broadly a neo-liberal, high growth era. I argue this era had implications for social policy and therefore the ability of poor workers and farmers to rely on market institutions for their wellbeing. Secondly, I look at the post-1997 era until 2006, a period characterised as the turning point for neo-liberal globalisation and 'the end of the day of the Washington Consensus' (Bello, 2003 referred to in Schmidt 2007, p3). Importantly this period saw a nationalist backlash against IMF conditionality and forced privatisation. There was a rise in localism and the success of TRT and Thaksin's 'Social Capitalism'

policies were largely due to their acceptance for better social welfare. I argue however, that these programmes had no interest in raising the poor's structural position within society. As Baker (2005) explains, 'the main strategy of TRT's programmes was to pump in capital funds with no interest in land reform or tax reform. It was a way to pursue his populist spending program to win support from the masses and lessen rural protest'. As Pasuk and Baker argue "his (Thaksin) economic policies and his feelings were clearly diametrically opposed" (Pasuk and Baker, 2004, p129).

Lastly, it has been argued that since the 2006 coup 'Sufficiency Economy' has been used to legitimate not only the coup but also limited social welfare (Walker, 2008). Interestingly, for the poor, Schmidt has argued this has meant 'the continuation of the idea that communities or 'civil society' can replace the role of the state' (Schmidt 2007, p22). Moreover, this allows responsibility to be shifted from the State and Market to individuals and groups (Ibid). This thinking complements the 'community development school' and Thai NGO sector and so has received limited criticism from civil society. It is within this landscape that this research investigates how individuals and household are surviving and strategising for their current and future livelihoods.

During Thailand's boom years, the country was economically dynamic. It was what Gough calls a Productivist regime (Gough 2008). There has been deliberate state support and management for economic growth, providing large investments in the export sector (Wade 2004). To illustrate, before 1980 agriculture accounted for 40% of GDP and employed over 80% of the population, but by 1997 35% of GDP was from manufacturing and only 48% of the population was employed in agriculture (Gough, 2008, p17). There were major benefits from this growth with large foreign investment creating job opportunities. Rural households were able to benefit from this by migrating to work in factories or in the service sector. However, these opportunities did not necessarily enforce trust within the market. Neo-liberal economic policy invested in export orientated services and as Stiglitz (2000) states before the 1997 crisis Thailand was running large budget surpluses but it was starving the economy of much needed investments in education and

infrastructure. For example, in the 1980's the Thai Department of Welfare spent less than 0.5% of total government budget on social benefits (Wongchai, 1985, p363 quoted in Schmidt 1999)

Those who benefitted from this growth most were the already wealthy and middle classes. Negative impacts of economic development were an imbalance of growth caused by favouring urban areas and 'modern' sectors at the expense of subsistence farming (Gough, 2008, p18). This neo-liberal strategy assumed 'trickle-down' effects to the rest of the population, and although income growth was high (Schmidt 2007) the market was not a source of security for the poor. Short term circular migration rather than permanent urban settlement is an illustration of this. The market was throughout this period seen to be a source for economic benefits. However the tax rates in this period could never provide adequate means for generous social welfare programs. The market was therefore a source of security for those with the means to control capital and those private sector workers who were able to benefit from private social insurance schemes. For farmers, the self employed and the poor, it was not a source of security but nevertheless a source of opportunity.

Due to increasing social pressure the 1990 Social Security Act was passed. This enabled the state and private companies to provide security for workers and give limited protection from market forces. The Act entitled legally registered workers in private enterprises with 20 or more employees the right to free medical services and financial benefits in ill health, disability or death. The costs were contributory and shared between employers, employees and the government. After the Act was passed it grew quickly. Changes included expanding to firms of 10 people or more and also self employed workers (Schramm, 2008). In 1997 there were more than 6 million workers covered by the scheme. By 1998 pension schemes and child allowances were introduced (Ibid). However, for the majority of the population, those rural farming households and informal workers, it was through traditional safety nets of families, kinship, village communities, Buddhist temples and charitable organisations that security from the market was encouraged.

The economic crises of 1997 changed how the population viewed the benefits of the rapid growth Thailand experienced in the previous decades, and exposed the dangers of an unregulated market. There was little in the form of formal safety nets provided by the government or the private sector for the working class (Haggard and Kaufman, 2008, p115). Only military, civil servants and some private sector employees enjoyed the generous protections of a more formalised market that the 1990 Social Security Act described above. Even so, during the financial crisis the unemployment section of the Social Security Act was not enforced, causing widespread unrest (Narawat, 2006) and so formal sector workers were also seriously affected with only a small severance payment given to them.

The collapse of the CPT in the 1980's has meant there is little voice for left parties or unions in order to push for increased financial reform and social insurance for workers. Severance packages were small if they even were offered at all and the government only offered those newly unemployed small benefits packages, only after strikes and protest (Ungpakorn, 2008). This was the reality for the majority of the population. So when the Chuan administration was forced to accept IMF structural adjustment policies in the aftermath of the 1997 crisis this led to a backlash against neo-liberal globalisation.

The 1997 crisis saw an already neo-liberal market but a state-led, export orientated one, become more privatised. The IMF forced an austerity plan which included budget cuts and high interest rates. According to Kasian (2006, p23) two thirds of big Thai capitalists went bankrupt, one million workers lost their jobs and three million more fell below the poverty line. Structural adjustment saw the 1998 budget cut by 35% for social services and 26% for agriculture (Schmidt, 2007, p4). Privatisation of public enterprises was forced and also privatisation of health and education establishments was encouraged. These developments caused popular protest. Localist voices also came to the forefront of debate. The King's 'self sufficiency' speech at the beginning of this chapter highlights the changing attitudes towards further entry into a free and globalised market.

A result of the crash was this new critical relationship with the Market. As Scmidt (2007) argues, high on the policy agenda were some new movements including a rise in protectionism and a shift away from such heavy reliance on export-orientation towards the domestic market. This can be described as a 'populist and nationalist discourse' (Schmidt, 1999). Thaksin's new TRT party took power in 2001 with their 'think new, act new' slogan pushing for change. As McCargo argues, they offered 'to redeem Thailand's national pride, restoring to the country the image (and self image) of a successful and independent nation' (McCargo, p13). Glassman states TRT's platform was 'anti-neoliberal in certain but not all of its elements and included a national health insurance scheme and various (Keynesian) spending measures to reflate the economy after the economic crisis. The policies were popular enough to give TRT repeated, large electoral mandates' (Glassman, 2007). Thaksin reversed Chuan's pro neo-liberal policies by pumping billions into the economy through subsidisation of rice, a universal healthcare plan and small loans.

Recovery was quick and Thaskin managed to repay IMF loans and GDP started to rise again after 2001. In order to get the economy back on track, the government wanted to stimulate domestic demand and also promote open markets and foreign investment, this strategy is now dubbed 'Thaksinomics'. Schmidt (2007) refers to these reforms of the Market as a 'communitarian third way' a new social partnership between the state and civil society. It emphasised self-reliance and protection of Thai interests, which appealed to neo-localists and backers of the King's Self Sufficiency doctrine. However, how much of this was a genuine recognition for the need to regulate the market and provide universal social welfare and how much it was a short term reaction to the crisis and way to gain popular support is unclear (see McCargo, Baker 2005, Schmidt 2007). Whatever it is, this period saw an increased regulatory role for the state.

Since 2005 with the rise in oil prices and inflation, droughts and floods, the Southern insurgency, Tsunami and political turmoil economic growth in Thailand has slumped. The leadership of TRT came into question and the questionable business dealings of Thaksin and his family finally led to large protests and ended in a Coup in September 2006. Thailand now has to deal with intensifying global competition, global economic turndown and higher commodity prices,

especially oil and rice. It also faces the problem of sustaining its growth as well as political instability. Short-term policies to address the immediate downside risks to growth are being put in place. Such as the expansion of price controls, continued intervention of the exchange rate, and socio-economic policies such as the continuation of the 1 million baht fund. However, the World Bank, Economic Monitor (April 2008) advises the State to look towards the longer term challenges by improving its productivity and competitiveness. Thus longer term measures are necessary in order for sustained growth.

TRT was the first government to enhance and substantially use public spending to improve economic opportunity. However there has been little progress on redressing the tax system to redistribute resources (Ungpakorn, 2008). For example, in 2005 whilst over 10 million people were eligible for personal income tax, filings were only 6 million (Sujjapongse, 2005). The reasons being considerable amounts of tax breaks and exemptions to stimulate investment for private companies, but other factors are prevalent tax evasions and the fact that a large number of people work in the informal sector (Sujjapongse, 2005).

Since 2006 successive governments have announced new economic policies including increased public expenditure in the form of mega infrastructural projects, tax cuts for businesses and individuals and further grants and loans to communities with low interest rates (WB Economic Monitor, April 2008). These investments in infrastructure, health, education, microfinance schemes and local product development (e.g. OTOP) are typical of policies in what Gough labels as a 'productivist' welfare regime. This also is in accordance with Haggard and Kaufman's (2008) view that East Asian welfare regime strategies give priority to education and basic social services, committing to democratic expectations but using them for their own political purposes of political socialization and control.

Productivist policies, volatile economic growth and then crisis and a lack of formalized institutions of welfare and social security have meant the market is a questionable form of security for the poor who are not able to benefit from formalised market institutions and rights. Parnwell (2001) investigates the coping strategies of those workers affected by the crisis and the implications of migration reversal. The exodus of migrant workers from Bangkok to their natal

villages after the crisis was an illustration of the volatility of the market and a reaffirmation of the security villages and rural communities provide. It has not only meant the strengthening of neo-localist discourses within Thailand, but also highlighted the importance of community and household safety nets and security for the poor.

This section has illustrated that although there has been a growth in State regulation of the Market, for the poorest there is little in the form of security from the state or market. Also there has been increasing privatization, suggesting that there is a reorganization of relations between the state, the society and the business sector. Market-based social security in the form of private insurance and occupational welfare and private family and community mutual self-help forms are increasingly expected to be the main providers of welfare, and not the State for the majority of the population. After the 1997 crisis and heightening after the 2006 coup, the responsibility has been deflected towards society from the State to provide welfare. Both the Market and private welfare through families have been portrayed to be more efficient and moral (Schmidt, 2007). For the poor it is the family and community that provide the burden and responsibility for provision rather than the market as many do not have access to formal private sector forms of insurance and security.

The Community and Household

As a productivist welfare regime, Thailand has deliberately pursued economic growth by emphasising international competition, expanding the service sector though an export-led development strategy and low social welfare programmes. Schmidt (2001) argues this has led to an anti-entitlement attitude and has 'laid the groundwork for a stable social order based on the family and a specific set of shared values'. In the case of Thailand these shared values are in understood principles of things such as '*bunkun*' and '*katanyu*' (traits of respect, thoughtfulness and repayment, especially to elders). 'Traditional' cultural values have been promoted in order to sustain intergenerational bargains in a time of rapid change and social fragmentation. This section discusses the state's push for welfare to be continued though state facilitation and use of neo-localist and 'sufficiency' economic discourse to support this institutional set up. I argue

that by building on existing welfare arrangements and traditional values in Thai society the state has been successful in its bid to curtail any powerful calls for large scale reform.

The UN's common country assessment for Thailand in 2005 highlighted that the main form of social protection for most people is through their families and communities: 'Thai society strongly supports family and community as important institutions' (UN, 2005, p22). This is also illustrated in the rise of the 'community culture' school of thought, and now the 'sufficiency economy' debate, whereby the community is seen as the main institution for the provision of welfare and wellbeing. NGO's have also been prominent in the call for welfare to be organized by communities rather than the State (Ungpakorn, 2009) and this has complemented neo-liberal attitudes for little State provision (Ibid).

Government strategies clearly support the facilitation of inter-generational support. For example tax breaks are offered for those who choose to look after elderly relatives. According to the Ministry of Finance 30,000bht tax allowance is offered to those looking after their parents or parents-in-law (Sujjapongse, 2005). The view of successive governments has been to boost the capabilities of families and communities in order to help them achieve greater self-reliance and to support individual development which was 'very much in compliance with the Thaksin government's goal of enhancing social partnership' (Schmidt, 2007, p18). Social partnership between the state and agents from 'civil society' enabled the government to co-opt NGO's which were hopeful of TRT's mix of populism and nationalism. As Connors (2001) notes TRT encouraged participation and self rule, self reliance and self capacity at the local level, this also won over neo-localists.

As Schmidt also illustrates 'the Thai elite ethos [is] well encapsulated by its tendency to reduce complex social problems to, for instance, "family breakdown" as a code for bad society which only a government with "values" could fix. One politician suggested that 'we believe that with a warm and healthy family, every social problem- drugs, street children, child exploitation, and

prostitutes will be solved" (Schmidt, 2007, p18 quoting Assavanona, 2000). This has been echoed in numerous government administrations, for example:

"family and community institutions must be strengthened. These two basic institutions are the binding thread of the society; the bedrock of social order, the mould for economic and social upbringing, the guardian of social values, the social protector, and the safety nets for the individuals in need. The family and community institutions, which are the nucleus of society, also serve as the source of spiritual strength and strong moral force to help heal the various social ills, such as drug abuse, street crimes, functional illiteracy, and socio-economic disfranchisement of the disadvantaged"

(Mr. Asda Jayanama, Director-General of Department of International Organizations, Speech made at the World Summit for Social Development Copenhagen, 10 March 1995. Available on the web at: http://www.un.org/documents/ga/conf166/gov/950310143051.htm [accessed August 2010]).

The 'family' as an idea has been co-opted for political purposes, as the quote above demonstrates. By being 'the bedrock of social order' and 'guardian of social values' it legitimises the need for policies to 'strengthen' them as institutions. By upholding the institution as having 'spiritual strength' and 'moral force' families are romanticised. Any policies that would be seen to have a 'defamilising' effect are negative. Social democratic welfare policies that are seen to be eroding strong families in Western welfare states are therefore not part of the 'Thai' identity or 'Thai' value system.

Ideas of social responsibility are also enshrined in ideas of the family as 'social protectors' and as 'safety nets'. Successive governments have used enhanced notions of responsibility to limit correlative duties and keep responsibility for social welfare in the private domain of the family rather than primarily the State. Thaksin did this through his notion of 'social partnership'. The military regime after the 2006 coup d'état also used notions of the family and the need to protect families heavily in their campaign. Numerous governments have used it to legitimise their regimes of limited social welfare, instead keeping a role as regulator and facilitator.

Clearly the family can be seen as a welfare system in its own right. It often provides financial, material and emotional support for its members. This is also true for the community, especially in Thailand whereby the village temple often provides emotional and material support for members, and community members often provide collective action to support one another. However, the fundamental problem with the family and community as providers of welfare is that it is difficult to formalise them. The private functions of the institution of the family can also be questioned. For example with increasing social change, consumerism and migration notions of 'family breakdown' are voiced and this makes it legitimate for the family to become an object of state intervention. In Thailand this intervention is mainly in the form of state propaganda through television and education material used for social control in which families are encouraged to fit into state-defined versions of how they should behave.

The state in Thailand has invested heavily on notions of the 'Thai family' and what it should consist of and represent. Discourse of the Thai family allows those with power to declare what is normal and acceptable, and thus any changes, such as nucleation or dispersal of families over large spaces, as migration involves, are seen as a threat to the 'Thai family' and therefore also a threat to Thai nationhood and culture.

There is a normative discourse about the family in Thailand, whereby the institution is seen as natural and universal, something grounded in universal imperatives (i.e. as in the neo-localism discourse), not as a more transient entity, constantly changing and responding to social and economic changes (i.e. as Rigg and Ritchie argue of the rural, 2005). The debates of the family within Thailand are similar to those of more generalised views of what is 'Thai' and what is 'the rural' in Thailand as discussed at the beginning of this chapter. The 'nation' of Thailand is also constructed as one big family, with the King as 'father' (both father's day and mother's day rests on the Kings and Queens birthdays). The wellbeing of Thailand and its citizens thus rests on the maintenance of this order. Luscher and Pillemer (1998) argue that a focus on problems within families such as weakened family ties and spatial dispersal are limited. They do not consider why families cohere. I argue this is relevant to the neo-localism discourse within Thailand. They

provide an incomplete picture of family life, as well as rural life which is what Rigg and Ritchie (2005) illustrated. Families are fluid and changing. They are not static institutions but are in constant reproduction. Much like the nation of Thailand these reproductions are subject to elite ideologies being enforced upon actors, but it is important to remember that actors are in constant negotiation with these discourses and their own values. There is both fission and fusion within families. Whilst taking advantage of opportunities from neo-liberal development provides, they are not necessarily following a linear path to individualism. For example Parnwell (2005, 2001) argues families and communities were able to manifest social capital in times of need after the financial crisis. Families are therefore choosing their own path and not necessarily adopting either ideological elite-driven position of liberalism or localism. Families are internalising elements of both value systems in their survival strategies. As Long (2001) demonstrates in his work on an actor oriented framework (see Chapter 3), rural change does not have a uniform impact and there are many idiosyncrasies and ambiguities within these processes of global-local relations.

2.6 Wellbeing Outcomes: Sufficiency Economy: Making a virtue out of low level reciprocity

One outcome example out of the above welfare mix, and ideological discourses behind it, is 'Sufficiency Economy'. Bell (2008) pointed out that the Sufficiency Economy is a strong critique of Thai capitalist development and is an illustration of anti-globalisation sentiments in the face of the 1997 economic crisis. It has been applied to the nation as a whole in not wanting to appear dependent on a volatile market and allowing the internal appearance of self direction and control over domestic matters. However, the group most encouraged to be autonomous and 'self sufficient' are the poor (See Walker, 2008, for a discussion on this). They are encouraged to be 'autonomous' in their search for welfare but relationships of dependency and state paternalism are still enforced thus causing problematic inclusion and wide international criticism for this highly enforced and propagated state ideology. Therefore autonomy coexists with substantial relationships of dependence and subordination (for a discussion of autonomy and dependency see, Devine, Camfield & Gough, 2006). The ideas of autonomy the sufficiency economy discourse is pushing for, is not rights based with entitlement guarantees (as Doyal & Gough (1991) understand autonomy as a human need).

The Sufficiency Economy discourse is one that has been developed out of the need for a 'firm foundation of self reliance' as a basis for human development (Walker, 2007), i.e. autonomy and not dependency on the state. In the aftermath of the 1997 economic crisis the need for self-reliance as a safety net for future uncertainties increased and has been adopted and re-labelled in various forms ever since. It builds on a premise that participation in the global economy, 'in both popular and academic imaginations, is the root cause of all manner of Thailand's ills' (Rigg and Nattapoolwat, 2001, p945). 'Sufficiency' is explained as having three components: moderation, reasonableness and self-immunity (Sathirathai and Piboolsravut, 2004). The meaning and working of what 'sufficiency economy' really involves is contested. However there is a large consensus that the now infamous theory has been hijacked 'for political and business gains' (Pasuk, 2006, p178).

Walker (2008) argues sufficiency economy has become an ideological tool that seeks to moderate rising rural expectations for economic and political inclusion. He states:

 "*whatever sufficiency economy thinkers may have to say about urban consumers or businessmen, it is towards rising rural expectations for economic and political inclusion that the sufficiency economy urgings of moderation are most clearly directed. This is ideologically linked to the active delegitimisation of rural voter's electoral wishes in the post coup environment. Not only are rural people to be shielded (or excluded) from full and active participation in the national economy but their full and active participation in electoral democracy is delegitimised and the power of their elected representatives constrained*" (Walker, 2008).

Whilst it is illustrated in this thesis that villagers are acting more 'sufficient' and are not being dependent on the state, they are also pushing for more inclusion and participation in Thai society, and are therefore challenging this state ideology.

2.7 Reproduction consequences

Conditioning factors and the Welfare mix in Thailand ensure an institutional arena in which the poor face a lack of socio-economic security. Opportunities for institutional support are precarious and poor families have to rely on more informal institutions and relationships for

their security. Indeed in the Thai context, they are encouraged to do this. However, by entering into these relationships and welfare strategies, as Wood (2007, p1) argues, they are in fact strengthening informality and foregoing a rights based future. As illustrated in the historical development of state-society relations under the sections of conditioning factors and the welfare mix, the poor have been marginalised firstly as non-actors, then as a group that needed to be 'developed'. Still, they are not adequately provided with the necessary institutional setting in which they are perceived to be powerful and knowledgeable actors. They survive as best they can in a hostile political-economy in which inequality and alienation prevail and this thesis is an investigation on *how* they do this.

However, whilst there have been largely simple reproduction consequences, there is at the same time constant debate and dynamic regime changes. Internal debates over regimes whether it be liberal or conservative have resulted in a volatile political environment. With the rise of democracy there have been increased opportunities for 'voice' options (Hirschman, 1970) within the institutional landscape. In the Thai wellbeing regime the dominant voices are those loyal to the three pillars of the Thai nation 'nation, religion and monarchy' which means there is little room for expanded reproduction within the current regime settlement. There is little room for voice to criticise the current regime from Trade Unions, poor groups or NGO's. As Ungpakorn (2009) demonstrates, NGO's have been 'loyal' to the existing regime for their own survival and political purposes.

This brings us back to the benefits of a Wellbeing approach. The use of a 'settled' / 'unsettled' idea is illustrative of the constant debates going on in Thailand. Thailand is not entirely path-dependent with 'simple' reproduction outcomes of existing power structures and social inequalities and ideas. However the changes occurring are not revolutionary or groundbreaking. It is therefore useful to see Thailand as an 'unsettled' regime, as it implies conflict, negotiation and undercurrents of change and debate. As I have argued in this chapter, the debate is not settled over the use of the market, welfare or classes, all domains are contested and there is only short lived political settlement.

The differing versions of the Thai welfare mix and what it should consist of, i.e. the sufficiency/community model or the 'Thaksinomics' model, tell us a lot about the nature of insecurities poor people in Thailand face. Both a community approach and the neo-liberal economic approach suggest that welfare and the provision of welfare falls mainly under the institutions of family and market. Bell (2008) argues that Sufficiency Economy supports the neo-liberal position as neither approach raises the issue of rights or guarantees formal social protection by a strong state-sponsored system. Until this happens there is little chance for expanded reproduction consequences.

2.8 From the wellbeing framework to my own conceptual framework

The above discussions over the wellbeing regime within the context of the Thai studies literature reveal various discourses and institutional set-ups that make Thailand a relatively 'unsettled' wellbeing regime. The rest of this thesis goes on to discuss the strategies actors use in order to find security within this unsettled regime. Therefore I am building my own conceptual framework (see figure 3 below) in light of the Wellbeing model. This is in order to better understand the reality of behaviour and meanings for Thai villagers in this study and within the Thai context.

The conceptual framework starts with the viewpoint that actors are actively searching for their own wellbeing. The top left hand box illustrates that actors are being instrumental and are actively negotiating their livelihoods around both local values and state sponsored ideologies and initiatives. They have the capacity to make institutional choices but only within the framework of local realities and values which are in turn shaped by institutions and social norms, including state ideology versions (Long, 2001). Therefore 'agency' is a central element in the conceptual framework. This idea is taken from the wellbeing framework in which the human being is at the centre of analysis (McGregor 2008). This is not an individualistic perspective as in

order to understand human behaviour it is necessary to understand communities and societies in which actors are situated in and the importance of relationships in these.

Figure 3: Conceptual Framework

Epistemology

Actor oriented perspective

I.e. actors have the capacity to make institutional choices but only within frameworks of values, and influenced by state ideology versions of those values.

Actor's Behaviour

outcomes

Avoidance of dependency due to state ideology as well as cultural norms.

Survivalism

Less expanded reproduction consequences.

Values

Family & Identity

Institutions: State, local, and social.

Norms

Ideologies: State NGOs Buddhism

'Sufficiency economy'/ 'Localism'

Circular migration prevalent. Multiple outcomes rather than simple urban modernism, i.e. 'rurbanisation'.

Frames institutional choice away from state & market dependence towards autonomy of family & self sufficiency – But not of state ideology kind

Reinforced by external national ideology.

Other influences

Structures: including socio-economic inequality, class, ethnicity, international standing etc.

The next sections of figure 3 are the middle boxes explaining behaviour. The boxes of values, institutions and ideologies all contribute to actors' behaviour. They are all dynamic and are socially constructed in relation to particular natural and social environments. They provide guidelines and systems of meaning in which actors perceive and act and are in constant negotiation and flux. As this chapter has illustrated through an analysis on conditioning factors and institutional responsibility the State and Market have been unreliable forms of security, so there is an avoidance of dependency on these institutions and a sense of survival stress (as seen in the top right hand box). This has ensured that the importance of the family and community as institutions have been realised as important safety nets and positive forms of identity. According to the literature review it has also ensured circular migration rather than permanent migration to cities, because of the sense of identity and responsibility to family (the middle right hand box). Life cycle obligations and family responsibility is enforced as actors are reliant on kin and

family for support in times of crisis and in old age (as seen in the bottom right-hand box). These strategies also serve to ensure simple reproduction consequences, as in the wellbeing regime model as they do not out rightly challenge ideologies of limited welfare.

The State in Thailand has been successful in constructing this institutional set up as a virtue of 'Thai family values'. Its 'Sufficiency Economy' discourse has been promoted as a 'Thai way' of emitting the insecurities faced by rapid modernisation and economic shocks. As discussed in the section on reproduction consequences, this has enabled the State to legitimise itself and its low level welfare policies in preference for community capacity building and education policies.

Increasingly it is argued that although self-reliance is being reinforced by this national ideology of 'sufficiency economy', that it is an ideology based on a false reality (Walker, 2008). Imagined communities and families never were homogeneous nor perfect moral beings. I argue that there needs to be a better understanding of families. Their strategies work within relationships to the state and market, but actors remain reliant on realms they can trust. In this case their families, kin and community (this will be further illustrated in chapters 5, 6 and 7). It is important to view this from the perspective that families are actors and not just from state interpretations. Families are themselves involved in institutional choice and change and are therefore negotiating structures for their own benefit.

2.9 Conclusion

The main purpose of this chapter was to provide an overview of the institutional landscape within which poor people in Thailand have to negotiate. I argued that a Wellbeing approach is heuristically useful because it allows us to broaden notions of welfare wherein there is a potential for rights, security and subjective wellbeing. Rather than a more normative approach such as the welfare approach which assumes a positivist connection between the rise in income and other human development indicators and wellbeing. The Wellbeing framework gives

empirical importance to households, communities and the inter-relationships between these and the state and economy from the local level to the global. In the case of Thailand this is particularly important as many values and ideologies are constructed in this domain.

I have also argued, once these inter-relationships are analysed, that the State in Thailand is implicated in reproducing rather than helping to solve problems of inequality and fragmentation. Therefore the state is not a hegemonic force for change. Thai debates illustrated in the conditioning factors sections and the institutional responsibility matrix show that the competing forces of neo-liberalism and the increasing critique of this through neo-localism are seemingly incompatible thus making Thailand an 'unsettled' regime over core values. However, there are still simple reproduction consequences from the current welfare mix leading to outcomes that create little scope for change and instead remain loyal to nationalist ideologies such as sufficiency economy. The poor have to survive with little hope for life changing state support, as the state encourages values of self reliance and communitarian principles.

What the Thai studies literature has contributed is that these multiple state and elite values are in fact 'myths' that need to be deconstructed. They highlight the need to look at agency and institutional choice by poor families and their scope for agency within this adverse landscape. The rest of this thesis is a deeper investigation of these debates. In-depth qualitative research has enabled me to gain villagers' perspectives about what they value in their society. I go on to look at the strategies they adopt for their wellbeing and how this differs between the places they live in, and by gender and generation. This allows me to analyse the meanings behind these actions, which values are dominant and how people feel they should be behaving. With increased differentiation I investigate how families are continuing to live together and are adapting to these changes. Importantly I investigate how actors imagine their futures and how they are strategising for the future security of their family. Findings question the wholesale adoption of State-led ideology and meanings and also the types of security villagers choose to invest in.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

"Rural lives are no longer- perhaps have never been- rooted in one (rural) place, but are fluid and characterised by movement. Therefore a study of movement is more representative of the lives of ordinary rural people than a more conventional village-based ethnography" (Brody, 2001, p20)

3.1 Introduction

This thesis is a result of years of dialogue between me and my respondents, from July 2004 when I first arrived in the village for my Masters fieldwork and until September 2006 when I finished my PhD fieldwork. The main PhD fieldwork collection was from June 2005 until the end of 2006 and was based on a village study and in areas of destination, notably Bangkok and Bang Pa-In, Ayutthaya. This gives a more representative view of the life of rural villagers in modern day Thailand, who have high levels of mobility and frequently work outside of the village. The village 'Ban Dong'[11] is situated in a National Park in Mukdahan Province (see maps at beginning of thesis), which sits on the periphery of the Isan region (the North-eastern region). Studying a peripheral area made it easier for me to see the contrasts between rural and urban Thailand, which is one of extreme inequality and cultural differences.

I situate myself within the field of development, and not anthropology, sociology or human geography, but there are overlaps between disciplines, and so where my research lies is in an interdisciplinary 'development anthropology'. This has implications for how I conducted my research and the methods that I chose. I draw heavily on ethnographic methods, but not just in a descriptive style, as I investigate how people perceive events. Thus I also engage with sociological theory of structure and agency and elements of geographical issues of space and identity. Academic studies within and on Thailand have primarily fallen within a positivist social science agenda, following a deductive approach with set research questions and theoretical

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[11] Ban Dong is not the real name of the village, but is a pseudonym used by the Wellbeing in Developing Countries Project for the same village. Thus I adopted the same name for it.

hypotheses. This is especially the case for research conducted on mobility and social change. Within Thailand large demographic surveys are conducted and used for data collection with deductive reasoning from these. There have been limited constructivist anthropological studies (Turton (1983, 1992), Keyes (1967, 1972), Suriya Smutkupt (2003), Thaweesit (2004)). However, most anthropological studies have fallen into more functionalist perspectives. Writing this thesis has therefore given me the opportunity to contribute to a better understanding of the meaning and impact of rural change on people's lives and from their perspectives, within a constructivist ontology and a subjectivist, actor oriented epistemology.

In this chapter I explain the way I have chosen to conduct my fieldwork and the way I have approached my analysis through an explanation of firstly, my epistemology and ethnographical approach and secondly, my fieldwork methods, positionality and ethics. Lastly, I introduce more about the village and site selection process, which will link in with my next chapter which is an ethnography of Ban Dong itself. This chapter is both an explanatory process and also a reflexive process of the way I have carried out my investigation, and the limitations of this research. This chapter aims to provide a more detailed and philosophical discussion of anthropological research on social change and migration than previous studies on Thailand. Those who have written books and thesis on similar topics of inquiry (e.g. Mills, 1991, Brody, 2001) have included excellent notes on their methodology in their introductory chapters, but did not have specific methodology chapters. I hope that this chapter will therefore provide a helpful account of the methodological approaches and challenges to this kind of research.

3.2 Actor-oriented Approach Revisited

It was during my Masters fieldwork in the same community that I realised rural people's lives were intimately woven between spheres that were conceptually binary oppositions, such as rural and urban spaces and traditional and modern livelihoods. These people moved within and between these spaces and challenged my perceptions about them and changed my view of their

usefulness in understanding rural people's livelihoods. Thus one of the main underlying questions of my PhD research was to better understand the life worlds of these villagers I had met, originally from a rural village, but who have mobile livelihoods, spanning many different conceptual spheres. In so many reports and studies, the rural poor of the Isan region have been seen as powerless objects in the transformatory processes that Thailand is undergoing. Not as actors in their own right, as explained in the previous chapter. Those classified as the 'rural poor' are portrayed as 'pawns and failures of development, a thing of the past and as helpless victims of the forces of modernisation and industrialisation' (Brody 2000).

Therefore another objective of this research was to find out if the above was really the case and did the 'rural poor' really see themselves and act in this way. Of course, from already spending time in Thailand and in Isan, I was aware that this was not the case and so I adopted an approach whereby I could focus on the notion of actors' agency. The Actor Oriented Approach was first developed by Norman Long in the 1980's (Long, 1984, 1990, 1992, 2001 Arce & Long 2000); the approach means recognising 'that within the limits of the information and resources they have and the uncertainties they face, individuals and social groups are "knowledgeable" and "capable", that is, they devise ways of solving, or if possible avoiding "problematic situations", and thus actively engage in constructing their own social worlds…' (Long, 2001, p24). The approach does not assume that lifeworlds of the rural poor are preordained, by the state or by capitalism or 'development', as some theories suggest (Todaro, Marx, Tonnies, etc). As structuration theory argues (Giddens, 1987, 1991), social and economic structures are both constituted by human agency, and at the same time reproduced by this agency. This thought can also be seen as part of a wider debate on the sociology of development (Gardner and Lewis 1996, Hobart 1993).

By looking at human agency, my fieldwork focused on investigating the strategies of my respondents. Central to this was looking at the struggles, negotiations and trade-offs that take place between individuals and groups of actors with different and sometimes conflicting interests and outlooks. These people are easily distinguishable in the case of Thailand, where inequality between these different groups is large. I believe that it is the outcome of these

processes and struggles that results in social change, and as structuration theory suggests, emphasis should not only be on the constraints that powerful economic, social and political structures provide. Long states that research following this strategy must look at the strategies of rural actors, their calculation and decision-making (which I look at in detail in Chapters 5, 6 and 7) and also their 'lived experiences, desires, understandings and self-defined problematic situations' (Long, 2001, p27) which is the main objective of this research. All of this research has been conducted with an understanding of wider structural phenomena within Thailand (Chapters 1, 2 and 4) which are set within a context of rapid change. This rapid change is transforming labour processes and agricultural activities as well as cultural and social trends and behaviour and is structured by larger political-economic forces and power relations (therefore I have not taken *structures* out of the equation).

This approach is based on an interpretative conceptual framework, which was set out in Chapter 2. My aim in this thesis is not to formulate a general theory of social change in Thailand, and how larger political economic forces govern this change, as a positivist epistemology would espouse. Rather I seek to shed light on the processes, trade-offs and actions people use in their everyday lives to reproduce and sometimes change existing social arrangements.

Therefore this actor oriented approach is based on the ontological values of social construction and reconstruction. The epistemological foundations of this research are in essence interpretivist, because it concentrates on the subjective meaning of social actions (Bryman, 2000). It also builds on critical realism whereby human action plays a crucial role in the construction of reality, but noticing there is an independent external reality which can constrain or facilitate this very action, as in structuration theory. As Norman Long states the 'actor oriented approach offers valuable insights into these processes of social construction and reconstruction….. (whilst) also (enabling) us to conceptualise how locales interlock with wider frameworks and networks of relations…' (Long, 2001, p49). This approach can also be seen in more recent work in Thailand and elsewhere (see Gough & McGregor, 2007).

3.3 Studying Migration

Previous studies of migration, in Thailand and elsewhere, view migration as a concrete phenomenon, something which can be categorised by type, length and motivation. There are also various 'migration dichotomies' in migration thought (described in figure 4). My approach to the study of migration is different to many previous studies; it is more fluid, even in its definition. 'Much migration literature assumes that origin and destination areas are fixed in time and space. However in circulatory migration, multiple residencies are often held (Boyle et al, 1998). This approach to migration then causes problems when trying to define the phenomenon, how long do you have to be gone for? How far do you have to go before you are a 'migrant'? This is why I frequently use the term 'mobility' in this thesis, because it is a much more fluid concept, highlighting that there can never be any clean breaks in the spatio-temporal spectrum of mobility (Zelinsky 1983, also see Altimirano, 2006).

Figure 4: Methodological Dichotomies in migration thought

'micro-analytical' vs 'macro-analytical'

Research that concentrates on individual migrants and their decision making and lives, and those that focus on groups of migrants or population in general.

'Objective' vs 'normative'

Research that deals with broad identifiable patterns and research that deals with psycho-social levels of analysis that deals with the norms underpinning actions and decisions.

'Determinist' 'behavioural' and 'humanist'

Determinist accounts downplay individual agency and assume migration to be a rational response to a rational situation or as inevitable. Examples of these accounts are Ravenstein (1885) (laws of migration) and Zelinsky (1971) (demographic transition model) and neo-classical economic models such as Todaro, (1970).

'Behavioural accounts are critical of determinist perspectives, they not only take into account quantifiable, observable patterns, but also look at the mechanisms behind these individual acts. They analyse psychological processes and decision making between environment and individual. This view does not assume migrants to be purely rational income maximising agents, but instead they are people with different aspirations and needs and therefore satisfaction' (Boyle et al p63). See Lee (1966)

Humanist perspectives emphasise the individual migrant as an active decision maker, not necessarily rational and as someone with a choice. Humanists engage with the beliefs, aspirations and obligations of individual migrants. Humanist accounts do not rest on generalization, but instead on in depth experiences that may or may not be shared by others.

Adapted from source: Boyle et al, 1998

Chambers (1994) argues the significance of migration is as a cultural experience and not just a spatial or temporal movement. He describes migrancy as an experience of constant change, as population movement where the points of departure and arrival are uncertain (Chambers, 1994). This draws the study of culture, experience and subjectivity into the arena of migration, which is no longer a concrete movement, but an uncertain movement in one's life course. This all has effects on how to study such an uncertain, fluid and multi dimensional phenomenon.

Migration is both a reflection of culture and a constitutive element of culture (Boyle et al, 1998, p207). It is not an action that, as determinist and behavouralist approaches assume, is a specific action in time and space, but instead it is embedded within a migrant's life course. It relies on past experience and future expectations, it is embedded in their everyday lives and thus it is a cultural event. For example Fielding argues 'migration tends to expose one's loyalties and reveals one's values and attachments (often previously hidden). It is a statement of an individual's world view, and is, therefore, an extremely cultural event' (Fielding, 1992, p201). This is why the researcher felt ethnographic methods were the most suitable to adopt when undertaking this kind of research.

3.4 Methods: Doing Ethnography

Silverman states 'if one is really to understand a group of people, one must engage in an extended period of observation. Anthropologists' fieldwork routinely involves immersion in a culture over a period of years, based on learning the language and participating in social events' (Silverman, 2001, p47). Also, within an Actor Oriented Approach Norman Long warns the researcher not to impose their own categories of interpretation (Long, 2001, p27). Thus by undertaking an ethnographic study I have tried to keep my mind open to new ways of thinking and learn from the things that my respondents taught me and explained to me. My research therefore ended up being an inductive process, rather than deductive. As Boyle et al explain 'ethnographic research has strong emphasis on investigating particular social phenomena rather

than constructing and testing hypotheses about these situations' and ethnographic data also tend to be more unstructured and have depth rather than breadth' (Boyle et al, 1998).

The ethnographic techniques of participant observation and interactive dialogue meant that I had to be physically present in the field and personally involved in the everyday lives of my informants. To be able to do this I chose to stay with a family that lived in the village, I chose carefully, knowing that it was one of the most important and influential decisions I would have to make during my *in situ* stay. I ended up living with the Khamyod[12] family. They had a large kinship group and so I knew I would benefit from their extended network of relationships. In the household itself was Por (Father), Mae (Mother), Add (a 26 year old male, although when I first met him he was 22) and Nong Nim (now a 17 year old female, I first met her when she was 13). They also had two other older daughters living in Bang Pa-in in Ayutthaya Province, close to Bangkok, both working in factories (one of these was Pam from the introduction of this thesis). I knew that I could benefit from living with a household with contacts and experience in the city. They lived in a large house, with a newly built shower/toilet block and a tiled floor, with the downstairs enclosed with concrete walls (as most Isan houses are on stilts, they are usually open with no walls). The privacy and relative affluence of this family were also deciding factors, primarily because I had to hire a research assistant that could stay in the village with me for long periods of time.

Due to the remote nature of Ban Dong, it was extremely difficult to find a qualified assistant willing to live in these conditions. A second factor was that the house enabled enough room for the family to go about their normal daily lives without me being in the way and they could have their privacy upstairs, whilst I slept downstairs with my assistant and Add (he slept on the other side of the room sectioned off by curtains). A large amount of the other households in the village only had one room for their accommodation, including their sleeping area and I did not want to impose on families for a long period of time as it may have resulted in feelings of conflict. I stayed a few nights in other households the first few months of my fieldwork,

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[12] Not the real name of the family

including one of the teacher's houses. However their families were small and did not have any of their household members away working at that time.

There were however, some complications with staying with the Khamyod family. Por used to be a tambon[13] representative, and so they were already quite a powerful unit within the village, and there was some gossip and questions asked about why I chose to stay with this particular family. In my last few months of research I found out that some villagers suspected Por of corruption when he used to work in the post of tambon representative[14]. They did not understand how he could afford to make the changes to his house or concrete the small *soi* (lane) he lived on. I knew from past talks with him that he saved up the money over many years of his daughters migrating to make the changes to his house. His eldest daughter Pam (from the introduction to this thesis) had been migrating for 17 years, and his other daughter, Took for 9 years. The sum of money saved was substantial because for the first 7 years Took's entire salary was sent back to her family and she lived rent free with her older sister and her husband. Each month over 7,000bht was sent back and considering some families only make 25,000bht per year from their cassava farms, this is a lot of money. My point is, if I had not lived with the family and had this anthropological experience, these points of conflicts, gossip, and truths would not have been uncovered by the researcher, and have thus made my research all the more grounded and rich.

This point relates to my next topic which is getting beyond performances. When I first arrived in the village as a Masters student, I was told by the village head and various villagers how equal all the villagers were and how they lived in harmony and took care of one another. If someone could not afford to eat, then they would be given rice and so on. However, after the prolonged exposure to the field that ethnography allowed me to gain, I became aware of the multiple voices of villagers, conflicts, and inequalities and power struggles. If I had not stayed in the village for a large amount of time, living with a family and being trusted by the people, I would not have been exposed to the 'backstage' (Goffman, 1969) of village life .

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[13] Tambon= local sub-district, usually comprising 4 or 5 villages.
[14] Tambon representatives are elected officials to the TAO, Tambon Administrative Organisation.

As well as living in the village of Ban Dong, there was also an urban component to my fieldwork. I spent time travelling with participants to their areas of work in Bangkok and in Bang Pa-in. I had met Pam and Took, the daughters of the family I lived with, when they returned to the village in April for the Songkran festival and during their week in the village I got to know them and asked if I could visit them in Bang Pa-in to learn more about their lives there. Once in Bang Pa-in I lived with Pam and her husband and then after a few weeks, I stayed with Took and her husband for a month. I alternated between their dormitories depending on their hours of work and stayed wherever it was more convenient as some weeks Took and her husband worked the night shift and so it was more convenient for me to stay in their apartment during the nights. I started visiting other respondents I had first met during the Songkran festival and then snowballed from then on by visiting their friends. This allowed me to meet some participants who had not travelled back to Ban Dong whilst I had been staying there. I had met Nudt this way; she rarely goes back to the village to visit her brother and mother. Nudt lived in a newly built apartment block and shares a single room with another girl from the factory she works in. Even though her life in Bang Pa-in was comparatively nicer than other respondents in this study, she still explained to me that she is saving for her younger brother to enter into army training. Another participant, Ed had never returned back to the village since he left after he finished school. I had met his older sister San both in the village and in Bangkok where she works as a shop assistant in an aquarium near Jatjujak market.

When in Bangkok I stayed with friends or my research assistants in Phayathai or Saphan Kwai areas. Staying with participants was difficult as some like San lived with the shop owners. Others such as Ploy, who works as a construction worker lived in a large abandoned factory with many other people whom she did not know and advised me that it would be dangerous for me to stay there. I therefore chose to stay with my assistants in student dorms, rather than impose on respondents. This meant I had to ensure I visited regularly in the day time, and also visited their places of work. For some this was easy, as shop owners and bosses welcomed me as a foreigner they wanted to meet. For those respondents who worked in factories, access was difficult and meetings mainly took place in their places of residence, although I would often travel to work with them and meet them for lunch. During fieldwork I had expected to write in-depth analysis

on the urban component of this research. However, during the writing-up of this thesis I chose to focus my analysis on the village of Ban Dong. This was because I focused down my investigation to family welfare strategies and most of these related back to the village. However, my experiences in Bangkok and Bang Pa-in did influence the way I represented participants and the way I interpreted my data and enriched the whole research process because of it. Therefore whilst there is little discussion of the urban component, I did include smaller glimpses into the lives of those participants away from the village during their life histories in chapter 6 in order to represent their lives fairly.

Figure 5: my room in Bang Pa-in

Figure 6: On day trip with respondents

Figure 7: Visiting respondent in Bangkok

Figure 8: Visiting a construction site, Bangkok

I consider myself very lucky that I was able to spend a longer time in the field than normally undertaken by PhD researchers. This was because my initial Masters research was also conducted in the village of Ban Dong and so I was already known to villagers a year before my PhD research started. I had also visited the village between my Masters and PhD. This saved a lot of time as when I entered the field as there was already some trust and access established. Rattana (1997) describes how an ethnographer 'hopes to establish a long term relationship with the people she or he writes about because only when they can develop trust with the people, can they begin to ask provocative personal questions and expect thoughtful, serious answers from their informants' (Rattana, 1997, p16). My PhD fieldwork started in July 2005, the first 3 months of research were spent just living in the village, no formal interviews were conducted. Five informal interviews were conducted on the history of the village and religious ceremonies, with different age groups but I kept these as informal as possible. The main motivation behind them was not to gain information, as I was already aware of a lot of it from my Masters fieldwork, but it was an opportunity for me to get to know some of the villagers more personally.

It was from September 2005 until April 2006 that I conducted most of the life history narratives. Then in April 2006 I met more participants that had returned home for the Songkran festival and

I returned with them to Bang Pa-in and Bangkok to complete the urban component of my fieldwork and collect further life histories. I then returned to the village from July until September 2006 and during this time I did not conduct any life history interviews. I conducted focus group discussions, but most of this time was spent living in the village and participating in events and daily life, keeping my fieldwork diary and at the end, making sure I withdrew from the village as easily as possible.

During my fieldwork I experienced everyday life in the village, planting cassava, making rice in the morning, making merit by giving food to passing monks each morning, I helped cook lunch and dinner for the family I stayed with as well as cooking with neighbours. After around 4 months, I became a 'daughter' of the Khamyod family, an older sister to Nim and sister to Add. These relationships presented me with both opportunity and constraints. I could benefit from openness and honesty from those I was close to and their stories of me and trust spread to other villagers, which benefitted my fieldwork immensely. However, as an honorary family member I also had to abide by household and socio-cultural rules and norms. I could not stay out late, I could not talk to men by myself, and if I travelled out of the village I had to let everyone know where I was going and what time I would be back. I also had to fulfil familial duties by paying respect to my honorary parents on mothers' day and during festivals. I had to dress and behave appropriately, like a 'good Thai lady'. I lost over a stone in weight and straightened my hair to fit in.

As I settled into life in the village, my status changed somewhat as I no longer heard '*farang*' (a white foreigner) whispered by children or passers by. I made a conscious effort for everyone to know me by name and to get to know as many people as possible. Although I could never be a true 'insider' as my skin was white and I could always leave any time I wanted to, I became known as P'Susan (by people younger than me) or Nong Sue (by those older than me) and people opened up and became noticeably friendlier. As I walked down the road I engaged in friendly talk with neighbours asking me how I was, where I was going '*Susan pai sai?',* they invited me to eat with them or sit with them and I did. During these chats I got to know them, discuss politics, health and gossip and more importantly they got to know me. I had to give a

little of myself if I was to expect respondents to confide in me about their lives with thoughtful and honest answers. I had noticed villagers' lack of trust in other academics that would come to the village for a day or a week, collect data and then leave, never to be seen again. So it was important for me to position myself as someone who they could trust before I set out conducting life history interviews.

This brings me to the issue of relationships. They are very important in ethnographic research, as the relationships I had with participants became very intimate. Whilst this closeness was advantageous as it gave me deeper knowledge of their life worlds. It also meant I had to be aware of expectations of me, and also the issue of withdrawing from the field. I was lucky that the family I lived with considered me a family member and after a while refused any money I tried to give to them to cover rent or electricity. Instead I contributed food to evening meals and helped with household and labour tasks. Leaving the village was very difficult, but in the last few weeks I said my goodbyes to everyone, and explained that I had to go back to finish my study, and discussed my fieldwork findings for feedback. The relationships I had with some villagers were stronger than others. When I first entered Ban Dong it was at the age of 22 for my Masters fieldwork and I became friendly with the teenagers and young people and this gave me a closer relationship with them. When I left Ban Dong I was 26, most of the teenagers I was friendly with had either migrated or were married. Therefore I had to make a special effort with younger respondents; I went to play volleyball, went swimming and went on day trips with them. My relationships with adults were different. At first I was a respected foreign academic, but after a prolonged period I was Nong Sue and questions arouse such as '*don't you miss your parents*?', 'how can you be away from home for so long?' and 'when will you get married?'. This made me aware of the responsibilities and the stage on which young people have to negotiate within the village.

In addition to age, my gender was an important factor. All eyes were on me when I spoke to young unmarried men; I could never speak to them alone. I was lucky that Add was friendly and made it easy for me to interview young men by coming along with me and my research assistant. My race was another issue, at first I had blonde curly hair, cars stopped to look at me

as they drove by and many people stared at me, which made me feel uncomfortable. I decided to make a transformation which would lessen (although could never completely eliminate) my differentness. I lost weight, straightened my hair and dyed it brown. I worked on my Isan and Thai language skills and cars no longer realised a '*farang*' was walking along the road and villagers took pride in telling me that some people in neighbouring villages thought I was Thai or '*luk kreung'* (half Thai- half Western). However, no matter how much I tried to fit in, I would always be different. Many villagers thought all Westerners were rich and asked a lot about my life in the UK. I was asked by the school to pay for a new concrete driveway (I declined). I was not a rich student. I often had no money left after I paid my research assistant's wages. The family I lived with and most villagers noticed this and there was a mutual respect between us. I contributed what little I could, sweets for the nursery and English practice for neighbours' children, but nothing big. I often felt inadequate as many respondents asked for my advice on farming techniques, irrigation and crops. There was a desperate need for more knowledge about rural opportunities and land rights, but I was not an agricultural engineer or crop expert and could not provide them with the help they needed.

These participant-researcher relationships mean that it is impossible for any ethnographer to remain objective in the field, as Brody (2000) explains 'anthropologists are increasingly sensitive to the dangers of representation or of claiming to reflect objective truths that were available to them "out there" in the field' (Brody, 2000, p36, citing Clifford 1986). Thus the problem of how to interpret people's statements became a central concern and I have tried to overcome this being a problem by adopting the approach of discursive analysis (Foucault, 1972). I am aware that both I and my respondents are subjective actors, and we all to an extent put on performances. This research is also therefore a product of my own subjective interpretation of what I have seen and the stories people have told me. One of the limitations of research of this kind is that this is my own personal representation and interpretation of my experiences. This research cannot possibly provide an overall explanation of social change in Thailand, but is a small case study from which other research can be compared.

Throughout my analysis I was critically aware of the information my informants gave me, as well as other sources of information. Discourses are representational ways of explaining, describing and classifying people, issues and events in particular ways (Foucault, 1972). Therefore by analysing discourses, both dominant discourses and more informal discourse by my respondents I hope to uncover and deconstruct and therefore better understand social change in Thailand and the way ordinary people perceive themselves in the process of this change. I have collected sets of 'narratives' from my respondents, rather than giving structured interviews, because the term 'narrative' conveys that the information given is someone's ideas, values, attitudes, beliefs and actions. Therefore people's narratives are systems of self-representation, they are stories told, sometimes for the benefit of the interviewer, sometimes for the benefit of the interviewee. Also, because of my friendships with respondents, this has made it very difficult for me to pull back from the everyday concerns and struggles of villagers, and even harder for me to represent any respondents negatively in my analysis and writing up.

This brings me to the subject of triangulation. There are no 'truths' out there, to be collected by the researcher. People's narratives are only their version of the truth, and in this research I have tried to allow the multiple voices of the people that I have spoken with to come out. I have done this by writing case studies about people's lives, and have used their own words as much as I can, and hope that not too much has been 'lost in translation'. All of the 33 life narratives I have collected have been triangulated with one another, and what I interpret from them has been backed up by my own observations, as well as information from the other methods I have used and other studies such as the WeD project data for internal validity.

Lastly, this in turn brings me to the issue of ethics and representation in ethnographic research. My initial decision to enter into this PhD stemmed from my past experiences, both at Hull University when I first studied development issues in Southeast Asia and at Bath University when I undertook fieldwork in Khon Kaen, Roi-et and Mukdahan provinces in Northeast Thailand. The socio-economic inequality I first learned about and then witnessed fuelled my desire to somehow speak out against it. This is therefore a critical ethnography (Madison, 2005). Critical ethnography 'begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or

injustice within a particular "lived" domain' (Ibid, p5). Critical ethnography is also complementary to my actor oriented approach. Noblit et al (2004) argue that critical ethnographers must 'explicitly consider how their own act of studying and representing people and situations are acts of domination even as critical ethnographers reveal the same in what they study' (Ibid, p3). Therefore an awareness of my positionality is crucial, as Madison argues; it forces us to 'acknowledge our own power and bias just as we are denouncing the power structures that surround our subjects' (Madison, 2005, p7). Part of the purpose of this methodology chapter therefore has been to expose my positionality, my intentions, methods and self reflection.

Doing ethnography is a personal experience; my emotions were woven into my research design and processes. In order to remain accountable I followed the ethical guidelines of Bath University, as well as remaining in constant dialogue with those I 'researched'. I constantly asked respondents for verification of my findings, both formally and informally. In addition, in order to remain accountable I had to give some of myself to my respondents; the research was not all one way. They asked questions about my life story too. This helped the research processes, as my parents' occupations were similar to villagers (my mother a school teacher and father trained as a carpenter), I told villagers stories of my relationships back home, of my mother's battle with Multiple Sclerosis and cancer and so parallels could be made and the lines between researched and researcher blurred. This blurring of boundaries and informal nature of my research meant that formal consent was difficult. When I first entered the village, the village head introduced me at a village meeting and I explained that I was a student and wanted to find out about their lives for my research project. At the beginning of interviews I also asked for consent and ensured anonymity and confidentiality.

Avoiding harm was another ethical dimension to this research, it was my moral responsibility to represent villagers truthfully and accurately, and avoid them any harm. When difficult subjects arose during interviews all respondents were given the chance to stop the interview or ask for omissions to be made. However all respondents made it clear to me that they wanted me to tell their stories. It was at other times that I was unsure whether to omit my findings. During the

course of fieldwork I witnessed violence, underage marriage, illegal activities, lying to parents, sexual liaisons with police officers, corruption and drug use amongst many other things. These situations posed a moral dilemma for me, but in the end I chose not to tell parents or others or write about it in detail in this thesis, because this would have violated the trust that was bestowed upon me. In addition all names of people and places have been changed.

3.5 The Narrative Method

Narratives are useful ways in which to better understand the multi-dimensionality of migration. As Kothari states 'it is necessary to adopt a comprehensive framework that extends beyond economist analysis in order to reveal the complex and multiple processes' involved (Kothari, 2001, p26). In all too many studies of migration in Thailand there is a reliance on movement statistics, the number of people registered coming and going, remittances sent, ratio of males and female migrants and surveys on why people move and the seasons they move in. In these studies those labelled as 'migrants' are represented as a faceless, homogeneous group without individual thoughts and feelings. These studies include the National Migration Surveys undertaken by academics at Mahidol University, and other studies such as Lightfoot and Fuller (1989) who concentrate on the types of movements.

The approach that I take to the study of migration as set out above by my adherence to the Actor oriented epistemology, is more holistic than previous studies. I find the 3 main issues to remember (in figure 9 below) helpful when conceptualising my research methodology.

Figure 9: Three main issues to remember in migration thought

1. Migration has to be seen as an action in time. It is not a decision made in one point in time. Decisions are effected by past experiences and future aspirations. Asking questions such as "why did you move?" does not help to understand migration fully as decisions are part of the life course of a migrant, their biography. Biographical approaches offer a more in-depth understanding of migration. They build up a picture of decisions from different angles, demonstrating where migration fits into a person's life.
2. Migration is embedded within a person's biography and reasons for moving vary. Not all of these reasons will have equal significance but all will contribute in explaining the form that migration takes. There are thus no neat reasons or explanations for migration taking place.
3. Migration must be seen as a very cultural event. Individual migrants are embedded within varied cultures. These cultures introduce them to and socialise them into normative behaviour and responses to existing structures (as in structuration theory)

Adapted from Boyle *et al* (1998) p 81

Therefore when thinking about collecting narratives, I had to also think about the way I wanted to collect them and the different approaches. The life history approach traces individuals through their lives with emphasis being placed on their migrations that have shaped their lives. Boyle et al highlight the limitations of this approach, including memory lapse and errors and state that smaller or shorter migrations may be forgotten (Boyle et al, 1998, p53). A biographical approach is also helpful in migration studies. It can be distinguished from the life history approach because it stresses the structural and societal context of a migrant's history. 'It emphasises how this is rooted in their everyday existence rather than stressing the migration events occurring at specific points in time' (Boyle et al, 1998, p53). This is the approach I have adopted.

The biographical approach places emphasis upon contexts and culture. The biographical approach goes beyond humanist bias to allow recognition of the structural constraints and enabling conditions moulding migration (Boyle et al, 1998, p80). It does not stress the purposeful and calculative character of migration but instead it emphasises its location within the individual migrant's entire biography' (Boyle et al, 1998, p80).

Biographical approaches emphasise the cultural dimensions of migration, longitudinal data, housing histories and political economy (Boyle et al, 1998, p81). Biographical approaches look at migration within a series of narratives of daily existence. This requires researchers to conceptualise the action in terms of identity rather than behaviour (Boyle et al, 1998, p81). Therefore this complements the aims of my research and research philosophy, whereby subjective narratives are triangulated and contextualised with the wider context.

As emphasis is placed on context there is a need to disentangle the relative importance of different strands to any one migration decision. Whilst at the same time appreciating how any migration only occurs within the totality of an individuals' narrative portfolio (Boyle et al, 1998. p81). Life cycle approaches however, value stages in families/individual's lives. For example being born, finishing school, getting married, having children, retiring. The biographical approach is different to this as it is based upon personal biographies and event histories. It is sited in geographical, social, historical and political space. Here emphasis is not placed on life stages as it values diversity and transition (Boyle et al, 1998, p110).

However, biographical approaches have been criticised on a number of fronts. Most notably, subjectivity, memory and bias are at the forefront of critiques. In order to combat these doubts biographical methodology validated their sources by using representative surveys and setting up sampling procedures to ensure a lack of bias and ensure repetitiveness. However 'this led to new criticisms for the methods' lack of attention to subjectivity and for neglecting social and psychological influences on remembering' (Chamberlayne, Bornat & Wengraf, 2000, p4). Personal narratives were seen to be less objective, representative and 'truthful' than documented sources or even accounts given by statesmen. In the academic discipline of history the provenance was the most important thing, whereas in sociology it was quantitative measuring of social events (Chamberlayne, Bornat & Wengraf, 2000, P3).

In my research these criticisms are overcome due to my epistemology and academic background. I was not looking for objective accounts or facts and figures. What I wanted to

collect were the personal feelings and meanings my respondents gave to their actions and decisions. Therefore large surveys, questionnaires and structured interviews were not used. Rather, I chose qualitative, open ended methods because these provide unreplicable insights into the processes and meanings that sustain and motivate actors. I wanted to gain an empathic understanding of these actions, and so quantitative, more 'scientific' methods were not necessary as I wanted to understand what people 'do' rather than just what they 'said' they do. By mixing the methods of participant observation (ethnography) with narrative interviews I was able to ascertain both what people did, what they said they did and the reason behind what they did.

The life history biographical narratives were collected from 33 people (see appendix A for a table representing all respondents). Some interviews took only 1.5 hours to collect whilst some took a number of days and many hours (some took 7 hours). The sample was chosen carefully as I wanted to account for age, gender and wealth as well as to account for a range of occupations. I was fortunate to benefit from the Wellbeing in Developing Countries (WeD) Project data as they had a lot of quantitative data on all households. Access to this data enabled me to make sure I had representative samples from each of the three categories of households; those classified as rich, middle and poor. Ranking was from income, land ownership as well as wealth rankings from focus groups the WeD Project had conducted. In addition I had access to the names of each member of every household as well as their ages and gender. Overall there were more households classified as 'rich' in the village than middle or poor. There were only 39 households classified as 'middle wealth' out of 196 households in total. My sampling therefore tried to be representative of this and in all, 17 of my respondents were from 'rich' households, 5 from 'middle level' households and 11 from 'poor' households. My final decisions to include these particular households were not only dependent on wealth. I discussed which households I should ask to conduct life histories with my research assistant and also with the family I stayed with. Whilst I had data on the households' wealth, I had to find out which households had members that worked away from the village. Therefore within each category, I highlighted those households that currently had members migrating, or that used to migrate (this ended up being most households). The final decision about who to include was subjective; I ended up interviewing those participants that felt comfortable talking at length with me or those that I felt

had a story to tell me. In the end I had 15 male respondent and 18 female. I had expected to collect 15 male and 15 female, but ended up interviewing sisters within the same family and so I allowed for more females to be interviewed because of this.

For all life history respondents I also used a drawing of a timeline, so that they could find it easier to explain and remember events. I got them to point out important dates and events and the times when they felt happiest and why and when they felt was the lowest points in their lives on a hand drawn graph. Most narratives started off with experiences of childhood and then chronologically moved onto the present day and ended with future aspirations, my research assistant noted everything down on the chart in Thai and we translated them into English when the interview was over. Some of these graphs can be seen in chapter six of this thesis. I also undertook some in depth interviews (rather than life history interviews where a graph was drawn with respondents) to make sure those from poorer households were represented adequately and also to make sure older women were represented within my study. I did not draw life history charts with older women who had never migrated and so in-depth interviews were my way of making sure I could also represent them (those people I interviewed are also represented in Appendix A).

3.6 Focus Groups

There have been numerous examples where focus groups have been used to complement other methods in social research, particularly survey and market research. In this particular case focus groups have been a welcome addition to my main research tools of ethnography and life history narratives. This is because they have given me a chance to ´focus´ on particular issues/themes that have arisen from these other techniques, whilst also giving me the chance to give feedback about my research to the participants (i.e. focus groups as a participatory learning technique) and it also allowed respondents to discuss certain issues that may not have come up naturally through other methods.

My analysis of the discussions paid attention to the group dynamics and the way people constructed their realities and identities and gave meanings to things during the course of the interaction and discussion between participants. Therefore, the FGD has been used as a holistic method, not just to collect data from certain questions, for example, wealth ranking or social mapping. As Crossley (2002, p1472) states, FDGs are a site of constant negotiation of meanings, identities and stances over a limited period of time....and provide insight into the ´´relational construction of beliefs`` and ´´social processes of belief formation`` (Crossley quoting Waterton and Wynne 1999, p127).

It was hoped that from the questions villagers would share and discuss their feelings about the spaces they occupy. Each FGD started with introductions by myself and my 2 assistants and then we asked people about the most important things about the village for them and then asking them to plot these things on a map of the village (that villagers were asked to draw). The younger age group had no problems doing this. However those in the mid and old age groups were not confident enough to draw so my assistants or myself started to draw with the guidance of the villagers and once discussion had got underway some people found enough confidence to draw things. This then led onto more focusing questions about their perceptions of place and the meaning of change. During these focus groups family responsibilities emerged as a key theme. Focus group questions also included hopes and aspirations for the future as I felt an understanding of these was necessary to understand villagers 'doings' and 'meanings' in the present. Participants were interested in this topic as many people were keen to tell me about how the village has changed, the history of the village and plans for the future and I found that the focus group urged discussion between villagers. In total I conducted 4 focus groups (3 generational groups within the village and 1 pilot group).

I chose to group people into age groups because this is the main way I analyse change (in Chapters 5, 6 and 7). However, I soon became aware during the process that men in the focus groups tended to take a leading role and both myself and my assistants (I had 2 female assistants, one as facilitator and one as a note taker) had to constantly encourage women members of the groups to speak up about their feelings and experiences. To my surprise it was

in the older generational group where women did take an equal role and sometimes dominated debate. However the middle age and younger group were harder to conduct. The focus groups were held in different places, one was in the village meeting place, the rest in one of the member's houses. This was because I wanted people to feel comfortable and so I allowed members to take a leading role in organising the discussions rather than me or my assistants telling people where and when the discussions should take place, and this worked well. At focus groups drinks and snacks were provided for participants as they lasted 1.5 hours each and were in the evenings after dinner (mid-age and older group) or after lunch (pilot group and younger group) and some brought their young children with them and so it provided a good way of keeping them occupied so their parents gave their full attention to the discussions.

3.7 Site Selection and WeD Involvement

The process of selecting my main research site was intimately bound up with my involvement with the Wellbeing in Developing Countries Research Project (WeD). This was a joint project between the University of Bath, UK and Khon Kaen University in the Northeast and Prince of Songkhla University in the South of Thailand (as well as other sites in Peru, Ethiopia and Bangladesh). The Project in Khon Kaen had 4 research sites in the Northeast of Thailand, 2 in Khon Kaen Province, 1 in Roi-et and 1 in Mukdahan. I visited all four sites and chose to compare two for my Masters research, and eventually chose the village in Mukdahan, which was the most remote site, for my PhD data collection. I had a good connection with villagers and the village was a good case study for issues of change and identity within the Isan region.

Through working with the WeD Project I was able to benefit from having a base at Khon Kaen University, with a local supervisor, office space as well as access to data already collected by them, such as village profiles, wealth rankings, village maps and the Resources and Needs Questionnaires (RANQ). Having access to these quantitative data sets allowed me to validate my own interpretations from the field though triangulation with data from a larger number of respondents from all over the region. In addition, discussions with Thai academics, researchers and WeD members in the UK and other WeD countries enabled me to compare my

interpretations from the field and gain feedback and advice. My work was closely associated with the 'process research' WeD conducted. I could link my ethnographic findings to broader discussions and theories of migration, identity and rural change in wider contexts. Of course there are still limitations with my ethnographic case study method, mostly to do with generalisation and the subjectivity of my findings. Another researcher may go into the same village and have a different interpretation. This kind of research is value ridden and biased from disciplinary backgrounds. However, the interpretive claims that I make in this thesis have been discussed with fellow academics and respondents in a reflexive way. There are interpretative dilemmas in all sciences (Herbert, 2000, p558) and objectivity has been heavily critiqued as a social construction in itself, as all fields are apprehended though specific social processes.

I also used WeD research assistants during my field research, especially during my focus group discussions. This was because the staff had already had training in conducting them and so I did not have to spend a large amount of time having to train other assistants. It also allowed me to make sure their interpretations were consistent as I could ask them to check each other's translations. However for most of my time conducting research I had three assistants, one at the beginning of my research who was a recent graduate in social development at Khon Kaen University and she helped me a great deal in giving first interviews to village elders on religious ceremonies in the village and introductory talks with villagers, especially as my Thai at this time was poor. After 4 months I hired a new assistant, who helped me with the translation of the life history biographies, which was the most gruelling part of my research, both in the village and in destination areas. However, after a year, she left to work in the USA and so I hired a new assistant for the last few months of my research to live with me in the village and travel to areas of destination with me. I always felt the need for a Thai person to be able to explain things to me when I did not understand a conversation (especially if it was in Yor dialect). All of my assistants were female and from the Northeast of Thailand and could understand the local dialects 'Yor' and Isan as well as Thai.

3.8 Reflections from the field

Undertaking this research has been a continuous learning experience. A major critique of ethnographic methods has been the concern over representation (Herbert, 2000). Ethnography must be self conscious and reflexively aware about the activities of observation and representation. All too often are rural respondents represented as passive recipients and objects of study. I have tried to be self aware throughout my data collection period and writing up and have been aware of the many dimensions of power between the observer and observed. There are two illustrative examples of this that I wish to share:

Figure 10: Camping with the boy scouts

Camping with the 'Luk Seua'

Midway through my research I was invited to take part in a camping activity that was organised by the village primary school for scouts (Luk Seua). Until this time, I did not have much contact with the teachers of the school, primarily because all my time had been taken up with 'ordinary villagers' rather than people who had a lot of authority within the community, and who lived outside of the village in nearby larger villages or towns. Thus this was my chance to meet the teachers, and get to know some of the children and the activities I had heard so much about during my biographical life histories.

We started off about 6am, meeting at the school with the children getting ready filling their homemade bamboo flasks with water and filling up on sweets they had bought for the trip. I was expecting a long trek, but I was told we would drive to the camp with the teachers. We spent the rest of the morning setting up the camp and hiking in the forest with the village herb doctor learning about the benefits of herbs, leaves and vines in the forest. The hike ended with all of the children swimming in the lake near the campsite.

Back at base camp some of the other village elders had arrived, including Por and the village headman. They showed the children how to light fires safely, and how to cook rice using pots made from bamboo and cutlery made from leaves. During this time the village head and his friends had got drunk and were heading to the forest with their hand-made traps to catch rats (hunting is illegal in the national park). He was adamant that I should go along with him, but the teachers told me that I should stay, saying that it was dangerous for me to go alone with drunk men to the forest. They did not know I actually knew and got on well with the headman (as he lived opposite the house where I

lived), and had on many occasions gone into the forest with men, although I didn't want to tell them this for fear of them misunderstanding me.

The head teacher ended up asking Por to intervene and say that I was too busy helping out to go with them. This was one of the first of many conflicts between the villagers and teachers on what I should do.

It was dusk and time for everyone to take a shower in the small river, everyone except me that is. I was told I could not shower because it was dirty and unsafe and so the head teacher would drive me all the way back to my house in the village to take a shower and then drive me back to the campsite to sleep. As much as I objected, it was futile and I was escorted back, with my assistant. Por saw my frustration and laughed knowing that I liked to shower in the river near the house rather than use the house shower, but I had no power to argue with the teachers. This experience actually helped my relationship with Por and other villagers. We were all under control of the teachers.

Later that night, a bonfire was built and there were talks on poisonous animals and drugs by local health officials and the forest officer and group presentations by the children. As it got later more and more villagers joined the camp and started to drink and gamble. The teachers were not happy with the developments. The next day I found out that 2 people had been arrested. Whilst the forest officers had been in the camp site they discovered some of the villagers had extended their fields into park land which was near the camp site. It so happened that the head officer was married to one of the school teachers and so ensued a mass boycott of the school for the next week by villagers. No one sent their children to the school, and the teacher had to leave the village and go and live in another village for fear of her safety. This was one of many village conflicts between the villagers and powers of authority, and without being there in the field, I would not have experienced this first hand.

Figure 11:Planting Cassava

Planting Cassava

I tried as much as I could to help and fit in with the household I lived with. In fact this was quite an easy task as I found that I could eat all of the food they ate, which can be a problem for most outsiders as they frequently ate forest animals such as rat, bird, crab, frog, squirrel, insects and even monkey. To really be accepted and also for me to better understand them, I also had to experience their livelihoods. For most villagers this meant the production of rice and cassava, and for the household I lived with this meant planting 5 rai of cassava over 3 days (as well as looking after it, removing grass from it and harvesting it over the year). All 4 members of the household were there along with hired labourers who consisted of 2 women and 5 or 6 men. My research assistant however was most shocked to discover she had to help out and after a short period of helping out, after lunch mostly slept under the shade of a small hut.

Photo: Planting Cassava.

It was while she was away and I was alone with the labourers, some of whom I had never met before, that I found they were a very talkative bunch. They had been too shy to ask me questions when my assistant had been with me and took this opportunity to ask me many questions, all about the UK, my study, my love life, my thoughts about Thailand and the village. It was when I was talking about my study that I had a very useful discussion. I used the term 'migration' (op-pai-yop- อพยพ) and to my amazement I got a shocked response *"oh! Why did you come to this village to study that?? no-one from here migrates!!!!"* I was confused, because I knew people did migrate, including some of their sisters and them themselves. I asked my brother Add about his sister who works in a factory, if she migrated. His answer was no, she does not migrate, because migration is when you move away and take your family with you and don't intend to return. It suddenly began to get clearer, so I asked what then did people from Ban Dong do then, if they didn't migrate? The response from all of the labourers was that they 'went to work' (pai tam ngan- ไปทำงาน) and were going to come back, even if they had migrated for 10 years.

This conceptual clarification changed the way I explained my research, if I had not had this experience and learning experience of the villagers questioning me, the supposed academic, then I may have gone through my entire research saying migration (either op-pai-yop or yai-tin tan which are more academic terms), which would have confused villagers. Therefore not only

did I better understand their livelihood in the village of working in the fields, I also better understood their understandings and meanings of mobility.

These two examples not only illustrate the advantages of participant observation, but they also illuminate the power inequalities I experienced and the variations of this between me, villagers and members of authority. Villagers had a large part in the framing of my research concepts in an inductive way, they were thus very 'active participants' in my fieldwork. These examples are also reminders that much ethnography presents a vision of a village or social world that is far tidier than what actually exists due to their need to find order and relate their empirical findings to a neat theoretical framework. Although as a 'development anthropologist' my findings were always in constant conversation with the theory, I have also been well aware that the messiness of reality is not always acknowledged within the anthropological discipline. It is much easier to focus on structural analysis and descriptive discussion of everyday life (Katz, 1991) but the researchers must draw connections between micro and macro, empathic field data and theory.

3.9   Analysis

It was in the field that my analysis started. I wrote monthly fieldwork reports for my supervisor and kept a fieldwork diary. After each interview I translated what was said into English (I recorded all interviews). I wrote everything up straight into NVIVO, a qualitative data analysis programme. As I did not conduct any interviews in the last few months of fieldwork I was able to spend my free time thinking about the themes of my research, and I started coding my data. This resulted in themes emerging before I returned to the UK and I could discuss these with my research assistant as well as research participants. The main themes emerged through coding and then forming tables for men and women according to themes, age groups and types of migration. Other themes emerged such as political dimensions, ideas of freedom, displays of wealth, investments, future aspirations and family bargaining and strategising. When I returned to the UK I discussed my thought processes with my supervisor and this resulted in two main themes emerging; gender and generation. Initially I wrote a chapter on the gender dimensions of migration, however I decided to remove this chapter at a later date as my chapters on

generation expanded and I wanted to ensure analytical depth on the notion of generations, life courses and time.

The notion of *time*, as explained in the introduction of this thesis is very important. It resulted in my empirical chapters being split into three dimensions of time; cohorts, life courses and how individuals negotiated their life courses within the family who were all in different stages of their life cycles. The findings illustrated in this thesis emerged through the process of writing and re-writing. It was only until I was half way through writing something, that something else, more important emerged. The context I was writing in was also an important factor. After I returned to the UK there was a lot of news concerning the 2006 coup, corruption and news concerning socio-economic inequality. An influential contextual factor was that the rural poor in most of these discussions were considered as unknowing actors who did not have political views and were swayed by vote buying, or who were too stupid to know that Thaksin was corrupt. This fuelled my writing to ensure I adequately represented my rural participants as knowledgeable actors, who had reasoning behind their actions and strategic aspirations for better futures. The political and economic landscape has changed since my research was conducted, and I wanted to take into account this landscape the participants in this study had to negotiate. This is when I adopted the Wellbeing Regime framework as it gave me a lens through which to display the institutional context and socio-economic structures as well as enabling me to write about the agency, relationships and subjective views of my respondents.

3.10 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the foundations on which this thesis is based. These foundations are within an actor oriented epistemology, which is a constructivist approach to the social world. This approach was useful because the objective of this research was to collect in-depth qualitative data on the experiences and opinions of rural villagers using an inductive approach. These epistemological underpinnings mean that I have assumed that humans create their social worlds through their active use of 'agency', within structures, but that these actors are

strategising consciously. Through enacting these meaningful processes, actors are reproducing and challenging macro structures in everyday action.

This in turn has meant the adoption of certain qualitative methods in order to gain insight into these meanings and processes from an actors' perspective. The best way to gain an 'emic' perspective is to be an active participant in the everyday lives of respondents. Thus I used ethnographic participant observation to make sense of the actions of people, indeed I tried to 'make sense of their making sense of the events and opportunities confronting them in everyday life' (Ley 1988, p121). I supplemented this with life history narratives, collecting the biographies of villagers. This meant that I could gain insight not only into what respondents did, but also what they said about what they have done and their reasons for it. Life histories were a welcome addition in order to gain understanding of villagers lives because their lives are more frequently not only experienced within the confines of the village, but also through migration to other areas. Lastly, these methods were triangulated with FGD's and existing WeD data in order to focus on themes that had risen from my observations and life histories.

There are limitations with qualitative methods, especially concerns over generalisation and representation and the concern that a small in-depth study is not 'scientific' enough. Qualitative methods have undergone various innovations and paradigm changes from modernist to postmodern (for more in depth explanations see: Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Atkinsin and Hammersley, 2007; Le Compte and Schensul, 1999; Madison, 2005). Habermas (1971) highlights that qualitative methods fall into three main categories; the natural science model (also known as positivism, whereby the social world and empirical analysis is calculated, tested and predicated by scientific objective means), the interpretive model (also known as naturalism, whereby social phenomena is described and its meaning and functions elaborated through objective descriptions by the researcher) and the critical model (in which social life is represented and analysed for the political purpose of overcoming social oppression). Therefore qualitative methodologies are heterogeneous. This particular research, as seen throughout this chapter, falls within the more critical qualitative inquiry alongside an interpretive and constructivist 'actor oriented' epistemology.

Atkinson and Hammersley (2007) highlight the complexity of methodological issues that face social scientists. Some fields emphasise the importance of experimental methods, quantitative techniques and methodological fundamentalism to establish generalisable laws which establish the 'truth' and prove or disprove a theory (Ibid). These fall within positivism which relies on the logic of experiment where variables can be measured, and manipulated in order to identify relationships. Within positivism, the researcher must remain objective, and results must be based on directly observable phenomena. Hypotheses can be tested, and this produces validity as rigorous measurements can be checked. Results can be generalised as large samples can be taken. Qualitative methodologies, especially ethnography, from this perspective suffer from a lack of rigour and lack generalisability. Atkinson and Hammersley (2007) argue these should not be met with an equivalent fundamentalism in the virtues of qualitative methods blindly, but different methods are needed for different contexts and issues.

This particular research was not conducted to deductively prove a theory or to answer pre-set research questions. Instead it was to inductively gain a better understanding of social change and processes and meanings involved in this, and then relate this to theories. There are strengths of qualitative methods and they were the reason why these methods were ultimately chosen; they allow for in-depth details, they create openness, they can convey experiences, feelings and processes which are what the aims of this research needed to investigate, and actions are also contextualised. Also a particular virtue of ethnographic research is that it allowed me to remain flexible and responsive to local circumstances and gain the trust of my respondents.

Despite these strengths of qualitative research methodologies there are however still some limitations. This study is based on a small sample, therefore the results cannot be generalised. Another limitation of qualitative research in general is that the fieldwork is very time consuming, this can lead to problems of macro blindness and over attachment. Therefore the role of the researcher and reflexivity are very important, and I have illustrated this throughout this methodology chapter. In addition, the perspective of naturalism in some qualitative

methodology has been criticised for depoliticising research. As Golafshani (2003) points out ethnography is rarely value neutral. There are multiple interpretations and therefore multiple 'truths', as the work of Thomas Khun (1962) established, claims are always relative to the research paradigm within which they are judged, therefore they are never simply a reflection of some independent reality. Foucault's work has also pushed for the idea of multiple 'truths' or 'regimes of truth' and that the role of the qualitative researcher is to see how they are constructed and how they have structured institutional practices within societies making both power and knowledge very important. Again this makes reflexivity and self awareness as a researcher very important.

Another criticism of qualitative research is its perceived lack of rigour (as explained by Atkinson and Hammersley, 2007). I have been aware of this and argue that qualitative research can have rigour. As Golafshani explains, rigour in qualitative research is based on quality and trustworthiness (Golafshani, 2003). I believe that the sampling, recording and analysis of this qualitative study are transparent and trustworthy as methods have internal validity through the triangulation with participant observation, interviews and focus groups, as well other reliability checks such as feedback from respondents, discussions with other academics and comparisons with other studies and the wider literature. Also the length of time that the researcher has spent in the field has contributed to the quality and depth of data. My subjective interpretations have been informed through a constant conversation with my theoretical and conceptual frameworks. By doing this the findings and the knowledge produced through this thesis, whilst cannot be generalised, can be used to inform wider debates and theories of social change, migration and welfare strategies in Thailand.

CHAPTER FOUR: ETHNOGRAPHIC INSIGHTS

4.1 Introduction

Due to the research methodology incorporating aspects of mobility, agency and change, my fieldwork sites were widely dispersed and I found myself in constant flux between the village of Ban Dong and the far away workplaces of the people that came from there. This chapter will not describe in any detail the destination areas of my respondents. What this chapter provides is an illustration of the livelihoods of the people from this particular village, incorporating aspects of the village economy, ceremonies, history, ethnicity, culture and history. Whilst this fieldwork has been based on the lives and livelihoods of villagers of Ban Dong, it is by no means entirely unique. The villagers here as in many other villages in the same mountain area share many similarities. The wider issues of land rights, ethnic minorities and migration are of even wider significance to the other upper Isan provinces of Nakon Phanom and Sakon Nakon all with substantial ethnic groups, and, going further than this, is a reflection on Southeast Asia and nation building projects more generally.

As part of the village ethnography provided, this chapter firstly highlights the way rural Thailand has been written about and argues for the need to view rural villagers as important social actors. The chapter then goes onto provide historical insight into the area of Isan where Ban Dong is situated. It is an area of regionalism and protest (Keyes, 1967). The ethnography of the village then gives further details of the lives of villagers and institutions within the village. It provides in-depth data on the lives and livelihoods of villagers as well as illustrating the changing nature of Ban Dong. I argue the village had historically been an arena of contestation and struggle and these have been significant in the construction of identity and meaning within the village.

The second half of this chapter then goes on to look in greater detail at four examples of institutional change. Firstly, I describe villagers' involvement with the Communist insurgency. A large proportion of villagers in the 1970's were fighting against the Thai government and

consequently had to leave their lives in the village behind for over a decade as jungle insurgents. The second example is the ongoing dispute over land rights. Ban Dong was declared part of Phu Phan National Park in the 1980's. Thirdly, and in relation to the above challenges, villagers' involvement with the large rural lobby group 'Assembly of the Poor' is discussed as a way of claiming rights and entitlements. Lastly, the rising popularity of migration is highlighted as an on-going challenge to the existing order. I argue that all of these challenges are not only processes of change and protest, but they are also important strategies of inclusion and recognition in a state where their exclusion continues to be reproduced. The importance and increase in migration is not only an illustration of the increasing interpenetration of rural and urban livelihoods but it also has implications for collective action and protest. Migration is different to previous forms of change and resistance in that it is mainly individual and household forms of action rather than collective protest.

4.2 Writing about place and identity in rural Thailand

Thongchai Winichakul (2001) calls for the writing of a peasant-based history of Thailand. He argues that rural people and places have been marginalised and need to be included and understood. However, his writings have so far been only theoretical and have yet to be grounded in the everyday lives of rural people and spaces. In his book 'Siam Mapped', Winichakul (1994) argues that the formation of Thailand as a territory was based on a hierarchical relationship between the centre and periphery in terms of class, status, and ethno-geography. This is still true today. Rural people and places are marginalised. As chapter 2 illustrated, this has encouraged alternative development discourses such as the 'community culture' school of thought and 'sufficiency economy' ideology, although, as illustrated, these theories have also been criticised for romaniticising and essentialising the poor (Walker, 2008, Rigg and Ritchie, 2002).

It is often argued (Tomlinson, 1999) that globalisation and modernisation have brought with them commoditisation, cultural homogenisation, marketisation and labour mobilisation which

are processes cutting through time and space (Giddens, 1991). In turn these processes are dislocating people and associated identities from locality-defined cultures that constituted identity, from traditional to modern, involving a loss of cultural diversity and threatening 'indigenous' cultures as the 'community culture' school of thought in Thailand argues. As this thesis argues, the Community Culture School has had significant influence over Thai social policy. In this school of thought modernity is seen as a fragmenting and socially corrupting force.

Two of the most prominent writers on modernity are Giddens (1991) and Bauman (1992), both of whom view that places are losing meaning as a framework for people's lives and as a basis for which identities are constructed. Bauman (1992) in particular argues that the central role of mobility in modern society prevents a strong attachment to place, 'the urge for mobility, built into the structure of contemporary life, prevents the arousal of strong affections for any of the places; places we occupy are no more than temporary stations' (Bauman 1992, p695).

However, I argue amongst others (McGregor and Gough, 2007) that socio-cultural change is not all one way as hegemonic modernisation theories suggest and that place does still feature strongly, albeit differently, in people's identity and wellbeing. I believe Norman Long (2000) sums it up well, that we "cannot expect globalisation to have a uniform impact everywhere, to do so would be to fall into the same trap as universal theories of social change. It is not a hegemonic process that structures outcomes but rather a convenient shorthand for depicting the ongoing complexities, ambiguities and diversities of contemporary patterns of global-local relations" (Long, 2000, p214).

What I, as Long, suggest is that these forces do not always go just one way. It is far more complex than this. Global-local relations are diverse and as Appadurai terms, 'non-isomorphic' (Long, 2000, quoting Appadurai, p221). Appadurai argues that the nature of global cultural flows do not just follow one linear path or single general pattern. He uses the term 'scapes' to name types of these flows (Appadurai, 1996), for example ideo-scapes, techno-scapes, finance-scapes etc. It is these 'scapes' that enable images, symbols and ideas to be transmitted globally and

quickly to a large number of people. Again this is a modern phenomena as Giddens' time-space compression theory illustrates (Giddens, 1991), and what I should emphasise is that it is possible for flows in this time-space compression to go both ways, not just from centre to the periphery.

Many commentators have highlighted the 'reactionary' forces involved in globalisation and rapid change brought about by this time-space compression. Namely a resurgence of identity politics, and increased localisation and nationalism (Friedman 1997); in other words, a heightened sense of 'place' associated with tradition, heritage, territory, boundaries and belonging. In the case of Thailand this has been reflected in the rise of nationalist tendencies of 'Nation, Religion and Monarchy', Sufficiency Economy ideology and Community Culture thinking.

Escobar (2001) furthers these ideas of place arguing that people show an 'enduring connectedness' with the places they occupy, rather than a reflection of 'tradition' it is "an integral part of the contemporary modern life of these communities, even in cases in which connectedness might be a vehicle for the exercise of power over them. Persons and their environments, places and identities, are thus mutually constituted" (Escobar, 2001, p146). I believe this is a more relevant concept of place whereby it is being continually re-constituted.

From the above discussions it is clear that there needs to be a closer analysis of the meaning of 'place' in the context of rapidly changing modern society. As Wiborg (2004) notes, 'attachment to place in the context of modern society has changed, transforming it from doxa to opinion (Bourdieu 1977) and therefore to an object of negotiation and reflexivity' (Wiborg, 2002, p417). Also, if 'place' is no longer a fixed entity and something open to negotiation what does this mean for identity, after all identity construction and the construction of place are mutual processes. As Appadurai (1990) argues, place is no longer a specific, fixed geographical location that frames people's lives, but instead is (also) a cultural construction that is shaped and perpetuated through social relationships and imaginations.

Therefore embedded into notions of place are layers of meaning that are acted out in everyday lives of people. Places act as structures for actors' lives. From the above discussion it is now widely noted that actors' agency is changing the places we inhabit, by continuously re-imagining them and re-constructing them. Places are not inconsequential or irrelevant, but on the contrary are import sites of contestation, negotiation and resistance in the everyday lives of people. Places are not fixed timeless geographical spaces but are continuously being re-imagined by social actors, as Rigg and Ritchie (2002) argue in the case of Thailand. They argue what is considered 'the rural' is constantly changing and that there are blurred boundaries between rural and urban. It is within this thread of subjective constructionism and fluid identity that this chapter is situated.

The rest of this chapter goes on to discuss the importance of place and identity within the village of Ban Dong by providing details on the history, ethnic makeup and rising class divisions within the community and other institutional changes. It also illustrates how villagers are behaving and constructing the village in which they live in through processes of change and resistance.

4.3 Isan: Regionalism and protest

The construction of 'Thailand' is a modern territorial and political project. Over the course of the 20th century, those who inhabit the Northeast have experienced a rapid transformation into Thai citizens. A closer look at this history is necessary in order to understand regional protest and current political developments. The Northeast in general is considered to be an area with significant regionalism. A little over a century ago it was considered a Lao area under control of the kingdom of Vientiane (Keyes, 1967). With an estimated 20 million population (a third of the population of Thailand) the Isan region has more than eight times the number of ethnic Lao living in Lao PDR (Jerndal & Rigg, 1998). It is because of these ethnic ties that the people that live here, '*khon isan*' (isan people), see themselves as different to the Central Thai, not only because most speak '*pasa isan*' (Isan language, which is more similar to the lowland Lao language than to Thai language, although still in the same family of Tai languages) but also a shared '*watanatam*

isan' (Isan culture), markers of which are food such as *khaaw nieow* (sticky rice) and *plaa raa*[15] (fermented fish), music such as *morlam* as well as religious festivals.

Early in the 20th century (mostly around 1899-1902) there were millennialism revolts by '*phuu mee bun'*[16] (people with special merit) against the centralising forces of King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910) and the Thai State on the Isan region. France was colonising Cambodia, Vietnam and then Laos so the Thai state consolidated its power by establishing greater control over previously semi-autonomous '*jao*' (Lords) that had controlled the land and tax revenue. Commissioners from the central Thai state were sent out to the provinces and reported directly to Bangkok. The rules of tax collection excluded the rich and 'the burden fell mostly on peasant families' (Keyes, 1977). This caused widespread anger in a populace already suffering with harsh weather conditions including frequent floods and drought. Around this time there were '*phuu mee bun'* men who claimed to be '*phu wiset'* (people with special powers, usually local monks or wise men who provided herbal medicines, offered predictions and could perform supernatural acts or at least claimed to) that provided millennial advice for villagers and predicted the coming of a catastrophe and a change in the social order.

By 1902 the '*phuu mee bun'* prophecies had spread to many Isan villages and beyond into Laos. Travelling musicians would spread the stories and hand out books written by '*phuu wiset'*. It ended with a clash between the Siamese army and 2,500 (approximately) followers of many '*phuu wiset'* which had joined forces in their quest to gain independence from Siam. This clash happened near Ubon Ratchathani province in 1902 in which 2,000 Thai state troops captured 400 '*phuu wiset'* leaders and followers and killed many of the rest (Keyes, 1977). The leaders were then executed in their home villages as examples of what happens to rebels (Ibid). Although the resistance was finally quashed, the revolt against the Thai state was one where both peasantry and local lords were fighting together against imposed state control. The Thai state, in order to prevent further rebellions, increased state propaganda into villages through the education system. In all primary school text books children were taught that the only person

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[15] *Plaa daek* in Thai
[16] Sometimes this is called 'the holy man's rebellion' (Keyes, 1977).

who has merit is the King of Thailand, and stressing the connection between Nation, King and Buddhism (Ibid, 1977). Therefore legitimate authority comes from the Monarchy and not local 'phuu wiset'[17].

By the mid 20th century there were more calls, this time by Isan politicians, to be granted more autonomy. However these politicians such as Tiang Sirikhan from Sakon Nakon were arrested by 1948 and accused of being communists and separatists. Later, Tiang disappeared and it is widely believed he was assassinated like a number of other Isan MP's (4 other Isan MP's were shot dead in the 'kilo 11' incident in 1949 by the government, causing widespread public outrage). As Keyes (1967) argues, the actions taken against prominent MPs from the northeast by the central Thai government were 'extremely critical in shaping subsequent political attitudes in the Northeast' (Keyes, 1967, p32). Regional pride had been damaged and as Keyes states, 'sentiments that the central Thai and central government discriminated against the north-eastern region grew to such an extent that they were catalysts for the development of a distinct regional political identity' which can still be seen today (Ibid, p32). As Walker (2008) argues there is a 'rural constitution' whereby Isan politicians are elected on the basis that they can deliver promises to Isan people and are the people's representatives rather than solely looking out for government interests. This is still true today given the increasing political divides in the country.

As well as political inferiority, the northeast was, and still is the poorest region of Thailand economically. This underdevelopment has increased feelings of regionalism caused by Isan's problematic political and economic inclusion into the Thai nation-state. Increased migration to Bangkok in order to supplement income increased the awareness of cultural discrimination and subordination of north easterners. The exclusion and inferior social status in this new urban social setting triggered regional collectiveness, illustrated in Isan songs over the last half century, for example the song *Khon Lek* (Iron Man):

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[17] Although '*phuu wiset*' are still alive today, they are mainly in the form of medicinal practices.

Khon Lek (คนเหล็ก)

He's an Iron man. He's Isan

He works all day selling his labour

He came to civilised Bangkok, serving the country.

This is the song of a country man (*khon ban nok*)

Bangkok people think that rural people have sticky rice in their eyes and ears,

That they eat *plaa raa* and *plaa dek*[18]

These are Thai people too

When they say "*pai sai*", people think "pen *khon Lao*[19]"

They come to Bangkok to be taxi drivers, tuk tuk drivers, truck drivers, construction workers, artisans, technicians....

He's an iron man,

He's from Isan.

(Source: Brody, 2000)

This particular research has been based in Mukdahan Province in the Isan region; it is a province in the far east of the region, bordering Lao PDR, separated only by the Mekong River (see maps at beginning of thesis). In fact, Mukdahan used to be a large and important province that stretched far out into Lao PDR but at the end of the reign of Rama V (King Chulalongkorn 1868-1910) the area of Mukdahan on the other side of the Mekong was lost to the French (in 1893, see Timeline at the end of this chapter). The province then became a district of Nakon Phanom and Mukdahan was not an official province until 1982. Links with Lao PDR are still much stronger than in the rest of Isan. Being so close to the Mekong River many Thais can still cross the border freely. Many Lao traders come to the province on a daily basis, selling fresh produce, flowers and working in the restaurants of Mukdahan town. During my research the second Thai-Lao

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[18] Types of fermented fish very popular in Isan cooking
[19] Pai sai means "where are you going?" in Isan dialect, but in Thai it's "pai nai". So those people that say Pai Sai are thought of as "pen khon Lao" Lao people.

friendship bridge (from Mukdahan to Savannakhet[20] in Lao PDR) was constructed opening up Mukdahan to both other areas of Thailand and surrounding Mekong countries. The road, known as Highway 5 spans from Thailand to Laos and into Da Nang in Vietnam and will eventually link to China. The road that Ban Dong is situated on connects to Highway 5 and so it is known as 'the road that leads to China'.

Unlike the majority of case studies on the Northeast, Mukdahan is not in a central location such as Khon Kaen (Prompakping, 2001 Rattana 1997), Roi-et (see Parnwell, 1983, Textor 1977) or Mahasarakham (see Keyes 1967, M.B. Mills, 1997). There has been a shortage of ethnographic studies on the periphery of this region, especially in areas with high numbers of other ethnic groups other than the Lao. There are benefits in researching a borderland province, as Horstman (2002, p2) states, they 'are a laboratory of social change' and there is 'no place in the nation-state where contradictions of representation of bounded collectivities could be clearer' (ibid, p2). They thus illustrate the messiness of change and challenge any dichotomies of rural-urban, traditional-modern, Thai-Isan or Isan-Lao.

4.4 Village Background: Physical Location

The village of Ban Dong is located in Dong Luang District in Mukdahan Province. It is situated on a tributary to the Mekong River (see Map in the beginning of this thesis). The nearest town is over 30km away, providing the nearest high school, hospital and police station. In the opposite direction, the next nearest town is nearly 90km away. The village itself is situated in Phu Pha Yon National Park, which is part of the Phu Phan mountain range.

The village has a population of 883 (in 2006) making up 196 households, and all members of the community consider themselves to be Buddhist (see table 1 below). These figures are from the

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[20] Savannakhet is the 2nd largest city in Lao PDR

WeD Resources and Needs Questionnaire (RANQ) collected by the WeD research team in Khon Kaen University of which I was a member. The questionnaire was one of the main methodologies used by the research team to gain vital statistics and opinions from villagers in Ban Dong as well as three other sites in the Northeast and further sites in the Southern province of Songkhla (See Clarke 2006 for a comparison of all the sites). The sizes of the households in Ban Dong, like many villages in the Northeast are large, with the average household size being 4.5 (see table 2). Most households consisted of between 3-7 members, with the largest household consisting of 13 members (see table 2). The male-female ratio is quite even with 53.7% male and 46.3% female, so there are slightly more men (65 more men than women) in the village, however this could be down to migration (see table 3).

Table 1:Individual and Household RANQ Population

Population	Individual		Household		Average Household Size
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	
Buddhist	883	100	196	100	4.5
Total	883	100	196	100	4.5

(WeD Community Profile Stage 2, 2006)

Table 2: Number of individuals per household

Number of Individuals in Household	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative
1	1	0.5%	0.5%
2	13	6.6%	7.1%
3	46	23.5%	30.6%
4	48	24.5%	55.1%
5	44	22.4%	77.6%
6	22	11.2%	88.8%
7	14	7.1%	95.9%
8	3	1.5%	97.4%
9	3	1.5%	99.0%
12	1	0.5%	99.5%
13	1	0.5%	100.0%
Total	196	100.0%	100.0%

(WeD Community Profile Stage 2, 2006)

Table 3: Male-Female Statistics

	Male		Female		Total	
Population	474	53.7%	409	46.3%	883	100.0%

(WeD Community Profile Stage 2, 2006)

4.5 Village history, beliefs and ethnicity.

The total surface area of the village is about 3,768 rai (1 rai = 1,600 sq metres). It is split into three areas, Ban Dong Yai which is the largest area; Ban Dong Noi a newer settlement further along the road; and Khum Pa Dong which is further away from the main part of the village (see maps at the beginning of this thesis). Ban Dong Yai is the largest and oldest part of the village, it was first settled in around 180 years ago when Luang Phu Luesi Phadum (the 'Black-dressed Prophet', a Luesi is a spiritual leader, believed to have knowledge and foresight, he was a '*phuu wiset*') led three households to follow him from the neighbouring province of Sakonnakon (see timeline at the end of this chapter). They were all from the Khamyod kinship group which are 'Bru/So'[21] or 'Kha' (all three labels are used interchangeably) ethnic origin that moved from Lao into what is now Northeast Thailand during the Prab Ho War. This ethnic group is of Mon-Khmer ethno-linguistic origin, rather than Lao-Isan[22].

Later on settlement in Ban Don Noi was from families migrating for more land from the neighbouring provinces of Nakon Phanom who are Yor (ย้อ) ethnicity and Kalasin who are Phu Tai[23] ethnicity. These families were followers of a Monk called Luang Phu Sorn. Elders in the village recollected when they first moved there over 70 years ago (see timeline at the end of this chapter). For example Por Yai[24] Yeng (99 years old, Phu Tai ethnicity) told me "*when we first moved here looking for new land there were only 4 households here, they were very poor, they were So people and used to beg and the village was not called Ban Dong, the government*

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[21] Approximately in the Northeast there are over 70,000 people who speak Bru or So dialects which are of Mon-khmer origin. 'Kha' used to be the name for slaves and so many people prefer to be called Bru or So, all labels are used by people interchangeably.

[22] Most sources when talking of 'Lao' ethnicity portray the Lao to be a homogeneous group, however Lao ethnicity has much diversity and consists of many ethnic groups including Chinese, Vietnemese and Mon-Khmer. In this thesis I use 'Lao ethnicity' in the broad sense incorporating these other groups as a convenient shorthand but with full recognition of the debates involving its meaning.

[23] Both Yor and Phu Tai are 'Tai' ethnic groups rather than Mon-khmer, they make up for around 2.25% of the 22 million Isan population. There are around 80,000 Yor in Sakon Nakon, Nakon Phanom, Mukdahan and Nongkhai Provinces, and around 70,000 Phu Tai in Nakon Phanom, Sakon Nakon and Kalasin Provinces. Originally the Phu Tai came from Khammuan province in Laos and in 1835 many ethnic Phu Tai were relocated to Siam as part of a treaty between Siam and the governor of Mahasai in Khammuan Province (Schliesinger, 2001). The Yor originally come from the Lao-Vietnam border and so their dialect is similar to that of northern Tai dialects in Thanh Hoa province in Vietnam (Ibid).

[24] 'Por' meaning 'father', and 'yai' meaning 'great/big' (used to describe the elderly)

created that, the real name of the village is Ban Sa Ard Som Sii[25]". His wife (95 and from Laos) added "*sometimes the So stole our buffalos*". This negative opinion of the original inhabitants of the village was widespread in Yor elders. Others such as Mae Gaew (female, more than 80 years old) told me "*we used to celebrate Loy Grathong[26] and float clothes and food down the river for the spirits but the So would wait downstream and steal everything*". These divisions along ethnic lines are less apparent in the young who all went to school together. However, Yor and Phu Tai parents often restrict their children from partaking in some of the Wan Son Mai Tao[27] celebrations that involve spirits (but also because the festival has changed a lot and now includes modern morlam shows and dancing as well as some people drinking).

The latest settlement in the village is Khum Pa Dong. Villagers and families from neighbouring provinces started to settle here in search of new farmland. Now the predominant ethnicity of villagers is Yor (61%) (see table 4) and most villagers (88%) speak Yor dialect in their homes and in their everyday life (see table 5).

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[25] Ban Sa Ard Som Sii – meaning a clean and abundant area where you can grow many things.
[26] Loy Grathong Festival involved floating small boats 'grathongs' down the river for spirits.
[27] Wan Son Mai Tao 'day of the walking stick' is only celebrated in Ban Dong, it is well documented in this chapter, in celebration of Luci Pa dam a spiritual leader form the past.

Table 4: Ethnicity

Ethnicity of Household Head	Freq	%
Bru	6	3.1%
Phu-Tai	40	20.5%
Thai Buddhist	1	0.5%
Thai Isan	21	10.8%
Thai Tai	1	0.5%
Thai Yor	119	61.0%
Other	7	3.6%
Total	195	100.0%
Lao	2	1.0%
So	4	2.1%
Thai Dam	1	0.5%

(Source: WeD Community Profile Stage 2, 2006)

Table 5: Languages

Language Spoken and Proficiency of Individual in Ban Dong			
		Individual	
Language	**Proficiency**	Freq	%
Bru	Understand and Speak	2	0.2
	Total	2	0.2
Phu Thai	Understand and Speak	54	6.1
	N/A	1	0.1
	Total	55	6.2
Thai – Isan	Understand and Speak	26	2.9
	Total	26	2.9
Thai-Klang	Understand, Speak, read, and write	3	0.3
	Understand and Speak	5	0.6
	Total	8	0.9
Yor	Understand, Speak ,read, and write	2	0.2
	Understand and Speak	755	85.5
	Understand but cannot speak	11	1.2
	N/A	14	1.6
	Total	782	88.6
Other Specify	Understand and Speak	9	1.0
	Total	9	1.0
Korat	Understand and speak	1	0.1
Lao	Understand and speak	1	0.1
So	Understand and speak	7	0.8
	Not Known	1	0.1
Not Known	Total	1	0.1
Total		**883**	**100.0**

(Source: WeD Community Profile Stage 2, 2006)

The upper Isan provinces of Mukdahan, Sakonnakon and Nakon Phanom are home to many ethnic groups. Mukdahan is famous for having 8 main ethnic groups (Phu Tai, Yor, So, Kha, Kar Lerng, Saek, Kula and Lao). The So and Yor ethnic groups are spread over all three provinces. The other main ethnic group in Ban Dong is the Phu Tai from Kalasin Province, Sakon Nakon, Nakon Phanom and Khammuan province in Lao PDR. The So have more beliefs about spirits than the Phu Tai or Yor, often using what is called 'black magic' (ไสยศาสตร์, *saiyasat*), although this is not necessarily used for negative purposes.

On important days such as *Khaow-Pansa* (เข้าพรรษา - the start of the Buddhist lent in July whereafter monks do not leave the temple grounds) and Wan Son Maai Tao (the day of the walking stick, left to protect the village by Luesci Padam) believers will dress in white and dance to the spirits. The leader of this dance is the '*Khon Song Jao Kao Pee'* (the person that calls the spirit; a medium or for short, *jao kao*). The *Jao Kao* (nearly always a woman) will smoke and dance and call the spirit of Luesci Padam into her body. Wan Son Maai Tao takes place in the temple grounds in Ban Don Yai around the shrine to Lueci Padam (see figure 12 below).

Figure 12: The pagoda in Ban Dong Yai

 (it has a drawing of Luesci Pa-dam dressed in black on the side holding his walking stick)

All members of the village use traditional herbal medicine and many will use what they call 'magic' to cure themselves. These traditional doctors are called *Mor Yao* (หมอเหยา) and in the case of Ban Dong this is the same person as the *Jao Kao*[28]. She uses chants and her magic touch to heal the sick. Most villagers in Ban Dong will use *Mor Yao* as their first point of call rather than travel to the district hospital which is an hour drive.

Other rituals the villagers perform are based around the giant Buddha footprints (รอยเท้า *roy-tao*), one located near the temple in Ban Dong Noi and the other in a shrine on a nearby mountain (see figure 13). They are respected on both Kao Pansa and Ork Pansa days (ork pansa is the day

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[28] Currently Ban Dong has no Jao Kao as unfortunately, she died in a motorcycle accident during my fieldwork. The surrounding villages all have Jao Kao and Mor Yao and they come to Ban Dong for medical purposes and on religious celebrations to perform their rituals.

the 3 month Buddhist lent ends, in October). Villagers light candles and place them by the footprints. This is unlike most other villages in Thailand whereby villagers would walk around the '*wat'* three times and light candles around it[29]. On the full moon day the *So* villagers and *Jao Kao* will dance. The villagers do not celebrate the Thai traditional festival of Loy Grathong and anyone wishing to partake in this has to travel to the Tambon town.

Figure 13: The Buddha's Footprint 'loi prabart' in the nearby mountain

4.6 Land, Livelihoods and inequality

Most village livelihoods are from agriculture. The main cash crop produced is cassava, with glutinous rice production for villagers' own consumption being the second crop. This is because of the high terrain of the village and soil characteristics which are not suitable for wet rice

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[29] Villagers do also light candles and place them around the temple.

120

agriculture. Therefore villagers in Ban Dong were deeply engaged in activities linking them to larger national and international economic arenas as well as subsistence production. Despite equal feelings of hardship on the quality and availability of land (it is illegal for villagers to extend into the forest), not all households own the same amount of land (see Table 6 and pie charts, figures 14 and 15). The poorest own no land or have to rent a small amount of land of 1-10 rai for subsistence purposes. To supplement their income these villagers regularly seek employment as agricultural day labourers for families with more than 5 or 10 rai of land and cannot manage the workload with only family labour.

Those households with more than 20 rai often grow more than 1 crop, for example Por Kai and his family own 115 rai of land and only use 5 rai of this for growing rice. The rest is used for cassava, his cattle and the start of a rubber plantation. Those with larger amounts of land can afford to experiment with new investments such as rubber as whilst the saplings are growing (it takes 5-7 years before farmers can start tapping the rubber) farmers can still grow cassava on the rest of the land. This has caused differentiation and inequality to rise within the village community as those households with large landholdings are able to make considerably more income.

Table 6: Agricultural Land use

Land Used for Agricultural Purposes. RANQ Households Ban Dong		
Land Area (rai)	Freq	%
No Land	4	2.0%
Less than 5	23	11.7%
5-9 Rai	23	11.7%
10-20 Rai	57	29.1%
20-29	10	5.1%
30-39	15	7.7%
40-49	10	5.1%
50-59	11	5.6%
60-69	6	3.1%
70-79	1	0.5%
80+	36	18.4%
Grand Total	196	100.0%
Total Land Area (Rai) Used for Agricultural Purposes in Ban Dong	2313	

(Source: WeD Community Profile of Ban Dong Stage 2, 2006)

The following Pie charts illustrate this land inequality further. More than half of households own less than 20 rai of land. Only a small percent (18%) own over 80 rai of land.

Figure 14: Pie Chart of Agricultural Land Use

(Agricultural Land as a percentage by household[30])
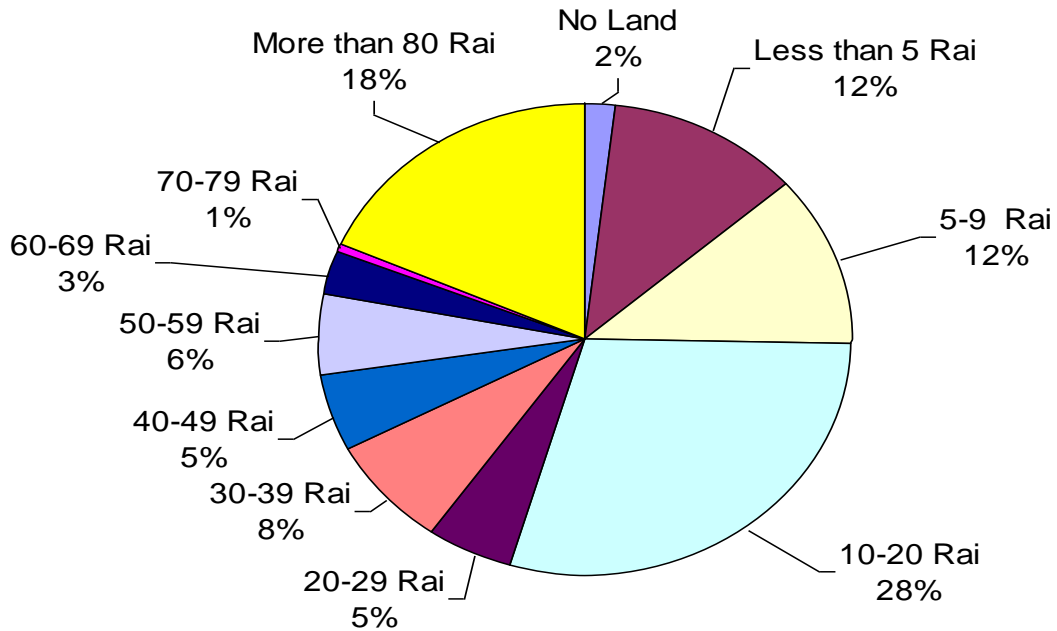
[30] Data is from the table 6

Figure 15: Agricultural Land Use 2

(As a percentage of over all land owned[31])
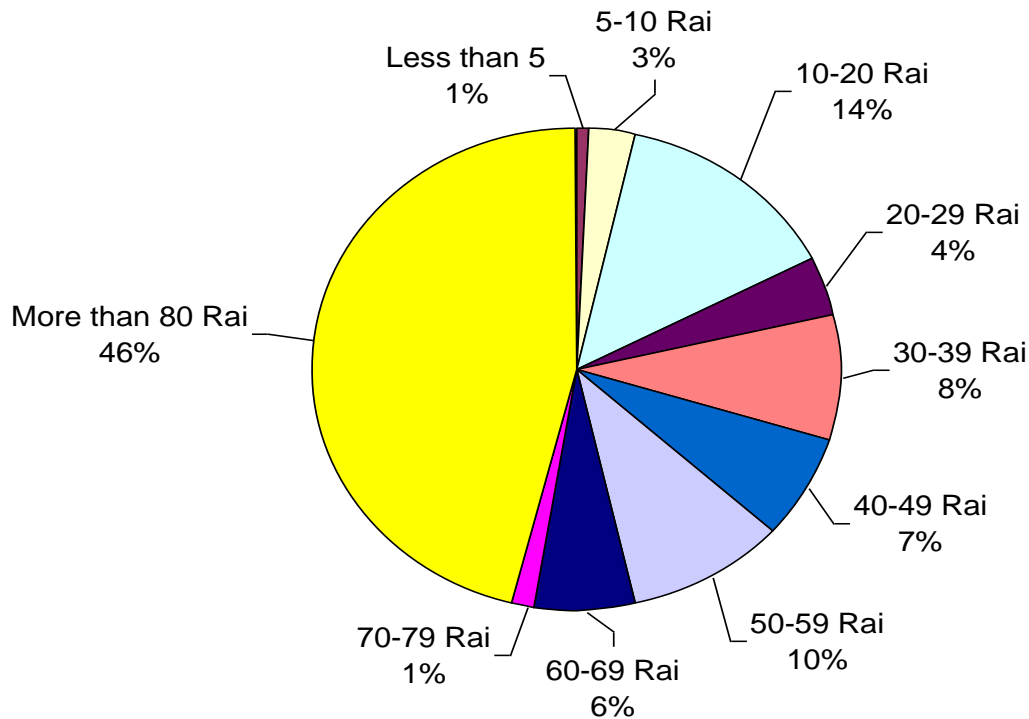
From the second pie chart (figure 15) it is clear that those with more than 80 rai of land own more than 46% of the total land. These figures are conservative estimates (as most respondents will own more than just 80 rai). Therefore 18% of households own more than 46% of the total agricultural land available.

The reasons for this are varied. However it is mostly due to the migration patterns of settlers coming to Ban Dong. The first So/Bru villagers were hunter gatherers and not involved in rice production as they bartered for rice. They also moved the original settlement of Ban Dong Yai to where it is today less than 100 years ago. The original settlement has long been abandoned.

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[31] Data is from table 6. It must be noted that these are approximate. This is because the total land area of 2313 rai is approximate (as some people own land outside of the village, and some people would have stated land they rent rather than own, others may have not been able to give truthful data as they have encroached on protected forest area). Also for the pie chart I have given conservative estimates i.e. those who use 10-20 rai was inputted as 10 and so on. Therefore for the group that own over 80 rai, I had to input as 80 rai. Some people own over 100 rai and so the figure of this group owning 46% of the total land is very conservative and they are more likely to own over 50% (but due to only having the figures to work with from table 6 I could not gain the exact amount of land they owned).

Land cultivation started on a large scale when Yor settlers came to the village in search of new land. Therefore it is this group of villagers, the first Yor households, who own much of the land today. The other group that own large amounts of land are the Yor in Khum pa Dong who migrated into the area for cattle land. Some Phu Tai families also own large amounts of land. The newer settlers have been restricted in land cultivation due to the poor soil quality and lack of space due to the mountainous terrain. Also in the 1980's the area became part of a National Park and so land clearance is now illegal. This also affects the younger generation who have to wait to inherit land from their parents with the only available land far away and expensive to buy.

The inequality in land distribution is noticed. When having informal discussions with the richest family in the village (who happen to be Kha/So ethnicity and get most of their income from off-farm activities) they pointed out the differences between ethnic groups within the community. They own a shop in the village as well as running a small trucking business as well as various other businesses[32]. For example one of them explained:

"*The Yor are richer definitely, the Yor have more wellbeing and they want to better themselves, So people don't like to be richer than each other, if they see someone getting richer they might kill them, So have magic…it doesn't happen very often but I believe in it*"

Por Kampree, informal interview.

Therefore there are inequalities between ethnic groups with Yor and Phu Tai having more land than those of *So* origin. However there are many inter-marriages and the younger generations are diversifying into other activities and so it is becoming less clear to see these inequalities along ethnic lines. The diversification into other off farm activities has allowed the poorest members of the community to escape over dependency on landlords. Opportunities to migrate for poor as well are rich household are frequent with nearly every household in Ban Dong having

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[32] I was asked not to include their activities in this thesis.

a member who works outside of the village. For those who chose to stay in Ban Dong, the need for hired labour is low with many young men in want of day labour work. The daily wage is 100 baht, however those with land try to spread the work out and give alternate people the opportunity day by day. This means for most day labourers they will only be needed for work 1 or 2 days per week. Wage labouring includes clearing land, planting cassava, removing grass, cutting cassava and planting and harvesting rice (see figure 16).

Figure 16: Young men and women planting cassava

There are however differences in the diversification strategies between rich and poor households. Those households with more land have been able to diversify into higher return activities such as shop keeping, cattle herding and things such as education and further training. The inequalities in the village are being intensified by these types of diversification. There is an emerging class of more wealthy households who have been able to diversify into small businesses and getting members of the family into formal sector or government positions and also increasing farm productivity. The differences between these households can be seen in the types of housing, for example figure 17 is an example of a rich household's house. They are two unmarried brothers who own over 100 rai of land and have migrated to Bangkok for a long time. They have now returned to the village and are enrolled on adult education programmes about the Thai political system and one has a position as village accountant. The second image (figure 18) is the poorest household in the village. This family owns no land and survives with only 1 member working as a wage labourer. The youngest woman looks after her small child and her mother spends her days gathering bamboo shoots and mushrooms as well as insects from the forest to eat and participating in *Long-kheck*[33] in exchange for rice for neighbouring families. The three adults and child live in a small hut made from bamboo. The family situation is further complicated by the woman's son suffering from mental health problems after experimenting with drugs and who now wanders the nearby mountainside only visiting the village every few months.

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[33] Labour exchange

Figure 17:Photo of a rich household with plenty of fruit trees and herbs growing outside

Figure 18: Members of one of the poorest households in the village

The village is still remote compared to many other villages in Isan due to its location in a National Park. The high school is over 30km away and children travel there by bus every day. Most households do not own a car (see Table 7) and families wishing to travel to another area will rent the car for the day. There are 2 cars in the village and both households make an income from renting them out. The most popular form of transport is motorbikes, as these are more economical for travelling short distances. Pick ups are also rented out when large groups need to go to Mukdahan town or festivals far away. They are also used for transporting heavy goods to and from villagers' farms. However, the lack of private transportation, and public transportation (there is only 1 bus per day in either direction) has ensured that villagers remain more isolated compared to other rural areas in Thailand.

Table 7: Ownership of Transportation

Transport	Ban Dong	
	Freq	%
Cart (ox, cow, buffalo, etc.)		
Bicycle	108	55.1%
Motorbike	134	68.4%
Car	2	1.0%
Pickup truck	10	5.1%
Farm truck	38	19.4%
Total	292	
Average number of different Transport types per household	1.5	

(Source: WeD Community Profile Stage 2, 2006)

The major source of influence on villagers is the increasing popularity of television. It is now the most popular electronic consumer good that households own (81.6% of households own a TV, see table 8). Many households (71 of them) also own radios which they would take to the fields with them and listen to whilst they work. CD players are also popular and the villagers listen to popular Thai and international music every morning, often on the loudest setting so that neighbours have the benefit of hearing it too. Other consumer goods are scarce, most villagers cook rice using traditional steaming methods as electric methods are expensive. Almost all cooking fuel is from the forest. Only 1 household owns a computer, there are other computers in the school but there are no internet cafes within proximity to the village. Nor are there any telephones as the lines have yet to be installed by the government. Although some villagers own mobile phones, they cannot receive a signal in the village due to the signal being blocked by the mountains. Without telephones[34] or internet, communication to and from the village is very difficult and this further isolates villagers.

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[34] There is 1 telephone in a shop which was installed the government, however it is very expensive to use. There are also telephones and internet in the primary school, but only the teachers use these.

Table 8: Electronic Consumer Goods

Electronic Consumer Goods	Ban Dong	
	Freq	**%**
Radio	81	41.3%
Cassette player	50	25.5%
CD player	71	36.2%
Television	160	81.6%
Fan (electric, etc.)	146	74.5%
Satellite TV	1	0.5%
Electric iron	89	45.4%
Electric pot	56	28.6%
Electric rice cooker	78	39.8%
Stove (electric/gas)	15	7.7%
Fridge	74	37.8%
Computer	1	0.5%
DVD player	3	1.5%
Video player	2	1.0%
Microwave	1	0.5%
Washing machine	3	1.5%
Rickshaw (including van)	2	1.0%
Total	833	
Average number of different ECGs per household	4.2	

(Source: WeD Community Profile Stage 2, 2006)

4.7 Cultural values, beliefs and beginnings of resistance

As described the village of Ban Dong was first settled in by those following a 'Luesi', an ascetic spiritual leader called 'Luesi Pa Dam' (black dressed prophet/ascetic). He earned respect from his followers, originally of Bru origin from Sakon Nakon province through his adherence to an ethical code similar to Buddhist precepts and practice of austerities. Therefore he was a 'respected moral person' (*phuu mee bun*) and '*phuu wiset'* (ผู้วิเศษ-wise men with special powers, as explained above). The history of the Millennialism movement (กบฏผู้มีบุญ *phuu mee bun* uprising) is also important in Ban Dong as Lueci Padam was one of these '*phuu mee bun'*. The tale of this folk hero is told during most religious festivals. His popularity amongst villagers in Sakon Nakon aroused suspicion from the Lord (*Jao*) of Sakon Nakon who had him imprisoned during the time of King Rama III[35] (1824-51) as he believed that Lueci Pa-dam was against the rule of Bangkok at the time and so ordered for him to be executed '*sam-ret-tot'*. According to various village elders in Ban Dong, he got out of prison by proving his powers. He was able to predict the sex of unborn children and with this gift he was set free. When he was released the Black dressed prophet went to live in the mountains which are today where Ban Dong stands. After his death the villagers built a pagoda in the village temple which was dedicated to Luesi Pa-Dam.

Every year they pay respect to him by organising a ceremony on the first full moon day in April (which is close to the Songkran festival in April also, often occurring on the same day or 1 day apart). Every household in Ban Dong Yai is expected to contribute and many from the other areas of the village also contribute. The ceremony consists of pouring water on the prophet's walking stick (a heavy iron rod) and telling inspirational stories about the prophet which guides listeners to have good lives. Throughout the day villagers would pay their respects to the walking stick and then make a wish. If they could raise the heavy walking stick three times and had faith the wish would come true.

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[35] I got this information from informal discussions from village elders, they told me that it was King Rama III, although one told me it was the Lord of Sakon Nakon and so I believe there is some debate on the actual year of events. Most 'phu mee bun' revolts occurred 40 years later.

These beliefs and practices are based on both animism and Buddhism. The embodied practice of the Wan Son Maai Tao (walking stick) celebration is also a celebration of the villagers distinct ethnoregional identity through making donations, listening to stories on Kamma '*kam*', seeing the drawings and walking stick of Lueci pa-dam , dancing to his spirit and chanting memorised Buddhist scriptures. Even though alternative sources of moral worldview are available to villagers through migration and television, throughout their childhood in the village this moral Buddhist worldview is internalised by Ban Dong villagers. Kamma refers to the force set in motion by actions with moral repercussions. Therefore one has the responsibility to make as much 'merit' as possible to attain a higher place in their future existence, or even in the future of their current life. Merit making is thus very important. On all Buddhist days including Wan Son Mai Tao merit making acts are performed, not only does it provide merit, but it also promotes solidarity of the community. Keyes (1983) discusses these world views in relation to acts of protest and resistance in Northeastern Thailand. He argues that villagers are not adverse to protest over their low status in society even though they believe in Kamma.

Whilst this belief 'predicates that inherent inequalities between humans are 'natural' (based on the merit gained in a past life) 'it is not fatalistic' (Keyes, 1983, p858). Villagers believe actions in this life are open to moral assessment and people are responsible for their actions, and these actions should not result in the suffering of others. Thus if villagers feel others are causing them injustice then this would be morally unacceptable and is cause for resistance. This is what happened in the case of the Communist insurgency.

4.8 Institutional Challenge: Communist Insurgency

The Communist insurrection affected the entire population of Ban Dong. If villagers were not directly involved with the Communist militia and living in the forest, then they had to leave the village and live with relatives in neighbouring provinces. Those who stayed to live in the village lived in the difficult situation of having to negotiate with both groups, both government soldiers

and Communist insurgents. As one villager commented in his life history interview with me "*at that time the community broke down completely, many people had to go to the forest and it has only been in the last 26 years that the village could start again when all the people moved back* " (Por Nakon, 54 years old, informal discussion). This section will firstly describe the history of the Communist movement in Thailand and Ban Dong. It then goes onto describe the failures of the CPT and consequences for villagers. Lastly, the section comments on the increased regulation by the State and its legacy over the collective action of villagers today.

Communism as an ideology against the right wing interests of the military and elite gained momentum since the 1930's, mainly within Chinese groups in Thailand (Baker and Phongpaichit, 2005, p180). It was not until 1942 that the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) was founded and it started a movement dedicated to increased welfare, organising labour through trade unions and strikes. It also started its own newspaper, Mahachon (The Masses). Leftist ideology began to attract some middle classes and university students who increased leftist writings and theory, including that of the Buddhadasa school of thought where the links between Marxism and Buddhism were emphasised. It was not only urban intellectuals in Bangkok that gave CPT support. In the Northeast Communist ideology had been popularised by the influx of Vietnamese refugees, most of who settled in Mukdahan province in the Northeast (The Nation Newspaper, 23rd August 2008). By the late 1940's the CPT increased its support base to a wider audience, particularly among those that were frustrated with the military dictatorship.

In the Northeast, CPT causes were particularly strong as Baker argues it enabled peasants to rally against the market and the forced imposition of the nation-state 'with its intrusive bureaucracy and demands for linguistic and cultural uniformity' (Baker and Phonpaichit, 2005, p 183). The first CPT base was set up in the Phu Pan Mountain area in Mukdahan which is where Ban Dong is situated. The area is also where Khrong Chandawong, a teacher and socialist leader from the nearby province of Sakon Nakon had been executed by Sarit's (the military dictator in Thailand at the time) troops in 1961. The acts of terror and repression were not new in the area. Many of my elder respondents recollected the terror government soldiers had over rural

villagers including acts of violence, rape, stealing and pilfering. One female respondent told me that "*in the past the government (jao nai) shot people who lived in Ban Dong…at that time the government troops would force villagers and hit and kick them, after this the 'sahai'*[36] *and government fought each other*" (Mae Lair, 42 years old). Another, Por Kai (male, 73 years old) explained the disapproval of villagers of military troops and police in the area "*the policemen used guns to shoot chickens and didn't ask villagers if they could shoot them…. The police would shoot people if they left their fields late in the evenings as they thought they were communists*"

A number of insurgent elements had enjoyed success in the 1970's as many supporters joined their ranks as a result of the 1976 military coup and the conservative policies of the Thanin Kraivichien government that followed it. Neglect by past governments, whose primary interests and attention were centred on the capital city of Bangkok, had alienated many rural inhabitants and particularly many ethnic minorities in peripheral areas of the country. Communist militants were able to exploit the discontent that grew steadily during the 1960s and 1970s. The CPT gained a lot of support in the Northeast, appealing to both Thai-Lao and non-Thai minorities, and among the Malay in southern Thailand. Leftist ideology gave these historically neglected and politically excluded areas hope for a better future, and this form of protest was a continuation of the antigovernment sentiments in these areas, especially the Northeast, which for decades had been a centre of political dissidence (Keyes, 1967 calls this ethno-regionalism).

In the early 1960's China and Vietnam (North Vietnam) began providing Thai cadres with training, money, and materiel for insurgency as well as radio broadcasts. Training camps were set up in Vietnam, in the Pathet Lao-controlled areas of neighbouring Laos, and in Yunnan Province in China. Many of my respondents in Ban Dong had been to Laos for training, especially young women who were trained in aspects of nursing. Others had been to China and Vietnam as well as Northern Thailand on various training, educational and subversion missions. For example, Por Kai (73 years old at time of interview) moved into the forest when he was 35 and lived there for 10 years. He moved with his wife and daughter who was 4 years old at the time.

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[36] Note: when talking of insurgents villagers use the term 'sahai' which is a positive word. Sahai usually means friend, kinfolk, brotherhood.

During their time in the forest his wife and daughter were trained in nursing in China and Vietnam. Por Kai was responsible for recruiting new insurgents from Nakon Phanom, Sakon Nakon and Kalasin and train newcomers about 'the politics of communists'. He spoke of his tactics in recruiting new members, particularly of inviting key people from villages who would then bring others. He talked positively about being a member of the communist group.

Por Kai as well as all other respondents spoke of the reasons they joined. Their reasons were clear, they fought for increased local development and rights and were against the military dictatorship of General Thanin. As Por Kai explained "*they taught us about politics and socialism…. I liked the system of the Communists as they were fair and didn't disadvantage people*". Later he also commented "*I joined the communists for one reason, because I wanted to learn about politics and wanted to have rights, liberty and equality (siti seri-pap[37] and sa-mur-pak). I didn't want other people to be disadvantaged in the country*" (Por Kai, male, age 73).

In response to the growing support for the CPT and what they stood for, the Thai government began to institute countermeasures designed to improve both the defence and the living conditions in villages in 'threatened' areas. Mobile development units dispatched to vulnerable areas attempted to establish the governments' presence and improve its image among isolated villages by initiating rural development programs. They initiated local health, educational and economic services. In Ban Dong they funded a primary school, the village's first rice mill and a water supply system (see Timeline at the end of this chapter). Failure to complete many of the projects and the government officers' attitude when visiting with villagers and lack of participation from rural people limited the effectiveness of the programs and the insurgency activity continued.

By the mid 1970s, the insurgency had become a part of life in Thailand. The Thai government, with the help of the United States had spent vast amounts of money to combat the various insurgencies (over US$100 million), but success was limited. The United States withdrew from the counterinsurgency effort in the mid-1970s. In addition, the 1976 coup had sent as many as

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[37] สิทธิ 'siti' means rights; เสรีภาพ 'seri-pap' means freedom/liberty and เสมอภาค 'sa-mur-pak' means equality.

5,000 students into the jungles to join the CPT. Total CPT strength was estimated at 12,000 armed fighters in the peak year of 1979 (Baker, 1995). In Ban Dong there were bombings and frequent shootings on the ground and from the air. Many villagers who had chosen to stay in the village fled to neighbouring provinces for months on end to escape the fighting in the village. Por Artit (now 52) was first a communist solider and then a recruiter. He was 19 years old when he fought against government soldiers in Nakon Phanom. He told me that fighting between insurgents and government troops would vary in time from just 1 hour to all night. They would have to walk and prepare their meals before they left their camp. Fighting would usually involve groups of 10 insurgents but sometimes over 200 insurgents would fight together. The insurgent camps based in the mountains would be split between male soldiers who would be moving around a lot and their families who would be in a separate camp with children. These camps were well equipped with university students from Bangkok teaching maths and politics and doctors from China teaching medicine.

The Thai government tried to increase the effectiveness of its counterinsurgency operations and in the early 1980's the government declared the 66/23 policy. It was successful in addressing the complex political and social aspects of the insurgency problem. The 66/23 policy was a broad political strategy, which offered an amnesty to all insurgents and a promise to accord them respect and security (something which had previously been missing in previous counterinsurgency operations). The policy also outlined measures to improve the social and political conditions of remote areas that had contributed to CPT strength.

This resulted in the surrender of more than 2,000 insurgents during the first ten months. Former student leader Thirayuth Bunmee's surrender after 5 years with the CPT gained wide publicity for the amnesty program, as did the mass defection of 250 armed insurgents and hundreds of unarmed family members and supporters at Mukdahan in December 1982. By 1988 most of the student revolutionaries had returned home and the CPT collapsed (Ungpakorn 2007). For those insurgents from Ban Dong, amnesty was also offered. Many were happy to return to the village. Por Khamyod told me that the Communist leaders in the area negotiated with the local military. They would return to the village if the government ensured them that a road would be built

connecting neighbouring villages all the way to the district town of Dong Luang. The government agreed and the road was named 'Prem Pattana' (Prem being the new military prime minister and 'pattana' meaning progress). This was seen as a victory for local insurgents whose main concerns were over the lack of development the area was receiving.

The collapse of the CPT had consequences, as Ungpakorn (2007) argues. Although there was a new parliamentary democracy in place the 'utter dismantling' of the CPT meant that there were no left wing political parties to represent workers or small farmers. The left wing parties which had success in the 1970's such as the Socialist party, Socialist Front and Palang Mai (New Force), gaining 14.4% of the popular vote (2.5 million votes, Ungpakorn 2007) were no longer organised due to the crackdown on any leftist movements. Those involved in leftist organisations moved into NGO work and parliamentary politics was left to right wing conservatives, the military and big business.

For Ban Dong villagers joining the Communist insurgents was a way of collective resistance. There have been many reports from villagers of the hardships of this resistance and the toll it took on the village. Most festivals were cancelled and the community dispersed. However, all members of the community have been affected by it. Both rich and poor villagers fought for greater rights and local development and so it was also a source of fusion for villagers. All villagers, whether they were 'khon paa' (forest people, meaning insurgents) or those that relocated to neighbouring provinces, or those that chose to stay and live in the village have a sense of regional identity as they have shared the hardships of this time period and their fight against oppression.

4.9 The period of greater state regulation and the continuing battle for land rights

Shortly after the collapse of the Communist insurgency, a large area of the Phu Phan mountain range was designated a Nation Park in 1987. It was one of five National Parks created to celebrate the King's 60th Birthday the same year (National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department website). This meant that the forest land once utilized and controlled freely by villagers of Ban Dong were now designated 'protected areas' and villagers' access, utilization and movement on these areas were now under control and surveillance from the State.

Without the full title deeds '*chanot tee din*' to their land, villagers cannot benefit from royally endorsed King's or Queen's projects, nor have access to government loans from the government's Agricultural Bank (BAAC). Villagers can no longer enlarge their cassava plantations, nor can they hunt in the forest. This has caused widespread anger from the villagers of Ban Dong. Many depend on hunting in order to survive and nearly every household is continuing to hunt despite these restrictions. Like the Communist insurgency, the issue of land rights was again a fusion issue for villagers as both rich and poor households protested against the state.

There have been frequent disputes in the village between villagers and representatives of the State. One such example when I was living in the village culminated in the school being boycotted by villagers and their children because a husband of one of the teachers was a forest officer who had arrested two villagers for extending their cassava fields into the forest reserve. Both the teacher and her husband took refuge in a nearby village for fear of their new pick up truck being vandalized or physical assault from angry family members. The families concerned argued that forest conservation policy was unfair as their land holdings were small and not enough for family subsistence needs. Eventually the dispute was settled as the forest officers allowed the extensions after village elders pleaded their case.

Mae Lair (female, aged 42) recollected that disputes over land and forest resource use have been happening between villagers and officials for over 15 years: "*years ago we all camped on the road protesting as the police arrested villagers who cut down trees and the villagers didn't accept this…it was shown on a TV news report on channel 7*". Feelings of frustration are widespread, Por Khamyod explained that he felt "*mai sabai jai* (not happy) *about the declaration, villagers find it hard to use the land, the national park is a problem. If I have 5 rai of land I can't enlarge it, in the past I could, but now the forestry office doesn't allow it and they will arrest villagers. 5 rai is not enough to live on, I have children and they will have children*". There is a sense of survival stress, the village population is increasing and land shortage is a serious issue.

There have been negotiations between village officials and local government. When Por Khamyod was Or-ba-tor (a locally elected official) one of his main priorities was to petition for land rights for villagers. He argues "*the people who claim for land rights are disadvantaged, I want land rights because I want to keep my land and give it to my children".* Proposals by villagers have been voiced publicly, for example Por Khamyod wants part of the National Park near Ban Dong to become a 'community forest'. Whereby the community would be responsible for the land and use the forest without being arrested. However these plans were rejected by local government and the issue of forest use and land rights is still of great concern to villagers.

Feelings of being disadvantaged are widespread throughout Ban Dong and this has been illustrated with the short protests against forest officers within the village. Illegal hunting, land clearance and logging are still prevalent and frequent arrests of villagers are a big problem for the community. This had led to 42 people from Ban Dong joining the Assembly of the Poor (AOP) and they went to protest with them in Bangkok. Por Kai joined because he "*was very disappointed with the government*". He explained that when the communist insurgency ended the government promised villagers land to work on- '*the government owes the people who were communist, they told us that if we left the communist group they would give us land to earn a living, 1 person should have got 15 rai, but in this area there was a shortage of land so they offered us money of 12,000 baht for 1 rai. Now we still ask the prime minister but the*

government says it was a different government that promised the money. We were supposed to get paid 24 years ago, we are still waiting".

These attempts at collective resistance and protest have meant that villagers have learnt from these experiences. Government and government agencies have not been sources of security for villagers of Ban Dong. Rather they have been agents of insecurity. Trust in the state, in certain aspects, is very weak.

4.10 Institutional Challenge: Assembly of the Poor AOP (*Samacha Khon Jon*)

"The Assembly of the Poor is at heart a classic peasant struggle over rights to resources of land, water, and forests. However, it differs radically from peasant movements of earlier eras. Peasants are not what they were. The emergence of the Assembly reflects not only a widening of the space available for peasant politics but also the appearance of a new political economy of the Thai peasantry or post-peasantry"- Chis Baker (2005, p9).

A number of villagers from Ban Dong are involved with the Assembly of the Poor (AOP). The main reason behind their protest was on-going struggle to claim the rights over their use of forest resources as described above. Above Chris Baker states the AOP is 'at the heart of classic peasant struggles over rights to resources of land, water and forests' (p.9). A group of villagers from Ban Dong attended the 99 day protest by the AOP in Bangkok in 1997. The outcome of this was the granting of limited use rights, whereby it was legalised for villagers to work the land they currently had in the forest, however ownership rights were still withheld and no extension of farmland was allowed.

The Assembly of the Poor was formed in 1995, it was a continuation of a series of protests by Northeastern groups as well as organised groups from the North and South of Thailand. It is an umbrella organisation with no specific leader. It is a 'loose network' of NGO advisors and local protesters (Baker and Phongpaichit, 2005, p217). The majority of these informal leaders are from rural areas with urban experiences. Bamrung Kayotha, one of the AOP leaders, was a migrant in Bangkok in the early 1970's and became involved in Trade Union activities. Other leaders such as Prawian Boonnak and Nakhon Sriwiphat were involved in CPT activities and later were teachers and local leaders. The decentralised form of leadership reflected the organisation's commitment to localism but was also a way of preventing intimidation and political manipulation that had been a constant hindrance to other forms of rural social movements. Therefore the AOP was a break from the 'party' format of the CPT. Neither was it just another lobby group as other farmers' organisations had been (see Baker 2000). Rather, the AOP was a way of organising protest with media attracting non-violent campaigns that have been able to capture the headlines and both rural and urban attention all over Thailand.

In 1996 AOP organised thousands of protestors from farmers' groups all over Thailand to petition for land rights and citizenship to Bangkok. Although an agreement was reached with the government, they were renounced when that government fell shortly afterwards. This led to a longer protest in 1997, whereby the AOP brought more than 30,000 villagers and protestors to the streets of Bangkok for a period of 99 days. Again concessions were made by the government and compensation was promised to many villagers adversely effected by dam projects. However, the government again fell and again the next government renounced the promises made. In 1998 more protests occurred outside government house in Bangkok but the Chuan government would not agree to demands, calling protesters 'parasites' and 'opportunists'. The government said: 'politics and interest groups are major hindrances to easing their [the poor's] plight' (*Bangkok Post*, 4 March 1998). All of the concessions previously agreed were withdrawn including some resolutions allowing settlers to remain in areas of 'official' forest. As Baker (2005) notes, after the economic crisis of 1997, the press and urban population became more critical of AOP demonstrations, 'wary of the rural poor gaining more control over resources and more political power in a time of urban uncertainty' (Ibid, p24).

As Baker (2005) illustrates the AOP was an organisation whose independence challenged the existing political hierarchy. It allowed the poor to directly confront and negotiate with government. However, the Democrats' reversal of the Assembly's gains was 'a reassertion of paternalist control, and a denial of political space for the Assembly's new form of politics' (Baker, 2005, p26). Villagers from Ban Dong are still waiting for responses from the government over their land use issues. Again their collective protests only gained small concessions and not victory nor greater recognition of their rights.

The 1990's marked a new era of political protest from small farmers and various disadvantaged groups. It also marked the realisation that the rural poor were a significant force in Thai society, a realisation that Thai Rak Thai (TRT, Thaksin Shinawatra's political party) benefitted from by attracting the rural voters with pro-poor policies. The AOP still have various protests, including a yearly 'village of the poor' whereby rural men and women sit on the streets reminding the government of their hardships and maintaining some media attention.

However, the overturning of the AOP concessions by the government in 1997 was a turning point and highlights whether a loose network such as the AOP can really make political gains. What the AOP did represent was the enlargement of civil society, especially within the Thai peasantry. It illustrated the hybridised 'post-peasant' whereby rural villagers retain self sufficient rural production side by side with a rising class consciousness though greater involvement with the urban economy through media, networks such as the AOP and migration. This 'new rural politics' (Baker, 2005) is a 'direct reflection of the urbanisation of the peasantry, the development of leaders who represented this combination of rural roots and urban experiences, and the formation of organisations which articulated rural demands with urban-aware strategies' (Ibid, p25).

In the case of Ban Dong, these 'urban-aware strategies' were very different from past CPT activities. Membership also varied as only those wealthy enough to take time away from their farmland travelled to Bangkok. The similarity is that both forms of collective action gained only concessions from the government. The lack of outright success of collective protest serves as a

signifier of villager's collective disadvantages and oppression. This in turn unites villagers in Ban Dong, both rich and poor, through their regional identity and peasant ideology. Taking the 'exit, voice and loyalty' (Hirschman, 1970) framework introduced in Chapter 2, 'voice' can be illustrated as these forms of collective protest. Households are under survival stress and 'voice' through protest is a way of managing this insecurity collectively.

4.11 Institutional Challenge: Migration as a continuing process of change

This section will now introduce other forms of strategic behaviour from households in Ban Dong. After the breakdown of the CPT, some insurgents left Thailand and moved to Lao and Vietnam, but the majority returned to Ban Dong. However, villagers are only 'loyal' to those state members who are seen to be involved in local politics and are looking out for local interests. This is why TRT had such a majority, not only in Ban Dong but the whole of the Northeast. It is widely believed amongst villagers that change is slow to come to Ban Dong, and this had led to various individual and household strategies. The main strategy has been through the strategy of migration.

Since the 1980's migration in Isan has gained in momentum. It is reported that up to 1 million migrants return to Isan from Bangkok every year for the Songkran festival. In Ban Dong, this migration phenomenon has also increased. In a study of three rural Northeastern villages (including Ban Dong) Masae (2007) found that 99.6% of households had members who migrate in search of paid work in other provinces. Villagers have been migrating to the central and Southern provinces of Thailand for generations. Although migration in itself is not an overt form of protest, it is a process entered into because of various push and pull factors (Parnwell, 1993). Villagers in Ban Dong are well aware that development projects are slow to come to them and that the quickest way to gain money for agricultural investment, education, consumer products or new houses is through the strategy of labour migration to Bangkok.

De Haan and Rogaly's (2002) study on migrant workers and their role in rural change in South Asia illustrated the need to view labour migration as a social process. They argue that migration is structured by gender, class and ethnicity and in turn migration affects social relations and structures and so it is a dynamic process. There must be a move away from seeing migrants as helpless victims to strategic social agents within the rural political economy (De Haan and Rogaly 2002, p5). Migration is bound up within social identities and networks (Lightfoot and Fuller, 1979), and boundaries around social identities may be affirmed, broken down or changed through migration. Migrants are in this case, creating a degree of choice with regards to who they work for and on what terms.

In Ban Dong both long term and shorter circular migration takes place in order to support households. The act of migration is therefore an 'exit' option for villagers as they search for increased security via work in the city to escape the hardship of low return agricultural labouring. Many hope to earn enough to buy new land in Mukdahan with land rights or start a shop in the village which would in turn provide increased security. These are all individual and household strategies of survival, rather than collective forms of action, and these are what the rest of this thesis will concentrate on.

The reasons and aspirations of migrants are therefore forms of 'everyday forms of peasant resistance' (Scott, J. C, 1985). Scott argues these forms of peasant resistance are more effective forms of action than more dramatic large-scale mass mobilisation (such as the CPT or AOP). Every day resistance requires little co-ordination and planning and mostly comes in the form of individual self-help (such as migration) and it usually avoids direct confrontation with authority (although Ban Dong villagers continue to violate National Park controls and hunt and use forest resources). Migration has acted as a strategy for villagers to gain increased welfare and security for themselves and invest in their own houses and village community away from the direct control of the State.

4.12 Conclusion

Ban Dong is no longer an isolated rural village. Various changes have occurred over the years. A steady influx of migrants, first So/Broo people and then Yor, Phu Tai and Lao have all come to settle in the village over the years, making it an ethnically diverse village. Everyone in the village normally converses in Yor dialect because this is the largest ethnic group in the village. Due to the increasing acceptance of migration some villagers have married people from the South, Central and Northern parts of Thailand. It is no longer an isolated village, but an ethnically diverse space.

Changes have also occurred agriculturally and economically. No longer are villagers using slash and burn agriculture or relying solely on hunting, gathering and bartering for rice with neighbouring districts. Cash cropping has been introduced with cassava being the main crop. However, this could change to rubber if villagers can make the initial investment. Also more and more off-farm businesses are being set up, and most villagers now aspire to open a shop, or other non-farm business.

Peasants are now post peasants and their struggles have changed along with their livelihoods. The village was founded with Lueci Pa-dam, a wise prophet-like leader who had been linked to the millennial revolts (Phrompakping, 2008). Then it was a strong hold for the CPT insurgency struggle in the 1970's with many taking up arms and taking refuge in the forest for a number of years. However, with changing socio-economic developments, villagers' struggles have developed new tactics. Migration and increased integration and communication have narrowed the gap between village and city. This in turn has affected the nature of institutional challenge. Disputes over access and control of resources, are instead aired in different ways as illustrated by villagers' involvement with the Assembly of the Poor (AOP).

This chapter has illustrated the changing formations of the rural politics and struggles of the people of Ban Dong. Protest and struggle are still continuing over similar ideological and material subjects such as land, access, rights and inclusion, as can be seen in the recent 'Red Shirt' protests in Bangkok and elsewhere in 2010. These were at the heart of what those who joined the CPT fought for, but armed struggle is no longer a viable option for these 'global villagers' who are dependent economically on the national and international economy. Instead everyday forms of peasant resistance (Scott, 1985) is applied to this new political economy of the modern day Thai rural villager, who are constructing the place they are living in through their everyday behaviour and resistance.

Figure 19: Timeline of Events in the Village and Region

Late 1800's - 1900 (approx) – Luang Poo Luesi Pa-dam led a group of villagers from Sakonnakon and Nakon Phanom into the forest area that is now Ban Dong. Only three Households existed. The region was ethnically Lao and under control of Vientiane.

1893 Franco-Siamese Treaty, resulted in Siam surrendering parts of Laos that were under their control to the French. Siam kept territory on the right bank of the river, which are now provinces in present day Thailand: Loei, Nongkhai, Nakon Phanom, Mukdahan.

1945 (2488) – More people came to settle in the village from Kalasin Province and Nage in Nakon Phanom who were following a Luang Poo Sorn, a spiritual leader. These people were mostly Yor or Phu Tai ethnicity.

1957 Military dictatorship in Thailand. Reports of government troops assaulting villagers in Ban Dong.

1971 (2514)- Ban Dong's Primary School was funded by the government and built

1973- Ban Dong was a significant area of Communist insurrection/ also same year of the 14th October Coup whereby mass protests in Bangkok overthrew the military dictatorship

1976 – Bloody crackdown against the left intensifies rural struggle and many students from Bangkok seek refuge in forests of the Northeast.

1979- The first rice mill was set up in Ban Dong

1980 – 66/23 Policy in place (to stop communist insurgents the government promised full pardon if insurgents returned to their villages); Prem Pattana Road was built (only a dirt road at this time). CPT starts to weaken and party collapses by mid-1980's.

1981- Support from the State for constructing a water supply system

1982 (2525)- Prem Pattana Road, a 38km concrete road was built; Mukdahan was made a Province.

1983- Cassava plantations began

1984- Dong Luang Sub-district was formed and split away from Nage District in Nakon Phanom Province.

1986- Electricity was extended into the village and the nursery school was set up

1987 (2530) - Phu Pha Yon National Park was formed in honour of the King's 60th Birthday- villagers officially have no land rights.

1989- Permanent building of a village nursery funded by government

1992- Kho Jo Ko Protests on Mitraphap Highway in the Northeast towards Bangkok in protest of the army scheme to remove 6 million 'squatters' out of 1,253 'forest' areas, some people in Ban Dong participated. Mass strikes and uprising against the military government all over Thailand.

1997- 42 people from Ban Don joined the AOP protest in Bangkok, their main cause was asking for land rights. They stayed in Bangkok for 3 months, part of the longest protest ever in Thai history (101 days and 30,000 protestors from all over Thailand). Also, year of the economic crisis and the new 1997 Constitution.

1999- A telephone service was set up in one of the village shops, the only phone in the   village (villagers cannot use mobile phones as there is no signal due to the mountain range).

2001 – TRT elected into power and introduced universal healthcare scheme and village funds, both of which villagers in Ban Dong use.

2004 – The Queen came to visit the area and local TAO sub district offices. Requests for full land rights at this time was denied.

2005- Government started promoting the cultivation of rubber trees in the area, some villagers in Ban Dong are investing in new crops.

2006- Landline telephone poles are being erected in anticipation of a new line being installed (by 2008 this had still not been installed). Also, military coup in Bangkok.

CHAPTER 5: GENERATION AND COHORTS

"Social change not only moulds the course of individual lives but, when many persons in the same cohort are affected in similar ways, the change in their collective lives can in turn also produce social change" (Keith & Kertzer, 1984, p25)

"Sometimes cows forget their feet" (Thai Saying)

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I highlight the rapidity of change Thailand has undergone. In addition to this I also indicate just what these changes have been, building on the structural changes highlighted in the previous chapter. In just 10 years access to education and media communications as well as housing styles and the need for consumer products have increased rapidly, at a far greater extent than that of the West and many other developing countries. State penetration into villages has been rapid and has infiltrated most spheres of life. The interpenetration of rural and urban and agricultural and industrial has also increased dramatically. In turn, teenagers are aspiring to new 'modern' lifestyles and migrate to meet these new needs as well as existing responsibilities. As a result migration has become part of the life course of many people in rural Thailand. The consequences from these rapid changes have had effects on the social fabric of Thai society and have caused fundamental changes in rural lives, identities and livelihoods, not just materially but socially and culturally.

The chapter highlights these material changes as well as the less tangible changes in human, cultural and social dimensions. I build up an analytic framework to better illustrate the everyday reality and changes that rural people are facing, such as those in Ban Dong, using a resource profile approach[38] (McGregor 2004). In particular my findings bring to light the changes in

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[38] A resource profile approach had been developed at the University of Bath in order to better understand livelihood dynamics. The term 'resources' is used instead of 'capital' because they are more fluid and can

opportunities and choice and the attitudinal repercussions of these changes. I use a cross-sectional analysis, using Collard's cohort model (1999) in order to illustrate changes and processes. This allows me to demonstrate what the variables of this change are through these selected keyholes[39]. In this chapter I use the 'keyhole' of life histories of members from one family across generations. I have chosen this family because it is representative of many families in the village of Ban Dong as well as other villages in the Northeast because their household has seen a recent rise in income due to daughter's migration as well as other household processes that are well documented in previous research (see Mills 1999). This household is also comprised of multiple generations, and can illustrate both male and female examples.

What my findings illustrate is that parents, in providing inter-generational transfers of investment, especially education to the young, have in part contributed to the shift in aspirations and de-agrarianisation process (Rigg, 2001) along with new forms of media and expanded social networks. Both young and old people that I met during my fieldwork mention the phrase above 'sometimes cows forget their feet' referring to those who have migrated and are perceived to have forgotten their roots and traditions. However, whilst there is a general trend of 'depeasantization' there are still important markers of agrarian lifestyle and 'ruralities' that these actors hold onto. Thus whilst there is an active and strived for transformation of the countryside, this is within a framework which still has elements of rural lifestyles and identity. Wood calls this 'rurbanization' (Wood, 1995). Those who are seen to be 'forgetting their feet', the younger generation living in Bangkok, are not necessarily dropping old ways for new ones. Rather they are considering certain trade-offs and are making choices in reconstructing this framework their parents had once themselves reconstructed and are still in the process of constructing.

Often studies have focused on young migrants, "we are not like our mothers" attitudes that the young have (for example, M.B Mills, 1997), and not only in Thailand, but in youth culture more

be lost and gained, therefore this researcher believes there is a distinction between social capital and social resources.

[39] The term 'keyhole' is a reference to the type of approach used in the analysis and presentation of findings in this thesis which emerged from discussions with my supervisor, Prof. Geof Wood.

globally. Elders have often been either ignored, or seen as the gatekeepers of tradition, a structure that the young and current generation are negotiating. Elders in this study are also actors, often presenting themselves as gatekeepers, but also as agents of change in their own right by storytelling and themselves encouraging their young to embrace new opportunities that were not available to them. This illustrates the inadequacy of current perceptions of change in Thailand, which are oversimplified and fail to grasp the complex meanings that rural people ascribe to these rapid changes and the negotiations and trade-offs that are being acted out.

With the above in mind, this chapter provides a descriptive and historical analysis into change processes going on in the everyday lives of these villagers. The 'keyholes' are entry ways into which we can see the changes that have occurred, some of the fields that are being contested and the close connection between the changing livelihood conditions and actors frames of reference for dealing with such situations. Livelihoods are the way people strive to make a living materially, coping with uncertainties, responding to new opportunities and choosing between different value positions (Long, 2000). The findings therefore point to the need for a deeper understanding of personal experiences and the issues of choices and values people can choose from.

5.2 Looking at Change through Cohorts

I have used the term cohorts rather than generations in this section because of the rapidity of change that areas like Northeast Thailand have undergone in the past few decades. Instead of looking at the three generations of 'young' 'working' and 'old', for the purposes of understanding conditions of rapid change, I have made distinctions between smaller age gaps, because those born just 5 or 10 years apart have very different opportunities.

Mannheim (1952, in Koning, 2005, p1) illustrated that a generation must been seen as individuals who share a 'common location in the social and historical process which provide a group with overlapping experiences, beliefs and views' and it follows that with each new age group there is the potential for new attitudes and new modes of thought. According to Koning

(2005) this definition is helpful in understanding social change in Indonesia where different generations are confronted by quite different experiences (Koning, 2005, p4). When looking at Thailand I have also found that 'generations' is a term that needs unpacking. Instead of the normal three generations of 'young' 'working' and old', which are more biological concepts of generations of people born in the same time periods, there exist more than just three. In such a rapidly changing context, there are different cohorts within these generations that also experience 'overlapping experiences' and thus have the potential for new attitudes and new modes of thought as Manheim illustrates. This is because change has happened and is still happening very rapidly in this developing context and so a more socio-historical approach to the study of generations is needed.

Existing studies on social change, and on Thailand more generally, concentrate on one specific group of people or age group, for example taxi drivers in Bangkok (Textor, 1966), Female factory workers (Mills, 1997), female cleaners in a shopping mall (Brody, 2001), changes in villages (Hirari 1997), teenagers (Malhota, Roca, Kittisuksathit *et al* 2005), the elderly (Lloyd-Sherlock, 2006, 2004; Vandergeest, 1993). However, few in-depth qualitative studies have drawn their data from more than one generation. Those that do (e.g. Malhotra, Roca, Kittisuksathit *et al* 2005) rely on older respondents' perceptions about the current generation, and not the older generation as actors.

Much of the Thai studies literature has focused upon the 'working generation', the 'unintended consequence of the contemporary stress on the younger generations is the impression that cultural adaptation and change takes place lineally' (Gardner, 2002, p19 referring to Bangladeshi studies). In order to understand social and cultural change more effectively we must consider all generations. This is because households, families and society all have inter-generational relationships, whether it be in the form of 'bargains' (Wood, 1999), 'contracts' or 'fractures' (Collard, 1999). Also, each generation has an influence on the next and vice-versa.

Using an altered version of Collard's (1999) 'Generations, populations and cohorts' figure 20, below, shows that generations do overlap, and so those models or studies that only look at two generations, usually 'young' and 'old', are inadequate. Figure 20 illustrates the middle cohort or the reference cohort consist of young people of period 1 who in turn become the working cohort of period two and eventually they become the old of period 3. The bottom bar shows the population at any given period of time. In each period there are populations of young, working and old.

Figure 20: Generations, Populations and Cohorts

			Young 3
Next cohort		Young 2	Working 3
Reference cohort	Young 1	Working 2	Old 3
Previous cohort	Working 1	Old 2	
	Old 1		
	Period 1 population	Period 2 population	Period 3 population

(Collard, 1999, p4)

Collard argues that the notion of 'intergenerational bargains' can play a central role in the livelihoods and decision making of individuals and the communities they are part of. He argues it is impossible for individuals to have a good life without transfers of resources to them at critical stages of their lives in their life cycles. Those that provide most of the transfers of resources come from the working generation or from outside of the community, such as the State.

In this section I will look at each cohort in turn, instead of highlighting just 3 generations i.e. young, working and old, I have separated out cohorts, in this case 6 cohorts (see figure 21 below).

Figure 21: Three Generations and 6 cohorts

Old Generation	Cohort 1: The elderly
	Cohort 2: Village elders, but still undertaking work
Working Generation	Cohort 3: Workers, usually married and with children
	Cohort 4 : New workers
Young Generation	Cohort 5: In school, some working part time
	Cohort 6: Very young and in school

This chapter will not discuss in detail the bargains made between cohorts (this is what I describe in chapter 7). This chapter will describe the changes in cohorts' opportunities and access, providing a backdrop to their lifeworlds and frames of reference. I do this using a family as a case study to illustrate the wider process of change within the village. The family is representative of many families within the village as the processes going on within this household have been found in other households I have studied in the village. As with any case study, these findings cannot be used to generalise for Isan, nor can it be used as a microcosm for Thailand as a whole. However, there are important processes going on within this family which have greater resonation with other families in the village (through my observation) and in Isan that have been illustrated in previous studies (Mills, 1999, Brody, 2000). Findings show that social and economic change has been rapid and different cohorts have responded differently to new opportunities available to them. Each cohort has expectations of other cohorts and so they have a reliance on one another for their current and future wellbeing. Even though change has been rapid, this had not necessarily meant the fracturing of generational ties. Whilst there is less uncertainty economically for cohorts this has not meant the total dependency on the market. 'gemeinshaft'[40] values still play an important role in the reproduction of security. Whilst the

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[40] Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft are two categories introduced by Tonnies in 1887. Gemeinshaft is when individuals are orientated to their local communities, shared moral beliefs and are committed to group behaviour and responsibilities with other members. The family was the example Tonnies used for Gemeinschaft values. Therefore it represents strong personal relationships, strong families and social institutions. Gesellschaft on the other hand, represents associations in society, but ones in which the individual is the most important member. There is a lack of shared common beliefs. This association is

market and 'gesellschaft' values are increasing, and indeed are welcomed by all cohorts, there is still the appreciation and need for the family and the security they provide within the Thai welfare regime. For families in poor rural areas, there are still uncertainties in formal social security systems and this makes it necessary to invest in the family as a source of security and in turn, the family is a central symbolic resource for villagers and their life worlds and identity. As well as the family there are important contextual factors such as culture and ethnicity, as well as the wider community which play an important role in the life worlds of villagers (for examples see Parnwell, 2005, 2007; Promphakpin and Nakhan, 2007). However, for the purposes of this thesis I have had to limit the scope in order for depth and through this investigation the other factors such as culture, values, norms and ethnicity are illustrated through relationships at the individual and family levels.

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maintained through individuals acting in their own self interest. Gesellschaft is about contractual secondary relationships rather than community or family ties. Social cohesion is through the division of labour and and civil society.

5.3 An Illustration: The Khamyod Family

Figure 22: The Khamyod Family Tree

COHORT 1

| Mae Yai Mee | Por Pol (deceased) |

COHORT 2

| M | Por Male | Mae Female | M | M | M | F |

COHORT 3

| Pam Female (30) | Husband (from city) |

| Took Female (27) | Husband (from N.E) |

COHORT 4

Add Male (24)

COHORT 5

Nim Female (15)

COHORT 6

| Baby daughter | Daughter (2) lives with grandparents |
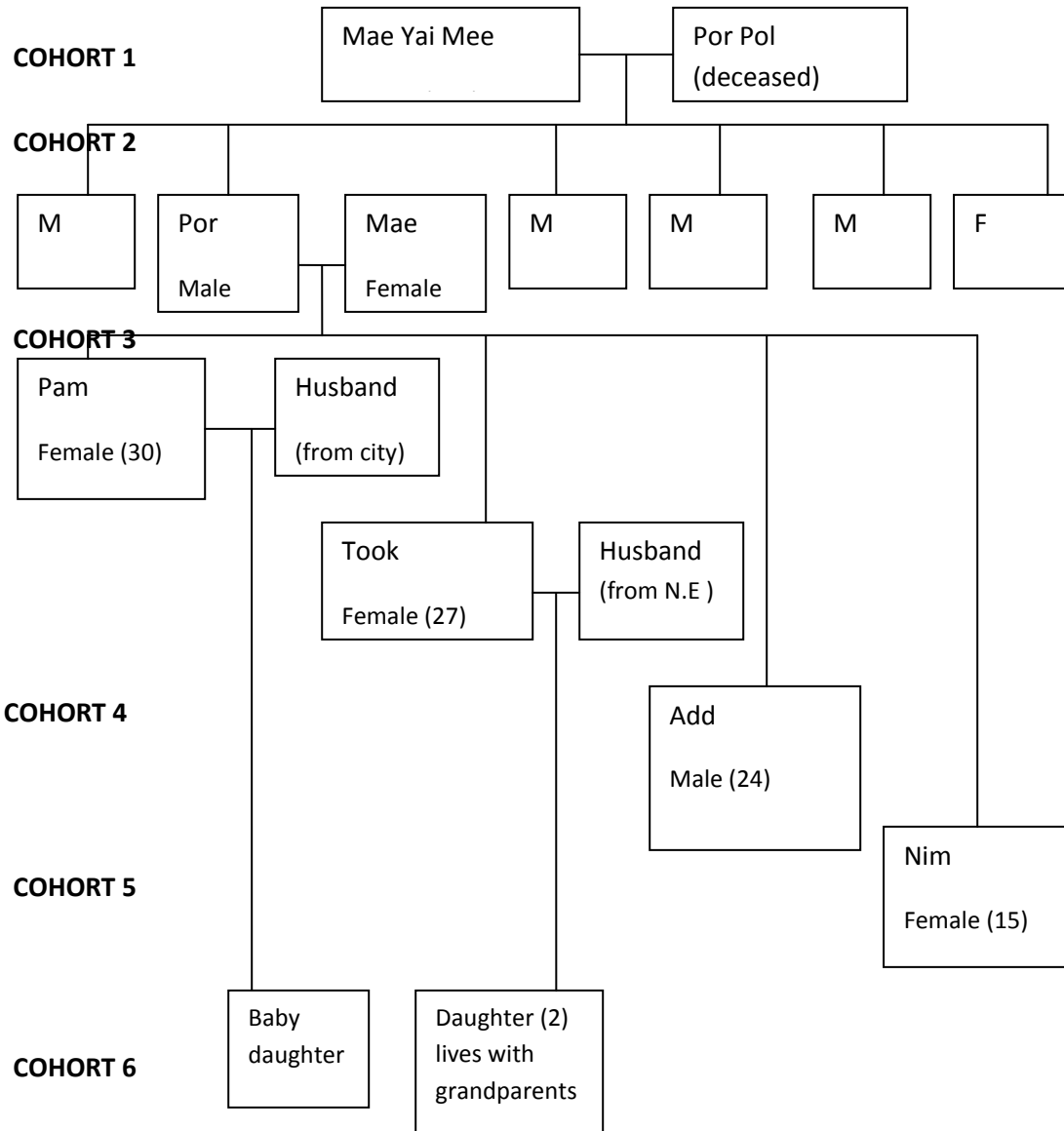
<u>Cohort 1: The Elders</u>

Mae Yai Mee is in her mid eighties and has never travelled further than 50 miles from the village. The furthest she has travelled is neighbouring villages to visit family members. She moved to Ban Dong from a neighbouring village (now part of another province after the separation of Mukdahan from Nakon Phanom in the 1980's) when she was 10 years old. At that time there were only three households in the village, all of whom were related to her. She has lived a comparatively sedentary lifestyle compared to younger cohorts, mainly because of the lack of opportunities; there were no roads, no buses and no social networks in distant places. Every household in the village were farmers or hunters and everyone was involved in agriculture. This perception fits into debates over Thailand's rural past that view past rural settlements as being subsistence-orientated, self-reliant, community based and inward looking (Rigg, 2001, p31, also Wolf, 1986, Scott 1976). As discussed in Chapter 2, Chatthip Nartsupha's (1996) view of village life is a good example of this school of thought, where the state was only marginally active in rural villages and commercial transactions were minimal.

These 'closed corporate communities' however are now considered to be an imagined construction and critics have mounted historical evidence of mobility, integration and exchange. After all Mai Yai Mee was part of an intricate network of kin spanning neighbouring settlements, trading and bartering. However, due to the remoteness of Ban Dong in the forest of the peripheral province of Mukdahan, capitalist commerce was minimal and so was State intervention and interaction. There was no school and no labour migration to distant provinces and more restricted '*pai taiaw*' (travelling). Instead migration was resettlement, many families, like Mae Yai Mee's moved to Ban Dong from other provinces, even Lao PDR.

Nowadays, Mae Yai Mee does not tend to the fields and instead undertakes household tasks as well as collecting fruit and vegetables and making her own chewing tobacco. In the past her fields were used to plant rice for subsistence. There was no commercial cash cropping, the land she used was small in size as the upland area of the village was not suitable for rice cultivation. Mae Yai Mee estimated her family had 3 or 4 rai to live on and this did not cover their

subsistence needs and so they bartered with kin in neighbouring villages and further a field with chilli and bamboo. Sometimes walking for a whole day to get there by foot. Today, travel to Bangkok is possible in this time. Now her fields are her daughter's with whom she lives. Mae Yai Mee had nine children, and so hunting and gathering were crucial for survival. Now only six of her children are alive.

All six remaining children live in the village, and are mostly in their 50's with families of their own. This is different from younger cohorts with children. Not only are they now having fewer children, but also live in fragmented households, with members living and working in distant provinces.

Mae Yai Mee cannot speak Thai, but speaks in her local Yor and Isan dialect. She is 'So' ethnicity, but does not use the dialect. There are two points to consider here. Firstly, this illustrates the remoteness and isolation villagers had with the Thai state apparatus before the 1970's, no one in this cohort can speak the Central Thai dialect. This puts huge constraints on their ability to communicate with figures of authority and also their ability to migrate to other provinces of Thailand. Secondly, more specific to Ban Dong, is the negotiation of ethnicity. Mae Yai Mee spoke of her parents speaking So dialect only with each other inside their house, but with other villagers they spoke Yor dialect, because they had moved into the village and so had to speak Yor. She now only speaks Yor as she grew up using it "*I'm not So, I'm normal…. the people in this village are normal people, we are all Lao*". Here she interchanges, So, Yor and Lao labels within a hierarchy, So at the bottom and Lao at the top. The importance here is that Mae Yai Mee identifies with Lao identity, rather than Thai and unveils that she looks down on her own ethnic origins.

Mae Yai Mee starts each day by making merit, giving sticky rice to the monks with her daughter and daughter-in-law. She lives with her daughter and grandson, in a large newly built wooden house on stilts paid for by her grandchildren in Bangkok. In her in-depth interview she spoke of her grandchildren in Bangkok. She has many of them there working. She felt that they had

stayed there for a long time and remarked questioningly that they didn't want to come back. However, she was also well aware of the benefits of their labour, "*the house I live in now comes from my grandchildren in Bangkok, if they didn't go I wouldn't have it*". At the time I spoke with her, she told me that she was waiting for her grand daughters to come back for the Songkran festival in April. When they come she would ask them for concrete to fill in the under level of the house. A month after the festival I noticed concrete blocks piled up in a corner by the side of the house and less than a year later, her house not only had concrete walls, but intricate wooden window frames, glass windows, tiled floor and a leather sofa.

Mae Yai Mee's cohort has illustrated the lack of opportunities that were available before the modern Thai state and the global economy became an influential force in villagers' lives. Material resources available were limited. There was no road, no modern forms of communication and no modern housing facilities. Trade was through barter and so financial resources were also limited as livelihoods were subsistence orientated. Human capital was scarce, literacy was low as there were no schools to attend. All teachings were religious from the village temple taught by the monks. Social resources were important as survival was heavily dependent on kinship ties. In comparison to younger cohorts, the eldest cohort experienced a time where village life was relatively autonomous from the state apparatus and isolated from wider Thai society. Differentiation in the village was not as pronounced as it is today with the proliferation of opportunities outside of agriculture and the commoditisation of natural resources that larger families in the village have been able to benefit from relatively recently.

In comparison, Mae Yai Mee's cohort were relatively inward looking and risk adverse, sedentary and only trusting those in their inner concentric circles of trust. However, taking into account historical circumstances, Mae Yai Mee was involved in resettling to the village, and although only moving a short distance, was still a risk. Still, those people she interacts with are those based in her kinship network, although now this network extends to Bangkok. What is certain is that this cohort never was change adverse. Images of peasant classes as unchanging and ahistorical before the 'modern' era are problematic (See Rigg 2001, p41).

<u>Cohort 2: Elders that still work</u>

Those in this cohort are also village elders. However, most still work on their farms, unlike Mae Yai Mee who is too old. Much like Mae Yai Mee, Mae has not worked outside of Mukdahan or Nakon Phanom Provinces in the Northeast. Her birth place was Nage District in Nakon Phanom and she came to Ban Dong in Mukdahan when she married Por. She has travelled to Bang Pa-in, Ayudhaya Province in the central region 2 or 3 times in order to visit her daughters who work there in factories. Por on the other hand, migrated to various provinces all across Thailand in his youth. He was a fisherman and a gem miner in the South, an army officer helping to draw maps in the North of Thailand and an agricultural labourer in the Northeast. Once he got married, he no longer migrated and took over his parents' farm and extended them. Both Por and Mae did not have electricity until 15 years ago. They had to walk to neighbouring towns and districts by foot before the road was built 25 years ago. Not many from this cohort were able to attend school because many who were born in the village had no school to attend and only men could learn at the temple. As Por informed me, he was a novice for 2 years when he was 14. Whilst he was there he learnt how to write his name and address and this was all he needed "*the Monk said, you just need to know this, you are intelligent, it's good if you can write your name and address, it's good enough (por dee)*"- (Por, Interview notes). Those that do have education were either taught by the soldiers, or took adult evening classes later in life. Por for example is now taking his high school certificate in his late 50's.

During the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) this cohort spoke of their lives in the past and the fertility of the land which is what made them want to live and stay there *"maa mai udd"* (มาไม่อึด in Isan or in Thai มากันเยอะ) . They grew up with little media or forms of modern communication "*in the past we played 'huan noi' (role play games), we didn't have TV, we didn't watch it, we didn't have sweets like children have today, the future for us was narrow. When we washed clothes we used 'mak nam paeng' (a type of tree) and we washed our hair by 'nam maa khao' (water soaked in rice), we ate only rice and banana for sweets. We had a barter system 'khor gan gin', we traded rice with chilli, it was a good tradition*"- Por, in FGD. From their discussion on their lives in the past, this cohort illustrated the close proximity and dependence they had on the natural environment surrounding them and the way they utilised these resources. This way

of life, however, has changed. Now most households in the village own a TV, children buy their sweets from the shop and only at festivals eat homemade sweets. People buy their soap, shampoo and beauty products from the local market that comes to the village every Monday.

Many from this cohort survived by living in the forest for a large part of their teenage years and into their 20's and 30's in the Communist camps there. This added to their sense of dependence and knowledge of the forest area. As Por recounted in his life history interview, "*my life was very difficult in the past, when I was 16 there was a war in the village, it was the communist time and the whole Phu Phan Mountain range was communist too*". The Communist insurrection has never officially been labelled a war, but many from this cohort describe it as such. Many respondents spoke of bombs being dropped on nearby villages and fear of being shot, both by government soldiers and communist insurgents. "*I didn't go to the forest with the communists but I learned with them. I had to stand with both groups, when the communists called on me I would join them and when the government called on me I would join them. I lived my life to survive" (Por, Life history interview).* Por did not join the insurgents, instead he chose to move out of the area and live with relatives for a few years. However many from this cohort did join the insurgents and the population in the village dwindled. There were only the elderly, women and children remaining and it was hard to keep working on their farms due to the government-imposed curfew.

When there was an amnesty between the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) and the government, at the time led by General Prem, those villagers who had joined the communist group could come back to the village. This amnesty was part of the 66/23 policy, whereby insurgents all over Thailand were not punished if they returned to their villages. They called those people '*poo ruem pattana chart thai'* (the people who participated in the nation's development), part of a nation building exercise and making the insurgents feel they had a role to play once they returned. As Satha-Anand (2002) explains this strategy was a successful solution for ending the insurgency because of its identification of social injustice and poverty as the major causes of insurgency rather than a strong affiliation with the CPT (as Por's quote above illustrates, he was not in favour of either side, but just "lived his life to survive"). Por

stated the benefits of the ending of the insurgency *"once they came back the village progressed more quickly, before there were only 80 houses and everything was made of wood, the past was not progressed like it is now"* (Life history Interview). As discussed in the previous chapter, the government's road building policy also added to the feeling of integration and progress.

It was this cohort that experienced the changes in monetary exchange and capitalist expansion as well as the 'green revolution', that increased after the Communist insurgency ended. The barter system they used ended as the road enabled villagers to buy rice more quickly from traders coming in their pickup trucks, and so they no longer had to spend days travelling to exchange with relatives over the mountains. The 2.9 square kilometres (1,809 rai) of cassava plantations that are used by 150 of the 196 households in the village (data from WeD Community Profile 2004) enabled this cohort to earn a yearly income. Those households which did not have land could earn incomes as day labourers. Cassava plantations were introduced in 1983 (2526 BE) and this cash crop changed the economy of the village and surrounding areas as forest was cleared to make way for the plantations and households had to depend on a yearly income.

Nowadays, those such as Por state the difficulties in having only a yearly income '*har ngern pii*' (rather than monthly or weekly salaries) as cassava is harvested in December and is quickly sold to merchants and the proceeds go into buying products for the next crop including fertilizers. Rice is also bought with the proceeds because as the village is situated in a mountainous area, there is not enough land to grow enough rice to last for the whole year. Thus villagers have to buy rice from visiting merchants, Dong Luang (district town) or trade with relatives. During the last few months of the year households have money shortages as the income from cassava crops does not last them until the next harvest, especially now, as cassava prices are falling. (Also see previous chapter).

However, even with capitalist expansion and regional integration, the feelings of independence and self reliance are still strong, especially for those who were involved in the Communist

insurgency. In the FGD with village elders there was frequent reference to '*tee puk tam jai'* (ที่พัก ทำใจ) in which the area is still seen as a place for healing, trust and somewhere to 'rest their hearts'. Discussion revolved around the importance of their heritage in this. They believed it was the merit (or charisma) '*bar-ra-mee'* left by the spiritual leader Lueci Padam that is said to still be looking over the villagers today. Breaking with the previous cohort of elders, this cohort no longer dances to the spirits on Lueci Padam day in April called '*wan son maitow'* (discussed in previous chapter) where people pay respect to his walking stick '*maitow*' that is said to protect the village.

This cohort instead stress the importance of Buddhism over the belief in spirits and 'black magic', making it clear that no one from Ban Dong dances to spirits anymore. Instead people come from surrounding villages who are 'So' ethnicity to perform the ceremony at midnight. Even though many in this cohort are ethnically So, like the previous cohort, they no longer speak So dialect, or practice what they call black magic (ไสยศาสตร์ – Saiyasat). Instead they speak Yor dialect which has been the dominant dialect in the village in the past 40 years due to the in-migration of Yor people from surrounding provinces following Monks and family members. Those in this cohort have thus fractured from previous cohorts, no longer associating themselves with ethnic groups that are seen to be less Buddhist or that many be looked down upon. After discussions with many from this cohort, the So or Kha ethnic groups were traditionally seen as backward groups, associated in the past with servitude and slavery, hence Mae Yai Mee's disassociation from them.

In keeping with ancestors, this cohort still has great belief in the benefits of traditional medicine and many choose to visit one of the six herb doctors in the village rather than travel to the public hospital in Dong Luang. Por being an elder and of So or Bru descent frequently goes to neighbours' houses to perform a healing ceremony. Mae also relies on traditional herbal medicine, drinking red soup made from herbs to cure her frequent stomach illnesses. This adds to their feelings of independence and autonomy. Satisfaction with government healthcare services however is not high, especially in the older cohorts. Por in his in-depth interview told

me of his plans to open a clinic in the village, and he has plans to extend his house to accommodate it.

Also in line with the previous cohort there is a sense of 'waiting'. Mae Yai Mee was waiting for her grandchildren, and Por told me of his waiting for the government. After the village was declared part of a National Park the villagers have protested against it, some going to protest in Bangkok with the Assembly of the Poor. Por himself used to be Or-bor-tor (local council representative) and he spoke of his time in this position and how hard it was to claim their land rights. He wants land rights *"because the people want land to work on and also to give land to their children"*. Now, he says "*we are waiting for the government to give us the rights, we are just waiting*".

Cohort 3: Large scale migration begins

These are the sons and daughters of Por and Mae's generation. It is in this cohort that females started migrating to far away provinces in order to supplement household income. Pam (also from the introduction of this thesis) is Por and Mae's first child. Like others in her cohort she finished only primary school before leaving the village in order to find paid employment in the city. Due to their low education levels, those in this cohort are usually employed in informal factories, as maids, seamstresses, cleaners, waitresses, construction workers, bar workers and agricultural labourers. However unlike previous cohorts, her education meant she could speak and understand Thai language well and so more opportunities were available to her due to increased human resources and capabilities.

Pam sent home regular remittances to her parents in order to rebuild their house, buy consumer goods such as a TV, one of the first in the village, and also to support her younger sister to finish school. Those in this cohort are aware of the important contributions they have made in the developments of the village. For example, donations have been made in the form of *pa-ba* whereby groups of migrants get together and organise a merit making ceremony and give money to the village *wat* (temple). The temple ground in Ban Dong Yai has been transformed in

the past decade, with new concrete buildings as the living quarters for the monks. Another example is the school sign at Ban Dong School, on the back of the sign is a list of names of all of the people who contributed money in order to build it. Included in this list are the names of Pam and Took, who are proud to have contributed to the development of the school and have their names on show. This is a social symbolic resource for both Pam and her sister, and a sign of their success. It is also a successful symbolic social resource for their family who still live in the village.

An important change in this cohort, was the rise of daughters as an important source of household income. Those households with daughters migrating increased their material resources greatly. This in turn encouraged younger siblings to join them in the city. As Wolff (1992) illustrates in her study on Javanese factory workers, migration gives women a higher status and greater spending power, financial autonomy and it also gives women greater assertiveness and independence. Mills (1997) also writes about the lives of female migrants to Bangkok from the Northeast. Again she notes the importance of daughters as a source of household income but with this comes the trade-off between responsibility as a daughter and their own aspirations to be independent 'modern' women. An important implication of this has been the rise of differentiation in intra-household relationships.

With the rise in benefits of labour out-migration there was also a steady economic differentiation within households in Ban Dong. Just four years younger than her older sister, Took was able to benefit from the remittances Pam bought home. She was able to finish school at 18 years old, and so was qualified to take the entrance exams in the formal and higher paying factories in Bang Pa-in. Until she got married, her entire salary was sent back to her parents' household and she lived with her older sister. This enabled her family to become a rich household in the village. They were able to transform their house, filling the under level with concrete walls, buying a stereo, fridge, building a new toilet and shower block, new motorbikes and it also allowed her father, Por, to run for local elections, which he won.

Cohort 3 have brought changes to the village and their lives themselves, taking full advantage of changes in opportunities in schooling and labour markets. Unlike previous cohorts they are not 'waiting' as Por or Mae Yai Mee described. Instead there is a feeling of bringing change by themselves. They do not want to wait for the government to grant rights or development projects. This cohort has taken advantage of the economic boom and the new job opportunities arising out of Bangkok and its surrounding metropolitan zones.

These changes have led to inter- and intra-household (and family) differentiation within the village. The majority of households have members living away and so there has been a rise in spatial dislocation and occupational multiplicity. With the increased movement and interpenetration between places and wider social networks and opportunities, agrarian change is now harder to separate from wider processes of change. The village and the people from there are no longer as isolated as in the past.

This cohort however has had to endure certain trade offs. For example, Pam has been living in the city since she was 12. She has never learnt how to work the fields, collect forest products and has difficulties with cleanliness when returning for village festivals. Her husband is from Bang Pa-In and has no interest nor skill in working in agriculture. Opportunity to return to the village is low, even though both speak of their wish to start up a business there. However, work in the city is not long term, Pam is now 30 and has a baby, she also has only low qualifications. Work in factories is very competitive. It is difficult for her to secure her future and their security is dependent on her husband's wages from working in a hotel in downtown Bangkok. The presence of future uncertainties have ensured investments back home and to younger siblings through intergenerational bargains, which I shall expand on in Chapter 7.

Took has also endured tradeoffs. She has a 2 year old daughter that is living back in the village with her parents. She can only afford to visit the village once a year and also wants to one day return home. Her husband from a neighbouring village also wants to return and buy land to start a plantation of a new crop. For this possibility, both have to work 6 days per week on 12 hour

shifts. They have both been working in factories for nearly 10 years, still they are saving for the land because they have had to support their family back in the village. They both believe that sending their daughter back to live with their parents benefits the child. Growing up in the rural village is seen as better than a childhood in the dormitories in Bang Pa-In. Clean air, open space, children to play with and an appreciation for their parents' rural values and identity were cited as reasons for sending their daughter back. Took believes this is best for her daughter and in the meantime she can save money for when her daughter is older to provide her with a good education.

Cohort 4: Reaping the benefits

Most previous studies have focused on cohort 3 because it was this cohort that undertook the most rapid of changes in a short time and had the double burden of sending remittances and resources back to the village and also trying to make a living for themselves in the city and have something for when they returned, which many of them aspired to do. But what of their younger siblings who have reaped the benefits of their hard work? Those in cohort 4 have benefited from older siblings' migration to the city. Not only had it allowed them to finish school but it has provided them with more comfortable living at home. What this has meant is that youth now are not as willing to leave the village for what they see as 'un free' work in the city. Even though the experience of migration and living away from home has become an institutionalised practice and is essential for youth and their social status.

For example, there was pressure on Add to migrate for money, as most households with children in cohort 3 already had remittances coming in. Add instead migrated more for the experience and also because it had by this stage become a normal act after leaving school. However, unlike his two older sisters Add did not like working in the city compared with the freedom he enjoyed in the village and so has since moved back and forth, oscillating between village and city, staying in the city for only 3 months at a time. He chooses to stay in the village in order to provide labour in his parent's fields, to go hunting to provide meals for the family and also to look after his younger sister. He described his life in the city as "*mai mee is-sa-ra*", meaning a life with no freedom.

Without the pressure and incentives to find outside work, villagers are reluctant to engage in work in distant provinces unless it is for '*pai thiaaw*' (travelling) and working adventures. They prefer to take part in shorter term oscillating work in the city. This has caused frictions between cohorts 3 and 4, elder siblings have invested heavily in the family by migrating for long periods of time supporting both elder and younger cohorts. There were frequent disputes between Add and his 2 older sisters from cohort 3 on the issue of responsibility. Add had repeatedly gone to live with them in Bang Pa-in for 3 or 4 month periods to work but every time had come back to the village because of the hard work and limited freedom. He said he could not endure continuing to work in the city. His sisters wanted him to take over responsibility for the education of their younger sister (cohort 5), so that the two elder sisters in cohort 3 could save money for their own children and invest in a house and land for themselves.

Cohort 5: New views

Nong Nim is 15 and this is the first cohort which was born with electricity in the village. Her older brother Add frequently referred to his younger sister as a "*modern child*", because by the time she was born the village had a concrete road and electricity and so this is the first cohort that could take these facilities for granted. Money has been saved for Nong Nim's education. At 15 she has been sent to the Provincial capital in Mukdahan to attend Commercial College to study accounting. It is hoped that she will get a job with the local government in her *Tambon* (district). This cohort has fewer restrictions than their older siblings. Nong Nim frequently goes on day trips with her friends, had a mobile phone, uses her brother's motorbike to go and visit her friends and sometimes rides to school on it 50 km away. This is a big change from her eldest sister Pam (cohort 3) who could not travel to school because there were no other female students from the village to accompany her. Therefore it is not just between generations whereby gender changes have occurred, but these changes in the freedom of female mobility and image has occurred between older and younger siblings also.

Nong Nim goes to festivals in neighbouring villages and provinces with her friendship groups and is now studying with her cousin of the same age in a rented room in Mukdahan town and goes back to the village at weekends. In the evenings she will sit with her friendship group and watch popular soaps on television such as Plaew Fi Fun เปลวไฟในฝัน (a soap opera of the lives of Bangkok elites). On many occasions I witnessed the pressures from these popular images of Thai film stars and pop singers on the youth in Ban Dong. In every house with teenage youth, there were posters of their favorite boy bands and soap stars. Nong Nim frequently asked her parents for money to buy teen magazines. Haircuts were chosen carefully to look like their favorite actress. There were also widespread changes in attitudes towards acceptable dress and appearances. Nong Nim and friends regularly skipped meals. Most days breakfast was eaten at 6am and once at school, no lunch was eaten; she would rather spend the money on something else, such as a CD. Also in the evenings Nong Nim frequently missed dinner. This in turn affected her health as she frequently missed her menstrual cycle.

Food is an important fracture for this cohort. Nong Nim refused to eat fish from the local river, complaining that she uses the river to wash and swim in and so she knew how dirty it was. This is a break from her parents and grandparents who are still proud of catching fish from the river and not needing to buy it. There is also less pressure for her to contribute economically for the time being at least. Instead resources are invested in her for the future. Nong Nim is extremely skilled at requesting her elder siblings' resources for her own use, such as requesting 50 baht mobile phone credit secretly from each elder sister and then also asking her parents, in the end receiving 150 baht. She works as a hired laborer during school holidays and her wages go directly into teenage consumer goods such as magazines or a day trip somewhere, rather than giving it to her parents.

Cohort 6: Aspirations for the Future

Cohort 6, although too young to know the outcome, the aspirations of their parents illustrate the importance of education. Both Pam and Took want their children to attend university and get good jobs in the formal sector, not in a factory, but in an office or in a company. Both have also said that they do not want their children to work hard like they have had to. Every mother

that I interviewed, or chatted informally with, spoke of this desire for their children to have better lives than their parents. This is the same for mothers that I spoke to in every cohort.

5.4 Looking at change through generations

In a situation of rapid change, as can be seen through the example of the Khamyod family above, generations and cohorts are confronted by quite different experiences. The main break or fracture that has occurred is the change in outlook and orientation. Between cohorts they are becoming more divergent due to the different and rapidly evolving socio-economic opportunities available and the effects this has on subsequent life experiences. The eldest cohort (one) did not travel far for work, they stayed in the local area, although their lives were not sedentary, as many came to settle in Ban Dong from neighbouring provinces and many from what is now Lao PDR. Their sons and daughters (cohort two) also have their locus set in the village, although some males migrated for work when they were younger, it was different to the opportunities the young have nowadays.

These two cohorts have lived through major changes, the crystallization of Thai borders, separating them from their families in Lao PDR and the subsequent infiltration of nationalist discourses of 'Thainess'. They lived through and participated in the insurgency against the Thai governments of the 1960's and 70's by joining the Communist movement, some actively fighting the military. They were the ones that made the transition from subsistence and hunting and gathering livelihoods to ones of periodic migration and cash crops in conjunction with past methods.

These cohorts have high levels of spiritual awareness and belief as well as knowledge of herbal medicine, and superstition is often discussed. These cohorts have spent a large percentage of their lives based in the forest and dependent on it. Whereas these older cohorts have avoided

risk and played it safe, there are fractures with the next sets of cohorts as they have been able to seize new opportunities arising from state and capitalist penetration. For cohort 3 this has been in the form of primary education and extended networks that allowed them to work in the city and start what is today mass migration. This cohort has an identity as the first wave of sons and daughters who migrated for long periods earning wages that allowed their parents and grandparents (cohorts 1 and 2) to build new houses, invest in new crops and consumer goods and send younger siblings to school. They had the double burden of sending remittances and saving for themselves. This is what many such as M.B Mills (1997) wrote about in the 1980's and 1990's. In fact, what my respondents had was a 'triple burden' of providing for parents, younger siblings as well as their own future.

The next cohorts have grown up with the benefit of the previous cohort's support, including investment in education. Cohort four had more education than previous cohorts, and has been influenced by the rapidly expanding media and communication facilities that their new televisions and radio bought. Cohorts four and five have more education and have therefore been able to climb the work ladder, especially females, who aspire to work in large factories. Men however have differing aspirations and access to opportunities. Whereas daughters have been in a process of negotiation with their parents over their freedoms, sons have enjoyed the support of parents in their sojourns. However, what they now have to deal with is the pressure from their female siblings to contribute more economically. With older cohorts 3 and 4 entering differing stages of their life cycles and getting married and having their own children, there is more pressure on cohorts 5 and 6 to start contributing monetarily to the household.

What has happened is that younger cohorts, whilst under more social pressure to experience life in the city, are not as prepared to trade-off their autonomy and personal freedoms like their older siblings who aspired to work in factories and service jobs for long hours and many years in order to see the city and buy necessary consumer goods and status symbols. Most households in Ban Dong already own many luxury items such as TV's, stereos, motorbikes, fans, refrigerators and mobile phones. Their experiences of village life are different, not only from their parents, but also from older siblings. The village now has better networks of communications, transport

and remittances from older siblings allow youth to have money to go to markets and buy their favourite CDs and meet their friends.

Youth now have the opportunity to go to the city for work for shorter periods of time, visiting older siblings, but few stay for longer than a year, and most young men only for a few months. The hardships and regulations endured in their work are not looked upon as endurable for a long period of time. The village is now a different place, younger cohorts have not had to work hard on the farms, but have instead stayed in school and enjoyed the benefits of earlier cohorts' migration. Again the frames of reference have changed and youth are reluctant to leave their lives in the village for hard working conditions. They have a wider set of spaces with which to choose from than older cohorts and a different set of aspirations and opportunities.

The sheer rapidity of change has meant that in a short space of time, changes have occurred and each cohort is equipped with different experiences and understandings to deal with this change. The younger cohorts have been able to embrace the period of adolescence in their lives, a luxury which the older cohorts did not have and they have thus been the eager targets of the growing popular teen culture that is spreading throughout Thailand. Older cohorts are ill-equipped to deal with the many consequences of this sweeping social transformation, which includes changing dress, sexual behaviour, drinking, smoking, drug use and gang activities (see Malhotra, Roca et al 2005, Soonthorndhada, Punpuing et al 2005). The example of Nong Nim above and her starving herself to fit the social norms of her friendship group is another example of this.

5.5 The Breaking down of Boundaries

This chapter has so far addressed the changes in structures that have changed the face of the village. In turn these changes have produced changes in the availability of goods, services and opportunities for people in Ban Dong. Villagers, as actors, have grasped the new opportunities

and in turn this has produced social change, much like the quote from Keith and Kertzer (1984) described at the beginning of the chapter. This change has meant that it is now impossible to separate the study of agrarian structures from wider process of change (Ritchie, 1994, Rigg, 2001). Looking at change through cohorts is a good way of seeing this change because each cohort has illustrated the growing opportunities and resources available to each. Changes that occurred in one cohort have effects on the next cohort. The growing access to media, transportation and education meant an increase in migration, this in turn meant the transition in the next cohort being that migration was no longer exceptional but encouraged and accepted. Now there has been the institutionalisation of migration in villagers' lives, so that now if you do not migrate you are the exception. This in turn has, as in structuration theory (Giddens, 1987, 1991), meant even more opportunities and resources have become available to villagers and are again changing villager's choices and aspirations.

However, this is not a simple 'modernization' story. By looking at the changes over various cohorts, it is not the case of sharp discontinuities between them whereby the younger cohorts are dropping the 'traditional' for the 'modern'. The sheer rapidity of change has also meant the re-affirmation of identity, not just in older cohorts, but also in younger cohorts. For example many choose not to move to the city for long periods of time as their view of the city and its association with 'modernity' are criticised. In the city you cannot work at your own pace, you have to work under a boss and you have to buy food. There is a loss of security for many, the security of working for one's family, whereby work is done when necessary and those in charge are often relatives.

5.6 Conclusion

Cohort analysis was introduced in this chapter as a useful and heuristic way of looking at social change. Through this analysis and the subsequent illustration of changes in cohort's lives, we can see that the role of agriculture is diminishing. From being the primary resource for cohorts 1 and 2 to an occupation that is to be avoided in later cohorts. Agriculture and rural values are not

totally vanishing though; elder cohorts within the village are still working the family farms and there has been a conscious strategising between cohorts to support the family farm. For example, cohort 3 migrated in order to supplement the farming income and afford needed investment to farming infrastructure and household necessities. A consequence of this has meant that younger cohorts are less willing to trade off their relative comfort in the village for life in the factories in Bangkok or in other laborious jobs in the city for long periods of time. This in turn has implications for rural change, rather than a linear progression of rural to urban change, there are a diversity of pathways for villagers to follow. Firstly, rural areas are diversifying and now combine aspects of 'rurbanization' rather than being solely rural agricultural solitary spaces. It is because of these changes that younger cohorts are more inclined to stay within the village or surrounding areas and therefore challenging the supposed linear change from rural to urban or traditional to modern. It was through the keyhole of one family and their behaviour that we can see this process of change and transformation.

Processes of agrarian change are embedded more and more within wider change in Thailand and urban processes that middle cohorts are involved in. This is because it is the middle cohorts and their 'triple burden' of having to support elder cohorts in their later years and also the educational investments they provide to younger cohorts in order to ascertain the future security for the family and themselves. The centrality of the family and the village in cohort's lives has reaffirmed the importance of place and locality in the lives of villagers. However the cognition and identity of the village as a place (being continually 'rurbanised') challenges static ideas of 'the rural' which viewpoints such as the Sufficiency Economy assume.

These changes have included some fracturing of ties between cohorts. Mainly, tensions exist between siblings over the responsibilities of providing for their parents and younger siblings. Family relationships are becoming more diverse with siblings choosing from a wider range of livelihood options. This is by no means an illustration of the demise of farming, but indeed could be the way of ensuring the continued reproduction of the family farm. Those cohorts engaged in work in the city have made it possible for younger cohorts to stay in the village. They have also made it possible to invest in new crops and equipment. Their experiences in the city also have

an influence of their younger siblings' perceptions of the city. Younger siblings see the double burden and hard work that those in the middle cohorts have to endure, and prefer to stay within the village and find ways to support their family in a place where they feel they have freedom and pride.

CHAPTER 6: BIOGRAPHICAL LIFE HISTORIES AND IMAGINATION

6.1 Introduction.

The previous chapter focused on the nature and variables of change. This chapter moves on to look at how people are actively coping with this change. The aim of this chapter is to provide a more dynamic analysis into change processes. Building on an actor-oriented approach I use longitudinal life histories as more of a process or video[41] analysis, rather than the more static snapshots provided in the previous chapter. Although I offer my own interpretation of change, these videos illustrate the increasing plurality and contradictions and trade-offs in the everyday lives of these men and women. Through the coding and analysis of life history biographies I have chosen the main reoccurring themes and then chose a respondent's life history that best represents the themes for each cohort. Whilst it may be possible to heuristically identify cohorts, individuals are not water tight or static subjects, rather the opportunities and resources they have are acquired (or lost) over time. I have had to be selective in choosing these life histories. Only a few examples have been taken as it is not possible to include everyone who was interviewed. Those chosen life histories are representative of a broader set of people I met during my research, as well as representing themes, the respondents that I have selected for use in this chapter are from each cohort, gender and have differing material wealth. Those people selected are selected for their stories to explore the processes and issues in the context of migration and rapid change. These findings are not therefore generalisable to other areas of Thailand without further research.

As the life history biographies concentrated on the respondents' own viewpoints and very personal accounts of success or hardship, when I first analysed them I was very close to respondents and during data collection was aware of their agency and my initial interpretation

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[41] See (Bevan, 2006)

focused on the small successes of families and the control they had over their lives and identities. On reflection I believe this was because of my alignment with an actor-oriented epistemology and my focus on migration in facilitating these successes. When writing this chapter and as time elapsed after fieldwork I realised that these success did not change the bigger picture of rural inequality and social exclusion. Those from richer families in the village did have more success. Also even those successful respondents are only relatively successful, compared with their urban counterparts. Therefore whilst making sure I have adequately represented respondents and their biographies as accurately as possible, which mainly focused on their successes; failure, dissatisfaction and hardship were also represented in this chapter as well as some of the structural limitations on actors, which I believe will be of greater contribution in the long run rather than focusing solely on agency.

As we move through our lives, we are constantly re-evaluating and re-positioning ourselves, our identities and our responsibilities. It is helpful to use the term 'life course' in this section rather than 'age' as a discussion of particular ages without contextualizing them is misleading, as the meanings that come with particular ages are always socially constructed. The term life course illuminates the ways in which roles and stages are embedded in social and cultural processes (Gardner, 2002, p19). Many older respondents in rural Isan did not know their exact age, and so their roles and responsibilities were dependent on their life stage, for example when they got married, when they had children, when they had grandchildren, when they moved houses etc. Those in younger cohorts however are still negotiating their life courses with many choices still ahead of them. As illustrated in the previous chapters, the explosion of opportunities and resources available to them is meaning that more choices are being made resulting in increased variation in the lives of these cohorts. This chapter looks in detail at the notion of time and the life course and how individuals prepare for the future and react to situations, shocks and hazards.

My argument in this chapter is that livelihood strategies are not simply following a linear trajectory; people experience ups and downs. People also make decisions not to choose what official discourses, such as 'Sufficiency Economy', espouse, or what modernization theory

prescribes (of a rural to urban existence). Instead they are making choices based on their own perceptions and meanings of success. This success however, is interpreted differently by different people. It is a shifting notion that people negotiate with to suit their own desires and circumstances. This can be seen mainly in the decisions to migrate and the discursive fields people use to navigate their way through such life choices. Those who feel a relative success in the city, not just materially but socially and culturally, stay for long periods of time. However, for those who feel life in the city does not meet their own expectations, or cannot meet the expectations of others, have found themselves oscillating between village and city. It is the younger cohorts who are experiencing the greatest variations.

This has had an influence on the layout of this chapter. I have selected cohorts 2, 3 and 4 who are all working and are old enough to have a fairly detailed life history and young enough to be able to explain it and their decisions. I have also selected male and female representatives, although not for the eldest cohort where no females migrated. For the younger cohorts however, I have chosen more case study examples, for the simple fact that there are more opportunities available to them and so I have made available a selection of life courses that are representative of the main choices and coping strategies that are being acted out. Whilst each life history is in essence an individual account of their own lives, they also reflect the respondents' relationships with other household members and those in other cohorts. These life histories are thus also representative of the respondents' family to an extent and the relationships within these families as I was also able to interview or observe their siblings and/or parents. In relation to this they also reflect wider processes of change, not just observable material change, but also change in values and purpose. As Davis' life history work in rural Bangladesh also illustrates, it allows the 'examination of the temporal and spatial context of people's lives in a way that uncovers a number of social phenomena concealed to other methods' (Davis, 2006).

6.2 Elder Cohorts: Expansion, Action and Diversification within the Village

Those above 50 years of age have all had the similar shared experience of living through the communist insurgency, through the expansion of state control through education, elections, loans, cash crops and the creation of the national park. In this section I will use case studies of two male respondents Por Kai and Por Artit. Both held leadership positions within the CPT insurgents in the Phuphan mountain range and this has had lasting effects on their lives. Both came from poor families, but Por Kai has managed to accumulate enough resources to become one of the wealthiest people in Ban Dong. Por Artit has yet to secure his assets and has to migrate periodically in order to supplement his income and protect his family from shocks and hazards.

Findings show that before marriage both men did not plan for the future as much as younger cohorts do now in their adolescence. Both tried to meet family obligations by contributing to household labour and looking after family members. They did not contribute to household income by migrating as younger cohorts do now. Their lives changed when the communist insurgency ended, Por Kai enlarged his fields and gained a steady government income. Por Artit did not have any land and found it harder to make a living as a hired labourer, migrating periodically to support his family. Both men have tried to diversify and invest in multiple occupations rather than rely on agriculture alone. Therefore it would be wrong to assume the elder population in rural areas are dependent on agriculture alone. Both have migrated as hired labourers and construction workers in other provinces, both spoke of their perceptions of greater self awareness and intelligence after their migration experiences and both have invested the money they earned into buying or renting land, buying farming machinery, their children's education and new houses. In addition Por Kai has diversified into rubber plantations, he has set up a shop in the village as well as starting a small pig farm in the village.

These life histories therefore challenge perceptions of older generations and their agency over patterns of change in rural areas. Both life histories illustrate that the choices and livelihood decisions of this generation have had great influence over succeeding generations.

Eldest Cohort: Por Kai

Por Kai is now 73 years old and is a village elder and is widely respected in the village. Like many in his cohort, Por Kai only finished 4 years of schooling. He had five sisters and was the only son in his family. He was born and went to school in the neighbouring province of Nakon Phanom, of which Mukdahan was a part of before 1982. I had chosen Por Kai to talk to because of the status of his household, he was well respected and talkative and I could see from his house and surrounding area that his livelihood consisted of multiple occupations. However, it was not always like this. His father died when he was 12 years old and so he had to leave school and fulfil familial duties as he was the only male in the household. His duties increased from looking after his family's buffalo after school, to working the family farm full time. It kept him busy as he had to look after buffalo, grow rice, feed 3 pigs and feed 6 cattle.

Por Kai did not want to leave school, he enjoyed it (see life history figure 23) and the insecurity of his father dying meant this time was one of the lowest points in his life. He could no longer fulfil his ambition to stay in school and become a soldier or teacher. During this time, one of his sisters died and the youngest got married and moved out of the household, so his responsibilities grew and he also cooked food for the family, "*I felt sad when I saw all of my friends go to school, I didn't want to live with my family*". At 21 the opportunity arose and after being declined from entering the armed services, his uncle invited him work in the South of Thailand, in Phang-nga province. "*I was so sad when I couldn't be a soldier and my mum was telling me to get married, but I was too young, so I decided to go to Phang-nga*". He explained that his decision to go was not for money, in fact until her death several years later, his mother often wrote him letters telling him that she could send him money if he needed it.

His work in Phang-nga was difficult and he was homesick. Por Kai was a construction worker on a new road. His tasks were hard labour, digging the soil in preparation for the concrete road. Although his work was hard he explained that he enjoyed his life, and travelled to many provinces in the South that the road travelled through. His work was made easier by having a good relationship with his supervisor. Por Kai would sometimes clean his house, water his garden and wash his clothes and car instead of working on the road, and he was taken on regular outings to the beach in Phuket with his co-workers, all of whom were from north-eastern provinces.

Por Kai worked in the South for 9 years, until he was 30 years of age. He travelled back to Nakon Phanom because his mother died. Once he returned he saw that his aunt was also growing old and had no one to look after her land and cattle and so he stayed in the village to fulfil familial obligations. "*At first I didn't want to stay in the village, I wanted to work in Phang-nga, but I had to look after my aunt".* A year later he was married to a girl 10 years younger and from Ban Dong. "*When my family asked me if I wanted to marry her, I said yes, but I wasn't serious, because she was so young. I was sure I loved her, but we had some problems, I wanted to live in my hometown, but my wife didn't want to go there as she didn't have any relatives there so I had to move to Ban Dong".* At this time Ban Dong had no electricity and no water supply; water had to be collected from the irrigation dam. This was different from what he was used to in Phang-nga, as Por Kai described "*it was more developed than isan*". If he needed soap, fuel or oil he had to walk to the nearest town which was a day's walk away from Ban Dong.

Four years after moving to Ban Dong, his family (they now had one daughter) had to move into the forest as they were part of the Communist insurgency. "*At that time helicopters and police shot from the sky into the village so we had to go and live in the forest. Nobody lived in Ban Dong at that time because the government thought everybody from the village was Communist".* He had to build a makeshift house in the forest by himself and take all of their cattle to neighbouring villages for relatives to look after. He told me of the rules he had to follow in the forest "*we had to follow the rules and it was very strict for me, the communists taught me about*

politics and socialism. I was unhappy because I didn't have a permanent house and we had to keep moving to other places in the forest. We were there for 10 years".

Por Kai went into detail of his life during this time. Every day he and four others had to visit villages in the Phu Phan Mountains and recruit villagers to join the insurgency. The strategy was to invite key people in the village to join and train them and teach them what the insurgents were fighting for and then they would go back and recruit more people from their villages. His wife and daughter went to Lao PDR to train to become nurses and several others went to China and Vietnam for training. After a few years, Por Kai became a leader and was proud *"I had a position like gamnan (district head), poo yai ban (village head) or nai amphur (provincial level), very high, the people in these positions had to work hard and be experts about politics and know how to train people to be soldiers. I wanted democracy, as at that time Thailand's prime minister was a dictator, he was the one who shot the mob in Thammasat….. I wanted to end that system*".

Nearly a decade later the government offered an amnesty to the insurgents. Por Kai explained villagers were promised land and money if they returned to their villages, but the government still has not paid them. When he returned to the village, he extended his fields and grew rice, he kept pigs and buffalo and picked vegetables from the forest. Four years later, because of his knowledge and training, he was selected to be the resident physician for the district (tambon), noting all causes of deaths and fingerprinting the deceased. For this Por Kai got a salary of 1,400 baht per month and he commented that he was very happy doing this as he could work on his farm at the same time, and he could afford to open a grocery shop in the village.

It was during this time and just before he retired, that the village of Ban Dong was declared part of a National Park. He spoke of his sadness when the declaration took place. He joined the protest and lobby group Assembly of the Poor and went to Bangkok for protests over land rights. When he joined the Communist group he spoke of fighting for liberty and equality, and he explained to me that he felt the declaration took this away and so it was the lowest point of

his life. Until today, there have been constant clashes with forest officers, as people are encroaching on forest land as families get bigger. Por Kai is one of the village elders that are able to negotiate with forest officers when villagers are arrested. Many respect him for being able to settle disputes because of his position and social resources within the village.

During the last decade, Por Kai has won the lottery twice, amounting to over 210,000 baht, this enabled him and his family to invest in their children's education, refurbish their house, visit other provinces and buy more cattle and buffalo. The economic security that the family now enjoys has made Por Kai happy (as he pointed out when drawing his life history, see figure 23), in addition to this he is still a senior advisor within village networks.

The example of Por Kai's life history is an example of the variety that life can take. From living in a poor single parent household, he now has one of the richest households in Ban Dong. His experience in the South of Thailand and with the communist insurgents gave him the skills and social resources to be one of the most respected members of the community. His life has been one of accumulation and diversification, he has extended his fields (at a time before the solidification of the national park border) he has bought new land, he has invested in more cattle, in a pig farm, and he has diversified from rice into rice and cassava and now, with his son in law, he has started a rubber plantation. In addition to these agricultural activities, Por Kai has been able to benefit from a monthly wage in a government job registering deaths. He got this job because of his high social status within the village and local area from his time as a communist leader. He has invested the money from these activities into other off-farm activities such as opening a shop and investing in his children's education. Each resource has been able to provide additions to other resources resulting in Por Kai's resource profile to be secure and perpetuate itself against shocks and hazards.

Lastly, within this elder cohort, members have been involved in organised collective action and resistance. Por Kai still currently uses his knowledge and identity as a communist insurgent to

inform his opinions and action on present day conflicts and situations. Family resources, inheritance and obligations are very strong.

Figure 23: Por Kai's Life History

Happiest time

Liked school and wanted to be a policeman or teacher

government didn't want soldiers from Nakon Phanom as they were scared they were communist, but uncle invited him to the South of Thailand.

Won the lottery 110,000bht built a new house and bought 6 cattle and 9 buffalo and went travelling

Won lottery again 100,000bht, used money to send children to school

Wants his children and grand children to study at a higher level as they get good grades, but its very expensive

Phang-nga, construction worker on a new road for highway department. He was homesick.

Resident physician in village, determined the cause of death and documented deaths in tambon. 1,400bht p/m and he did this for 12 yr s then opened a grocery shop

Married a girl from Ban Dong. The grew rice and cotton and she made silk

Mum died so he moved to take care of his aunt

Left the forest and went back to Ban Dong. Grew rice and fed cows and buffalo

They had to move into the forest as they joined the communist group. They had 1 daughter

Government declared village a national park. He was very sad and went to protest in Bangkok. They lost their land they worked on and lived on

Lowest point

Age   8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73

186

Por Artit also spent a large amount of his life fighting with the CPT in the forest. From the age of 17 he lived in the forest camps and was taught by Bangkok university students. By the age of 19 he was fighting against the Thai government soldiers. He highlights this as the high point of his life, he felt proud of his past and his skills at fighting and surviving:

"the first time I fought against the government soldiers was when I was 19 in Nage (neighbouring district), I liked it very much, sometimes we fought between 200 or 300 people, sometimes there were only 10 people involved, it depended on our leaders. We fought against the government to show our power. No one usually died in the fights, but sometimes people got hurt. I liked to fight and I liked the adventure, we had to walk a long way to fight. The second time I fought was in the neighbouring village, we fought from midnight until 9am, I was never tired because I was so excited, normally fighting only lasted 15 minutes or 1 hour."(Por Artit, life history interview).

When Por Artit was 26 he left the forest. This was one of the lowest points in his life, he had no fields and "*had to start a new life*". He caught wild animals from the forest and sold them to exchange for rice. He also tried to make a living as a hired labourer and helped people to build houses. This was a low point because his income was insecure, but he was still proud of his local knowledge "*I could build a house by myself, I cut the trees, built the walls and stilts, I didn't need a machine, I also could catch a lot of wild animals, for one piece of meat I could exchange it for 5kg of rice*".

His lack of income meant that when the government offered him a salary in exchange for his services he accepted it grudgingly. Even though he had spent most of his life fighting against the Thai army, he started to work for them, travelling to the North of Thailand to tell villagers there (such as the boy scouts and women's groups) all about his experiences as a communist insurgent. "*I didn't like this job because I had to lie a lot. For example, if they asked me if the*

communists were good I had to lie and say no and that I had a really bad life in the forest, but actually I really liked my life in the forest….but I was too scared to tell the truth because I was scared the police would arrest me if they thought I was still a communist". Por Artit worked for the government in this role for 3 months, even though he didn't like the job, he explained that he did it for the 900 baht per month salary which he could use to make his life easier in Ban Dong. The money he earned enabled him to get married.

The lowest point in his life was at this time, newly married and with no jobs or land, they had to live in the temple grounds. His parents were poor and only had 5 rai of rice fields, he could not ask them for help. This situation was made better when he got a temporary job helping to build the village stupa. However, when this ended he was left with no income and this pushed his decision to migrate to Phuket, "*I was told by my friend that I could get a lot of money, 13 other people from Ban Dong went*". This kind of large group migration is not uncommon, especially in construction work. His wife went along too. He explained that they could go at this time of year (October- December) because it was very difficult to catch animals in the forest at this time and there was a drought in the village and rice crops and vegetables had low yields. They were able to save enough money to go back to the village and start a cassava plantation. "*I went back and started to plant cassava, I rented 5 rai of land in the village at a cost of 200 baht per rai per year and once I harvested the cassava I could get an income of 15,000 baht per year, this was enough for food and rice to eat for my family*". In addition to this he also grew some rice in the mountains and can harvest this once a year and he uses it to feed his family.

For subsistence needs his family is secure with their rented land and forest resources. However Por Artit decided to migrate again this time to Bangkok in order to earn an extra income. At 51 years of age his nephew invited him to go with 20 other people from Ban Dong to work as construction workers at the new international airport. It was a dangerous job and Por Artit was very unhappy working there as he had no life insurance and was scared what would happen to his family if he had an accident at work. His task was to install the air conditioning units and pipelines high up in the ceilings. He only lasted 2.5 months before he resigned and returned to the village, saving 3,000 baht to take home with him.

In the future Por Artit wants to buy 20-25 rai for growing rubber trees, and he wants to buy his own car so that he can transport his products to other villages rather than rely on the traders that come to Ban Dong. He has so far sold his cattle in order to buy a sowing machine for the existing cassava fields he rents, and told me that he is watching television and listening to the radio about the prices of different crops as he is trying to decide if he should change to grow something else. His life is made more secure by his eldest son; he now works in a factory in Bangkok. His eldest daughter is now also in Bangkok, studying at university and working in a jewellery store part time. His two youngest daughters are still in school in Ban Dong. Por Artit explained that he hopes they continue with their education so that they can get a good job in a factory or with a company.

When asked if he felt he had changed, Por Artit felt that his experiences have made him more intelligent. "*My life has changed a lot since I was young, before I didn't economise, I bought things to eat, but when I grew up I only use money to buy things I really need, now I want to save money for my children to study, so I save up, work hard and am more intelligent….my characteristics have changed too, after Phuket and Bangkok I'm more intelligent and hardworking. I always work on time, in the past I worked 'sabai sabai' (relaxed), if I didn't want to work I slept. I learnt how to work in construction, how to install air conditioning, I have knowledge about carpentry, this is good because with this knowledge I can work as a carpenter in the village and get more money*".

Por Artit's self perception is one of maturity and hard work. He compares himself to before he migrated, he feels he is more hard working and intelligent. Not only does he have a self perception of himself as a poor farmer (as the last point in his life history represents, See figure 24) but also a hardworking person, an independent and knowledgeable person that can survive in the forest and from forest resources, building houses by himself, but also a good father that invests in his children's education and saves money for his family now his is older. Por Artit's biography asserts the self worth he feels from the struggles and hazards he has come through in his life. Firstly through his childhood, helping his parents and living though the village drought,

then as a communist insurgent in the forest, then getting by to get money (even taking a job he disagreed with working for the government), living and surviving in the temple grounds (which was the lowest point in his life (see figure 24), he described his life as a construction worker in Phuket as an unhappy period in his life but he managed to save money and invest it in renting cassava fields when he returned to the village. Through his self perception as being poor but happy in the village and as a hardworking and intelligent worker, he gives himself and his life and life choices purpose and meaning. His attachment to home and the village is emphasised in the hardships he undergoes in order to make his life and his family more secure within the village and through agriculture.

Figure 24: Por Artit's Life History

Happiest Time

He had fights with the Thai government soldiers in Nage, Nakom Phanom Province. He enjoyed it as he liked fighting and shooting a gun.

He went to school in the village 7-9pm as it was government policy everyone has to finish primary school and his education in the forest was not recognised.

Came back to Ban Dong, he was happy as he felt more intelligent than in the past. Started growing cassava and could get 10,000bht when he harvested it, he rented fields.

Lived in Ban Dong and helped his parents feed buffalo and bring water from the well.

He got married, his wife was from Ban Dong and was 16. He knew her for 1 month before they got married

Construction worker, Phuket. Unhappy because he was a labourer and his supervisor controlled him. 105 baht per day 7am-4.30pm if he worked an extra 5 hrs he could get extra 105bht. Cost of living was very high

Lives in Ban Dong and is happy as he has a simple life. But his family is still poor.

He lived in the forest as his family were members of the Communist movement. He studied about politics and how to be a soldier. His teacher was a student from Bangkok.

He worked for the government in Nan Province, Northern Thailand. Teaching people about living in the forest. 900 baht per month. But he didn't like it as he had to tell them Communism was bad. 3 months.

He worked as a construction worker in the village, building the temple. 150bht per day but the Monks didn't have the money to pay him and only gave him money when they could afford it, but he didn't mind. The Architect came from Kalasin and he had arguments with him

Lived in Ban Dong, there was a lack of food and he had to hunt wild animals to exchange for rice

The village had a drought. They had to buy rice from another province. His father made money by being a tailor

Unhappy because he had to decide to leave the forest and leave the communist group. He didn't want to leave. He came back to Ban Dong

They lived in a small hut on the temple grounds and were very poor, they had their 1st child

Nephew invited him to work in the Airport, Bangkok. Unhappy as job was dangerous and he didn't have life insurance. 235 baht per day and 25 baht per hour o/t. 2.5 months and saved 3,000 baht

Lowest point

Age   1 2 3 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51

191

6.3 Middle Cohorts: Delaying Entry into Farming

This section deals with the middle age group within the village, those between 30-50 years of age. This cohort was young during the communist insurgency and have benefited from greater access to educational opportunities and media access. The majority have taken advantage of work opportunities in the cities. The greatest significance has been for women. Unlike their mothers they have been able to travel greater distances and enjoy greater freedom away from the village setting. These changes have meant increased migration into paid wage labour. Unlike the previous cohort example, this cohort has had more of a variety of jobs and most migrate more frequently than the older generation. Land is scarce in the village and many from this cohort are under survival stress, working as wage labourers in the village or working their parents' land. In order to accumulate enough capital to invest in more land or a business, most individuals have to migrate. Some are successful, and those who are invest in new houses, marriage, siblings' education, land, businesses as well as remittances to family. They migrate frequently or for long periods of time.

Rigg (1997) questions, do these changes 'represent the abandonment of agriculture, or the social reconfiguration of production?' (p115). There have been many researchers that have noted the exodus of young people from villages and the gentrification of farming, particularly in Thailand (Funahashi 1996, Rigg 1997, M. B Mills 1997). The following case study life histories illustrate the continued investment in agriculture and give examples of when villagers go back to the village and the terms on which they go back.

I have selected two representative females and two males. Firstly, Yim is introduced as a case study of someone who is struggling and is finding it hard to accumulate resources. She has taken on jobs in the city since she was 12, and today her family is one of the poorest in Ban Dong, they still have to periodically migrate in order to survive. Secondly, Phornpan is introduced as a more successful female, finishing high school, getting secure jobs in Bangkok, but having to come back to the village because of an accident. This case study illustrates the sense of freedom young

women feel when living independently and their views on going back to the village. Then Ton is introduced, a male who also found some success migrating to Bangkok and secured a good income. However, like many males in this cohort, his ability to accumulate resources and save money is low. His life history illustrates this and the job hopping that many young people partake in. Now back in the village, Ton has little agricultural knowledge and experience and is finding it difficult to support his family. Lastly, Oat's life history is considered. His long term migration to rubber plantations has given him the knowledge and resources to invest in his own rubber crop back in the village. The terms on which he has returned is favourable and his life very satisfactory. His delayed return to the village has meant a greater sense of security when he did return.

Middle Cohort: Yim

Yim was born and went to school in the Central region of Thailand, Sukothai Province and moved to Ban Dong when she married her husband. Her family in Sukothai, she explains, was very poor. She was the second eldest child in the family and so when she finished primary school she went with her elder brother to Kamphaeng Phet Province as a labourer but only worked 15 days before going back home. The same year she migrated with her father to Nakon Patom near Bangkok to work on a construction site with him. She enjoyed this a lot more as they went with many people from her home province. They lived in what she called a 'camp' which are make-shift dwellings near the construction site that the labourers stay in. Her task every day was to carry cement and sand to the mixers and for this she received 65 baht per day. What made her stay so enjoyable was that her father would take her to the zoo and park on their day off.

Eight months later she went to work with one of her friends in a small grocery shop and they lived above the shop with the owners. She worked 16 hour days and got paid 600 baht per month. Living with the owners was an advantage, rent and food were provided for and they were kind. She remembered she enjoyed going jogging in the mornings with them. The money however was very little and after 2 years, Yim eventually quit and got a job washing up in a hospital canteen for 1,500 baht per month. Although this was more money, the cost of rent and

food meant that Yim was worse off than staying at the grocery store. She desperately looked for another job and after finding a few jobs she disliked, she eventually found one in a printing factory, printing T-shirt designs.

Yim explained that she was a lot happier working in her new job, it provided her with a good income, around 2,000 baht, and she made a lot of new friends. They went on trips to the beach and all stayed together in the factory dormitory. At 17 years of age, this job allowed Yim to experience more freedom as she lived by herself and she explained that she loved going out in Bangkok with friends. Something she was not able to participate in living with relatives or employers.

Over the next few years Yim changed jobs and also went for a period to the Northeast as her parents migrated to Udon Thani where her mother comes from to open a grocery shop in the village. Yim, being used to living in Bangkok, got bored in the village after 4 months and returned to Bangkok by herself and got a job in a frozen chicken factory. It was during her time here, when she was 18 that she travelled to one of her close friends' villages for the Songkran festival. The village was Ban Dong in Mukdahan. It was here that she met her future husband. This was one of the happiest periods in her life. However, it did not last long. Before a year had passed, she had moved back to her parents' house in Udon Thani because "*he wouldn't take care of me and went out all the time, we had arguments every day. I was lonely as I didn't know many people in the village"*. Soon after she had a baby son, and left her son with her husband whilst she worked in Saraburi Province in another chicken factory. It only took 1 month before her husband called her asking her to come back and live in Ban Dong. Since this time, her family has grown; they have had another 2 children.

Yim is now 32 years old, she migrates sporadically in order to supplement her family's income. She has to help pay off the loan for her family's sowing machine. She also has to get money to buy more rice, as the 1 rai of land they have to grow rice on is not enough to last the family throughout the year. In addition, she also has to send her three children to school. Her husband

also migrates to work in a factory in Khon Kaen Province in the Northeast. She migrates between Khon Kaen, working as a hired labourer and living with her children and husband in a tent near the factory and in Chiaphum Province, also in the Northeast. She also waitresses in friends' and relatives' restaurants in Lopburi Province (central region). When living in the village she and her husband are hired labourers. They rent 3 rai for themselves (1 for rice and 2 for cassava) as they do not own their own land. They must work on her grandfather-in-law's cassava fields to supplement their incomes. But their labour is not needed every day and so Yim must gather forest products, such as bamboo shoots, mushrooms and pak wan for food for subsistence. When they have no money again they will migrate back to Khon Kaen or Chiyaphum Province, usually for 2-3 months at a time.

This example is a case of Yim and her husband working together in order to pay off debts and meet their needs. Because both parents migrate, they have to take their children with them; therefore their children miss some school. The household has a small amount of land which they do not own, but rent, and this produces rice and cassava, but not enough to feed them throughout the year, they are under survival stress. Their labour is also not in demand, as their grandparents' fields only need their labour for a few days at a time. The products which they can collect for free from the forest are for subsistence only, not enough to meet their existing debt obligations for the sowing machine, rent for their land or their children's hidden education costs. This is therefore a case of family insecurity and it is this insecurity that fuels their motivation for migration. Their mobility is a strategy for protecting themselves from shocks and hazards, but is not enough to achieve long lasting security. Whilst mobile, they strive to stay in the village, both for the education of their children, and the security they have in the village and the networks they have there.

Figure 25: Yim's Life History Diagram

Happiest time

Father took her to Bangkok as he was construction worker. She was happy as had friend and he took her to the zoo. She got 65bht per day and worked for 7-8 months

Got married and lived in Udon for 4-5 months but husband didn't like it so they came to Ban Dong

Ban Dong, happy family, had 2nd child

Now live in Ban Dong, children like it and want to study here. Bought sowing machine with loan and now have debt

Family lived in Udon and opened a small grocery and sold noodles. Stayed 4 months but then argued with her mum

New job printing T-shirt designs. Got job by herself. Sometimes boss took her to the beach. 1yr 5 mth 1,800-2,000bht then left as her family left Sukothai and moved to Udon

Moved to Udon as they had argument with relatives in BM, their family had no money

Daughter of her boss got her a job in hospital canteen, she washed dishes and sold food. 9-8pm 1,500bht p/m she worked 3-4 months

Went back to Ban Dong as husband missed her.

Lopburi. Worked in restaurant for sister-in-law. 2 months pregnant, worked 1.5 months 2,000bht

Khon Kaen, husband worked in sugar factory and she worked harvesting rice 130bht p/d, 2-3 months. The went to Chiyaphoom province, husband moved sugar factory (190bht p/d) and she worked in the canteen. Hard work wanted to go back to Ban Dong

Finished primary school. Wanted to study more but had no money

Friend invited her to work in grocery shop in Bangkok, had kind boss, took her jogging. 600bht per month and she worked for 2years, left as wanted higher salary

Went to Bangkok chicken farm, 7am-12 or 2am. 1,800bht per month she got free room. Made new friend from Ban Dong and she took her to visit and she met her husband

Sapanburi. restaurant, her friend invited her. 1.5 months 2,200bht then went back to Ban Dong as was 5 months pregnant

Sukothai Province. Her older brother invited her, she had to pick worms from leaves on a farm. 45bht per day as wanted to support her family. Only worked 15 days and then got homesick

Changed job as friend said she could work in factory but instead took her to work in construction in Bangkok. Worked for 1 month 2,500bht

Sapanburi, chicken farm. 4,000bht p/m but missed her son so went home

Moved to Ban Dong, but husband didn't take care of her she was 7 m pregnant so she went back to Udon. When she had baby doctor asked where husband was and her dad said he was dead. Felt her parents hated her son

Lowest point in life

Dad died of cancer so she had to go back to Udon for 3-4 months

Age   1234 5   6   7   8   9   10   11   12   13   14   15   16   17   18   19   20   21   22   23   24   25   26   27   28   29   30   31 32

196

Phornpan is included in cohort 3 because she has finished school with the support of her elder brother and sister already working in Bangkok. She has previously migrated to work in Bangkok and Chiang Mai for 5 years and then returned to the village and got married and now has a small baby daughter.

Like others in this cohort Phornpan was able to benefit from the extension of education. Unlike her elder three brothers or three sisters, she finished high school along with her other younger sister. As soon as she finished school she went to live in Chiang Mai for three months with her older sister and stayed looking after her sister's children. As her life history graph illustrates, she was very happy to be able to travel to popular tourist destinations and go to the Songkran festival there. It was a contrast to her life in the village "*Chiang Mai was very different from the village because it had many interesting places to visit and every place was clean and there were many trees, in Ban Dong it's very dry. When I lived in the village I never travelled to other places, I just studied and worked on the fields. But in Chiang Mai I could go outside and travel*".

After this another sister invited her to Bangkok in order to earn money. She lived with her sister who was just 1 year older than her and after job hunting for 10 days found a job in a 7-11 convenience store. Phornpan was a cashier and received staff training which made her 'feel good' about her job, although she confessed she did not like her job at first 'because it was hard work' and she did not understand how to do things. After a month she felt good with her new found autonomy and commented that "*it was good to be able to earn money by myself and I had many friends on my shift".* By living with her older sister Phornpan was able to send half of her 6,000 baht monthly salary back to her mother in the village "*I was proud to send money back to my parents".*

When she was 21 she resigned from her job and went back to the village. Although she explained her supervisor was kind to her, she felt she was tired and wanted to find a new job. She went home to rest, and as her life history diagram illustrates (see figure 26) she soon got bored once she got back and was unhappy "*because I had no money*". Phornpan worked on her mother's fields and helped out around the house. After a year, she went back to Bangkok again and this time got a job as a waitress in a fashionable air conditioned restaurant called MK which is very popular. "*I was so happy because I had so many friends and could earn money by myself again. When I worked I had money to buy food and things for myself, when I lived in Ban Dong I have no money, I liked getting money every month*". She talked about her change in life style in the city, "*when I was in Bangkok I ate Thai style food, but in Ban Dong I ate Isan food and spoke Isan, when I worked in Bangkok I spoke in Thai and dressed in fashionable modern clothes. I became more intelligent and had a lot of responsibilities and I became more mature*".

However, her time in the city came to an abrupt end when one day she finished work late at 11pm and was walking across a busy road in the rain and was knocked unconscious by a motorcycle. She broke her leg, and after a day in the hospital she returned back to the village. "*I was so unhappy because I worried about my leg, I didn't know if I could walk again, if I couldn't walk I cannot get money by myself again, I want to work in Bangkok again*". Losing her independence and autonomy, this was the lowest point of Phornpan's life course. The uncertainty of her future meant that when she received a marriage offer from a carpenter in the village, she accepted. "*I got married when I was 24, we met when I came home injured, he came to visit me often and took care of me. I was so-so when I got married as I didn't really love him but he was a good person, he didn't drink or smoke and he was intelligent and would take good care of me*".

Two years later Phornpan had a baby which made her husband and her family very happy. "*I was so happy because my daughter was strong and healthy, we have a warm family and my mum likes to take care of her a lot*"….."*it changed my life a lot when I had a baby, I had to start economising and I had to be a mother and save money for my daughter, my life is difficult now*

because I have no time for relaxing or sleep, when my baby is sick I have to look after her, when she doesn't sleep, I don't sleep either" (and laughs).

Pornpan's life course took a turn for the worse when she had the accident in Bangkok. Her reaction to this was to return to the safety net of the village. In order for her to secure her future she married an "honest" carpenter from the village. Although she is happy with her new baby, she also felt that her life was more difficult. During the focus groups discussion I later conducted with this age group, Pornpan also spoke of how she felt 'unfree' in the village because she had no way of making her own money and had the responsibility of childcare as well as helping her elderly relatives. The double burden Pornpan explained made her miss her life in Bangkok, which was relatively free.

Figure 26: Phornpan's Life History Diagram

Happiest time

Lowest point

Liked going to school but didn't have good teachers

Joined in running competitions at school

Lived in Chiang Mai and took care of her sister's children. She travelled to see waterfalls and the mountains

Bangkok. Sister invited her to work in MK Restaurant. She was happy and she had money

Pregnant and was very happy as she thought she was getting too old to have a baby

Gave birth

Graduated high school. Very proud of herself as only 3 people from her village completed it. She wanted to study more but her parents couldn't afford it.

Bangkok. Sister invited her to work in 7-11 store. Very tired but she was happy to earn money by herself and sent 3,000bht per month to her parents

Started high school and was a new student. Only 3 other people from her village
.

She got married to someone in Ban Dong, she didn't love him but he was a good person as looked after her. She is a farmer and he is a carpenter in the village

Ban Dong, she didn't have money but looked after her parents and worked on the fields for 1 year

She had to go back to Ban Dong as she broke her leg in Bangkok. She wanted to work in Bangkok again.

Age 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28

Ton, a 30 year old male told me of the motivational forces that led him to first migrate when he was 18 from his home town of That Phanom to go to Bangkok. Before 18 he never wished to migrate to the city, even though his family was poor compared to others in his village and had no electricity. It was not until he was 18 and finished high school that Ton accepted to go to Bangkok with his uncle to work as a *'chang-tat-yep'* (tailor/seamstress). After winning a scholarship to study at high school Ton felt sad that he could not afford to go to university or have the money to take the entrance exam to become a soldier. His disappointment with work in a low skilled and low paid job is illustrated in his life history chart (figure 27). He only lasted 10 days before quitting his job and leaving to work in a small plastic factory nearby. The informal factory only had 5 workers and conditions were harsh, Ton was paid only 3,000bht per month and could stay with the other workers rent free.

Like others in his cohort, work available in Bangkok for low skilled rural migrants was dirty and dangerous. Many of my respondents in this cohort moved around jobs to find the most comfortable position. Ton quit his new job in the plastic factory after only 2 months because of the dirty living conditions, low pay, impolite boss and bad fumes from the plastic. He moved to another factory, a shoe factory which a friend from school worked in. This factory was in Samut Prakan, on the periphery of Bangkok, but again he worked here for 2 months getting a low salary of only 160 baht per day. Eventually after 1 week of applications he was able to get a job in a soap and toothpaste factory nearby.

This new factory offered higher wages of 7,000 baht and over time, Ton could earn up to 14,000 baht per month. His success and security is illustrated in his life history diagram, at age 19 (see figure 27 below). His reasons for happiness were that "*my job was easy (sabai), I didn't have to work hard (mai nak), I learnt how to drive a forklift and I could stay in a room by myself…. I could understand my job and got on well with my boss, it wasn't stressful at all and I had time to take*

a rest and it was air conditioned too, it was so comfortable (sabai sabai)". He worked at this factory for 2 years, which was a long period of time for most male migrants.

At 21 Ton was recruited into the army for a compulsory 1 year. He had always wanted to be a solider and was happy he could complete his training that he had missed out on when he was 18. Again from his life history diagram he felt a measure of success. However at the end of the 1 year he was not offered a permanent position and had to return to his parent's house in That Phanom. After 4 years of surviving independently, his happiness decreased when he had to return to the village. He could not make an income there and so stayed only 3 months before going to Phuket (south of Thailand) with friends from his village as a construction worker. Construction work is hard and low paid with poor living conditions. Going with friends also meant Ton spent a lot of money on going out and drinking. After only 20 days he returned to his home village.

Ton's migration history like many in his cohort is varied (see table 9 below). Since the age of 18 he has worked in 11 places. It was when Ton was 24 that he was hired to help with the construction of Ban Dong School and met his current wife. Immediately he liked the atmosphere in Ban Dong village *"here it has fresh air and good nature, it has many mountains, trees and wild animals*". It was different to his natal village in That Phanom which was more crowded and dependent on rice alone with no nearby forest. Ban Dong also provided a contrast to busy city life as it is surrounded by forest with a cooler climate than other areas.

Ton decided to migrate to Bangkok again in order to save enough money to marry. He worked in a plastic bag factory (see his life history diagram; his happiness at 25 was very low). After saving enough money for the bride price, he returned to Ban Dong to settle. After marrying, both Ton and his new wife migrated again in order to save money to build a new house in the village. They worked in a shoe factory in Samutprakan for only a few months before they started having marital problems and then moved to work in a restaurant in Roi-et province (in Northeast Thailand). They lived here for 1 year saving money, but again had problems after Ton admitted

to having 'giks' (girlfriends) and so his wife wanted to moved back to Ban Dong. With only a little money saved, Ton and his wife were able to construct a small hut on the outskirts of the village and have since had a son. Ton explained to me that now his life is happy as he is happy in the village with his wife and son.

Table 9: Migration History of Ton

Age	Place/occupation	Duration/ Salary
< 18	Village in That Phanom	Home
18	Bangkok/ seamstress	10 days
18	Bangkok/ plastic factory	2 months/ 3,000bht p/m
18	Samut Prakan/ shoe factory	2 months/ 160bht p/d
19	Samut Prakan/ soap and toothpaste factory	2 years / 7-14,000bht p/m
21	Army	1 year
22	Home/ That Phanom	3 months
23	Chonburi/ compressor factory	4 months / 6,500-7,000bht p/m
23	Home/ That Phanom	4 months
24	Phuket/ construction worker	1 month
24	Ban Dong, Mukdahan / construction worker	2 months
25	Bangkok / plastic bag factory	6 months / 200bht per day
26	Samut Prakan / shoe factory	2 months (with wife)
26	Roi-et / restaurant	1 year (with wife)
27 - 30	Ban Dong	New home with wife and child

Ton's situation and ability to accumulate resources is precarious. He has few resources from his own family in That Phanom as his brothers and sister rely on their parents' rice fields for their income. Ton's wife does not own any land and works as a hired labourer on her parents' cassava fields. Ton does not have the experience or skill to make a comfortable living from hunting in the forest as others in the village are able to do. His livelihood is dependent on his ability to work as an occasional hired labourer for his wife's extended family and his ability to exchange goods from the forest to his natal village. He hopes to expand this business by opening a market stall in his home village selling wildlife from the forest in Ban Dong. "*I don't want to work on the fields. I want to be a seller in a market, selling vegetables and animals from the forest. Ban Dong has many things to sell. I don't want to wait and be dependent on nature and the rain. I want to earn money every day. Everything in this village depends on nature. I want to do different things every day. I want to do different things than the people in Ban Dong do. Now I work on the fields day by day because I don't know what else I can do, I don't have the answers....but if I am intelligent I can get more money and save it if I am a seller in a market*".

Figure 27: Ton's Life History Diagram

Happiest Time

Lowest point

Liked school again because he had a girlfriend. Played football in Mukdahan. Gambled at school. Went to school on a scholarship.

Went to Roi-et with new wife. Worked in restaurant for 1 year, but then came back as he had 'gik'. Moved to Samutprakan for 2 months but he got 'gik' again and his wife wanted to move back home.

Applied for the army and got in. 1 year training. Very difficult but he enjoyed it.

Soap factory in Samutprakan. Liked the easy job. 7-14,000 bht per month.. Travelled to markets and cinema

skipped class a lot

Construction worker in Ban Dong. He wanted to live there, liked the forest. Met a girl there.

New school in Mukdahan excited. New friends spoke many dialects. Wake up at 4am to study.

Compressor factory in Chonburi Province. 7,000bht per month. Quit after 4 months as bad living conditions and lots of drug addicts.

Liked beautiful teachers. Very naughty at school.

Lives in Ban Dong. Has a son so is happy. Wants to set up a business in the village.

He liked school but parents still argued. Liked maths and football.

Finished school. Applied to be a soldier but had no money to get to Bangkok for the test. Parents poor.

Got married and lived in Ban Dong

Back to live with parents. No money, but he liked village girls. Stayed 3 months. Then went to Phuket with friends as construction worker. Rained a lot, he didn't like it so quit after 20 days.

Plastic bag factory in Bangkok to get money then went back to get married

Went to Bangkok as seamstress. Quit after 10 days, lived with 10 other people. Got a job in a plastic factory making buckets and hangers. His boss was impolite. Worked for 2 months then quit.

Lived in That Phanom, went to primary school, his parents argued a lot as his father has a second wife. He was very poor.

Age 1 2 3 4   5   6   7   8   9   10   11   12   13   14   15   16   17   18   19   20   21   22   23   24   25   26   27   28   29   30

<u>Middle cohort: Investing back into the village: Oat</u>

Oat is now 40 years old and I met him whilst he was visiting Ban Dong with his wife. Both Oat and his wife work on rubber plantations in Rayong Province on the Eastern Seaboard. His life history is like many within his cohort, he migrated for long periods of time with the vision of one day returning to Ban Dong to invest in new farmland and crops.

Coming from a poor family in Ban Dong Oat left school at 14 and started helping his parents on their low-return rice fields and hunting for animals in the forest to survive. When he was 21 he went to work as a fisherman in Samutsongkran Province with a friend from Ban Dong. He had never been far from the village and it was the first time he had experienced life in the city. His job living on a boat with 20 other fisherman in cramped conditions was not what he expected and it was hard and dangerous work. Although he enjoyed days off going to restaurants and nightclubs with his new friends, he did not make enough money to save anything. He earned just 600 baht per month and after 2 months he decided to return to Ban Dong. Figure 28 illustrates that after Oat left school he was not satisfied with his life and migrating did not help to increase his happiness; in fact it lessened it.

Returning to the village was difficult. Oat made a living by hunting animals and exchanging them for rice. At 25 his family changed their rice crops to cassava plantations. The rice harvested was not enough to feed the family of 7 people and other villagers were investing in cassava and so Oat's family followed by turning all 10 rai into cassava plantations. The price of cassava was low at less than 1 baht per kilogram and after 2 years of trying to subsist on hunting and harvesting cassava, Oat decided it was time to migrate again.

At 27 he went to Rayong Province, an industrial province on the Eastern Seaboard. He got a job as a hired labourer through a friend from a village nearby Ban Dong.

Oat described how proud of himself he was at his ability to learn about new techniques and the speed at which he could learn. He explained that this was why he became happier with his life at 27 (see life history, figure 28). He explained "*on the first day I started as a hired labourer removing grass from the rubber plantation and got 70baht per day, after 1 week I asked my boss to change my position and tap rubber….the first day I collected enough rubber to get 12 baht, the second day I could get 60 baht and after 1 month I become more knowledgeable and fast so that I was getting 100 baht per day*". After a short break back home in Ban Dong between tapping seasons, Oat went back to Rayong and was earning 300 baht per day as the price of rubber was very high. He explained that this was one of the happiest times of his life " *I was very happy because I could travel with my friends, I could get a lot of money and I was an expert in what I did, I returned money to my parents 3 or 4 times per year*".

He met his wife in Rayong who also worked as a rubber tapper. When the price of rubber fell they returned to Ban Dong and grew cassava for a few years. Oat explained that he was not happy doing this (see life history diagram, figure 28) but as soon as the price of rubber went up again they migrated back to Rayong and were earning up to 800 baht per day between them. After 3 years of saving money, Oat and his wife have returned to Ban Dong and have invested their savings in buying new land. He has invested in 10 rai of new rubber plantations in the village. He has been able to use his skill and knowledge from his experiences in Rayong and bring it back to the village. The tools that he invested in for his work can also be used back in the village to tap the rubber. Now other villagers are also investing in rubber plantations because of the success of Oat. Villagers have to wait 7 years before they will be able to harvest the full amount of rubber. If the price of rubber declines, their risk will have negative effects on their livelihoods as many are investing in these crops with all of their savings.

In addition to investing in agriculture, Oat told me of his wish to open a grocery shop in the village and wants his son to train as a mechanic in order to set up a garage in Ban Dong. Until his rubber plantation can be harvested in 6 years time, Oat is still migrating to Rayong periodically. His hopes are to save enough money to buy another 30-40 rai of land in Mukdahan or a nearby province and grow more rubber trees. Oat put off his return to the village until he was 40 years

old, the terms on which he returned were his own. This means that when the rubber plantations are ready to be harvested fully Oat will be 47 years of age. His agricultural investments are a form of future old age security. Rubber tapping can be done in the evenings (unlike cassava harvesting which has to be done in the heat of the day time and is difficult for older villagers) and he can easily hire labour to harvest the rubber, and still make profit. Agricultural production in the village is changing because of migrants such as Oat, many are now changing from cassava and growing rubber.

Figure 28: Oat's Life History Diagram

Happiest time

Ban Dong. He went to school but sometimes missed it as he could not read

Learnt to read and it made him want to go to school

Back to Rayong. He travelled to the beach with his friends and could earn 300bht per day as he was an expert at tapping rubber and it had a good price. He worked for 2 years.

Rayong, rubber had a high price and they could earn 700-800bht per day between them. They worked for 3 years.

Ban Dong Started growing rubber trees 10 months ago. If they have a high price they want to buy more land. Have to wait 7 years to harvest them. He is not still a hired labourer in Rayong.

Ban Dong. Rested for 1 month as it was autumn and no rubber to collect. Very happy as he could catch animals and sell them and made money.

Rayong, hired labourer. He had to remove grass. 70bht per day, he worked for 1 week and then moved to tapping rubber. The first day he got 12bht but then after 1 month 100bht per day as he became an expert. He worked for 1 year 12-6am. He travelled to the beach

He became a hunter and went to the mountains. He left school as he wanted to help his parents. He started to use a gun and shoot birds and squirrels and caught deer and wild pigs.

Fisherman Samutsongkran, central region. He worked for 2 months and got 600bht per month. He got seasick so left

Ban Dong. He started growing cassava and worked hard. Cassava had low price 80-90 stang (less than 1bht)

Got married to a woman who also worked on rubber plantation. He could get 500bht per day but then left as price of rubber fell

Had a son and lived in Ban Dong for 1 year, he had no money and picked vegetables from mountain and grew cassava

Rayong. He moved to a different plantation to get more money but it was 50 km away from the city, they could only make 200-300bht between them as rubber had a low price. He had to buy new equipment. They worked for 1 year.

Came back to Ban Dong and grew cassava for 3 years

Lowest point in life

Age   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40

6.4 The Younger Cohort: Confronting Trade offs

It has been harder to generalise about younger cohorts, because their mobility has not only increased, but also varied greatly. There are however, some patterns within gender; young men prefer to stay in the village. They often talk of hunting and the freedoms they enjoy at home. They compare it to their lives when working in restaurants, factories and as construction workers which necessitate that they work certain hours and under supervision. Rather than question male attachment to their families and home villages, my findings suggest that it is men who are more likely to stay in the village. They only migrate for short periods for either money or adventure with friends. They do not trade-off their autonomy and happiness in the village for higher wages and city living. Young females on the other hand do not like working as agricultural labourers and do not go hunting and they aspire to work in offices and factories, or continue education. Although many say they are happier in the village, they trade this off in order to gain more autonomy in the city, secure wages and an opportunity to change themselves and their families. Not everyone though has educational qualifications, and for young women this means they cannot get factory or office jobs. Some make large sacrifices and trade offs for their survival and happiness in the city.

Young Cohort: Rod chooses the village life

Rod is 18 years old and currently living in the village with his parents. He has one elder sister who is studying in secondary school. He finished primary school and was glad because he wanted to be a novice monk in Ban Dong temple. He was a novice for 3 months before migrating to Lopburi Province in the Central region. He went to work for his aunt who owns a noodle shop. "*I went because my family was so poor, I wanted to help my parents and build a new house and make money so I could buy things, my parents asked me to go and I wanted to go as well".* When he arrived in Lopburi he was excited and his relatives were kind "*they took me to Big C superstore and to the Zoo".* However, he only stayed 3 months before getting homesick and returned to Ban Dong. It was monsoon season and Rod wanted to go hunting with his friends

back in the village. Before he returned home, his aunt gave him 400 baht for the bus ticket back and he was able to save 3,000 baht to give to his parents on his return.
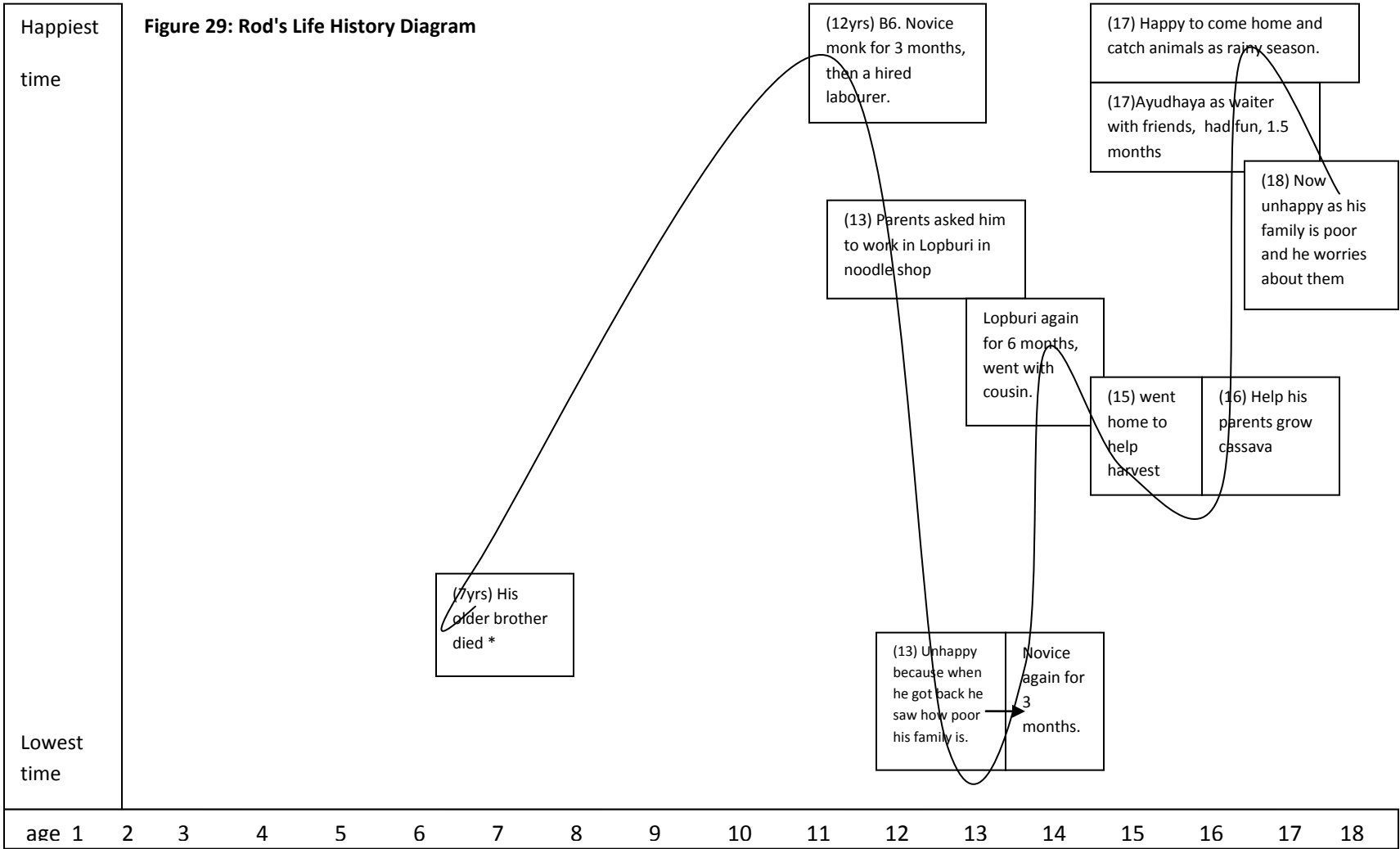
Upon his return however, he was aware of the hardship his family was under, they have yet to build a permanent house like other households living close by. It made him sad to be back and was the reason he migrated back to Lopburi. This time he stayed for 6 months and got a salary increase to 2,500 baht per month. After 6 months he came home, it was cassava harvesting time and his parents needed his labour on the fields. He lived in the village for another 2 years "*I was happy in the village and free (is-sa-ra), I could see my friends and travel with them".* Every male respondent in this cohort felt themselves to be more useful living at home with their parents in the village. Without their labour in the village, their parents would have to hire labour for their fields and there would be no one to hunt for food for the family.

At 17, he migrated with his friend Add to Bang Pa-in in the central region. Add encouraged Rod to go saying there were many interesting places to visit. He stayed with Pam, Add's older sister (from the introduction of this thesis) and she found him a job in a *Moo-gata* (do it yourself BBQ) restaurant *"I was happy to work there and I had friends that worked there too, it had loud music and I liked to listen to the music".* Many young males from Ban Dong migrate to work in restaurants and bars in the city. It provides them with the experience of nightlife whilst providing them with a source of income. Especially for young men, it is enticing because of the working hours, and the fun associated with the occupation, especially the ability to meet and watch the opposite sex, something not possible back home.

When his friend Add found a higher paid job as a security guard, Rod followed. However, he only worked for 3 nights, "*the second night, there were a lot of drunk people wanting to come into the building and then the third night I saw a man hit his wife. I didn't like seeing it so I had to quit*". He went back to work at the restaurant again but after 6 weeks he felt homesick. It was again the monsoon season and all he could think about was Ban Dong, he explained that there is

an abundance of frogs, crabs and other animals during this time, and he wanted to go hunting. Both Add and Rod quit their jobs and returned to the village.

Rod is still living in Ban Dong, from his life history graph (below), he is happiest when he can be in the village and find ways of providing for himself and his family. Migration to the city is for short bursts fuelled by the desire to raise his standard of living in the village, but always failing to do so. This is a re-occurring pattern for male youth in Ban Dong, breaking with previous cohorts who migrated for longer periods of time and then settle back into the village. Male youth in younger cohorts are oscillating between village and city at a much faster pace. Not earning enough money in the city to change their economic status within the village or contribute largely to their parents' incomes. Migration occurs in groups for short bursts, to popular destinations such as Bangkok or Bang pa-in where there are lots of entertainment establishments, or to beach destinations.

Happiest
time

Figure 29: Rod's Life History Diagram

(12yrs) B6. Novice monk for 3 months, then a hired labourer.

(17) Happy to come home and catch animals as rainy season.

(17)Ayudhaya as waiter with friends, had fun, 1.5 months

(18) Now unhappy as his family is poor and he worries about them

(13) Parents asked him to work in Lopburi in noodle shop

Lopburi again for 6 months, went with cousin.

(15) went home to help harvest

(16) Help his parents grow cassava

(7yrs) His older brother died *

(13) Unhappy because when he got back he saw how poor his family is.

Novice again for 3 months.

Lowest
time

age 1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   11   12   13   14   15   16   17   18

<u>Young Cohort: Noi and successful city living</u>

Noi is a 22 year old administrator in Bangkok, she has benefited from the continuing rise and expansion of education. Her aunt is a teacher in Nakon Phanom, and so when Noi was 12 she wher parents from Ban Dong sent her to live with her aunt until she was 15. She returned to Ban Dong to go to secondary school. Her schooling was different to those in older cohorts, every year she took part in poetry contests, flower making contests, sports days, beauty pageants and singing contests. She finished school at 18 and wanted to go to university. However, her parents could not support her to go and she felt she had to be more self sufficient (*por pieng*) "*my parents couldn't afford to buy things and I felt bad when I couldn't buy things, I had to be self sufficient*". She also explained that her younger brother and sister were growing up and her parents had to use a lot of money to send them to school, so she wanted to help her family. The motivating factors in this case are thus expressed through desire and/or need. On the one hand, wanting to buy things for herself, and on the other hand duty, to her parents by helping with the finances for her younger brother and sister to study. Young girls are operating within a cultural set of expectations, these expectations are also changing. Traditionally it was the youngest daughter that inherited the land and looked after parents. My research suggests that this is now more flexible and that sons are now inheriting land as they are willing to work it and stay in the village looking after parents whilst daughters work outside the village. This is the case with Noi. Her family is hoping that their son will take over farming responsibilities whilst their daughters are obliged to help parents through remittances (see their family case study, the Wongmor family, in Chapter 7).

In contrast with her previous cohort, Noi took advantage of further education in a commercial college in Bangkok. She moved to live with some relatives in Samutprakan and got a job in a factory making canned food. She eventually moved into factory accommodation after not enjoying living with her relatives because "*they liked to gossip about me and I wanted to live closer to the factory and stay with my friends*". After a while she was moved to work as an administration assistant in the personnel department and it was her co-worker that encouraged her to continue her education at weekends. She was happy that she got the job "*it wasn't in the sun, I get tired working on the fields and can't stand it, I once fainted, I had to work hard in Ban*

Dong. I dreamed to work in an office and sit on a chair and type on a computer and be busy and many documents on my table".
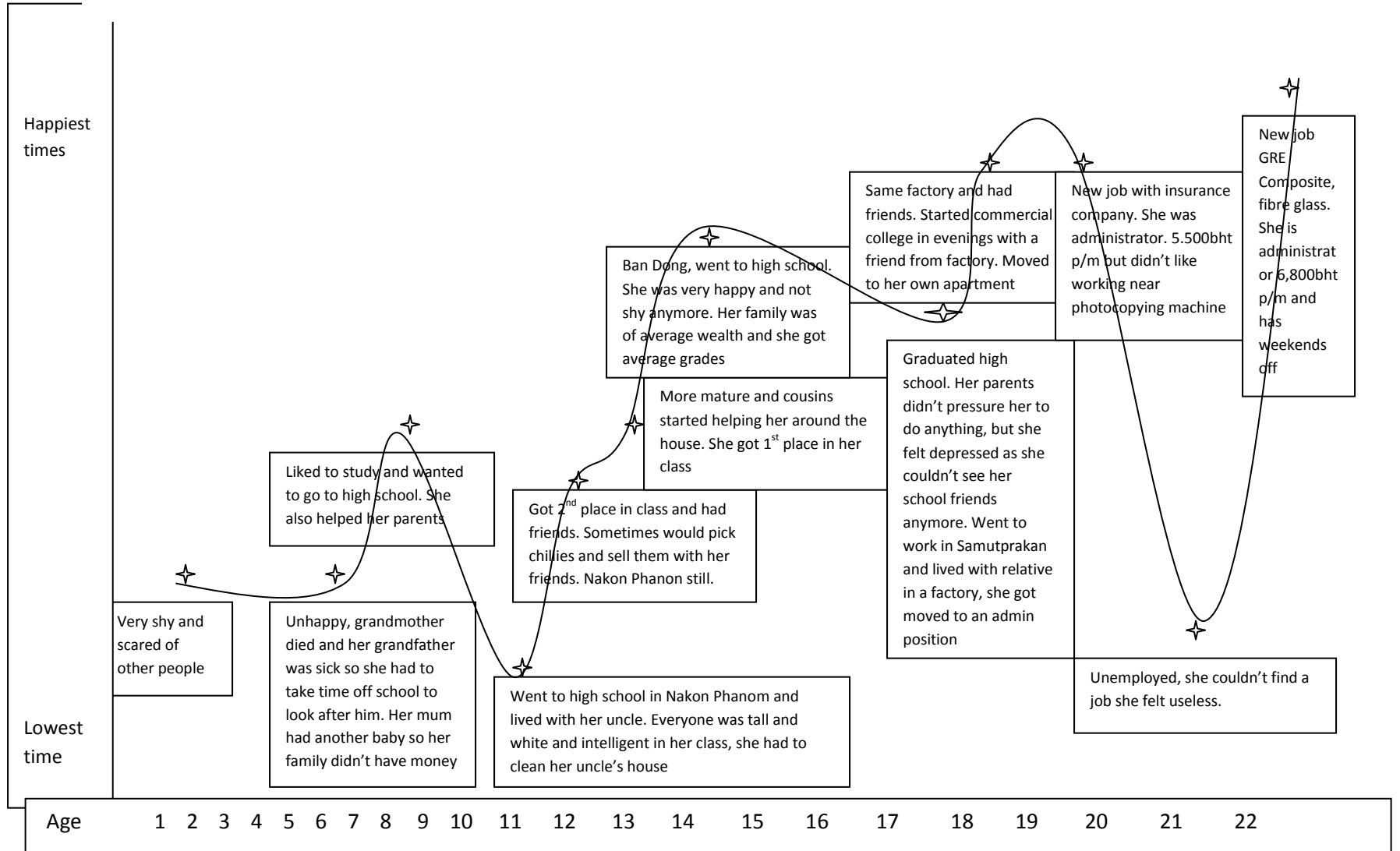
When she finished her diploma in administration she found a new job, "*I was so tired working in the factory, I wanted to find a new job that would give me more time for relaxing".* This is another fracture from her elder cohorts who do not have the opportunities, qualifications or outlook to choose. For older cohorts factory work is the best opportunity available to them, which in turn means working 12 hour shifts for 6 days a week. Noi however, did not like this and so applied to work as an administrator for an insurance company. Staying in an apartment in Bangkok and getting a pay rise, she was happy (see life history diagram below). When she heard of another job with a higher salary she took it, however, she stayed only 1 month "*I had to work all day photocopying; I didn't like it, it felt unsafe*". Again taking another risk she quit the job.

Unlike previous cohorts, Noi did not return to the village or stay with relatives. Instead she chose to stay in Bangkok job hunting. She was unemployed for 6 months and eventually had to take support from her parents for her rent. This was the lowest point in her life "*I was very unhappy and bored, my life wasn't purposeful".* Eventually, she found a new job advertised on the internet, again something not open to previous cohorts who are not used to working with or using computers. It was with a fibreglass company and the salary was higher than her previous jobs at 6,800 baht and has 2 days at weekends off, thus satisfying her earlier ambition of having more time to relax. Noi is still working for this company as she has now satisfied her ambitions and, as her life history graph illustrates, this has made her very happy and fulfilled. She is able to send 2,000 baht of her salary back to her parents per month and after living expenses has over 1,000 baht to "*spend on myself*". For now, she is able to satisfy her reason for migration, to buy things for her herself and help her parents.

In the future Noi would like to return to Ban Dong "*I want to save money before I come back to Ban Dong. I want to come back and live with my family when I'm 40…..I feel I can live in Ban Dong and I want to save money to build a new house here….in the future I want to open a*

garage to repair cars and motorbikes and my younger brother can fix them. I also want to open a shop for my mum as I don't want her to work hard growing cassava. Noi already has started a side business with her aunt in Nakon Phanom province who owns a gift shop. Noi buys bulk yellow t-shirts, 'we love the King' bracelets and soft toys from markets in Bangkok and loads them onto a bus from Bangkok and her aunt will pick them up when the bus reaches her village.

Figure 30: Noi's Life History Diagram

Figure 30: Noi's Life History Diagram

Happiest times

Lowest time

Age   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22

Very shy and scared of other people

Unhappy, grandmother died and her grandfather was sick so she had to take time off school to look after him. Her mum had another baby so her family didn't have money

Liked to study and wanted to go to high school. She also helped her parents

Went to high school in Nakon Phanom and lived with her uncle. Everyone was tall and white and intelligent in her class, she had to clean her uncle's house

Got 2nd place in class and had friends. Sometimes would pick chillies and sell them with her friends. Nakon Phanon still.

Ban Dong, went to high school. She was very happy and not shy anymore. Her family was of average wealth and she got average grades

More mature and cousins started helping her around the house. She got 1st place in her class

Same factory and had friends. Started commercial college in evenings with a friend from factory. Moved to her own apartment

Graduated high school. Her parents didn't pressure her to do anything, but she felt depressed as she couldn't see her school friends anymore. Went to work in Samutprakan and lived with relative in a factory, she got moved to an admin position

New job with insurance company. She was administrator. 5.500bht p/m but didn't like working near photocopying machine

Unemployed, she couldn't find a job she felt useless.

New job GRE Composite, fibre glass. She is administrator 6,800bht p/m and has weekends off

217

Sai and Joy: Precarious Livings in the City

In contrast to Noi above, not everyone is able to accumulate resources whilst migrating, some struggle to achieve security. These people often resort to more precarious and high risk occupations. It is interesting to note that both Sai and Joy made conscious decisions to enter into the entertainment/sex industries and both looked upon their experiences with both good and bad sides. Actually working in these environments was exciting and adventurous for both Sai and Joy, but both were aware of the risks involved, especially from drugs and violence. However, the main reason for their shame was when they returned to the village, from the gossip and treatment they received from other villagers. For example, Joy cried when telling me her life history, saying she was upset when she thought about it. She was embarrassed and said that many villagers now talk behind her back and refuse to talk with her. However, during her interview she made references to how fun her job in this industry was and that she would do it again.

Sai went to work in the Silom area of Bangkok when she was 15 years old and worked in a restaurant as a waitress. When the owner offered her the chance to be a singer in his bar in the evenings Sai was excited at the opportunity of earning a 6,000 baht monthly salary. This was a large sum of money for a girl of 15 years that came from one of the poorest households in Ban Dong. It would take her more than 6 months to earn that amount of money working as a hired labourer in the village.

Throughout her life history discussion with me, Sai spoke of her friends that worked with her. One was a '*mia noi*' (second wife) "*I could have got a lot of money if I was a second wife like her, but I didn't want to, my friend often got hit by the 'mia lieung' (1ˢᵗ wife) and I wouldn't be happy living like that*". At the same time though, both Sai and her friends would frequently be taken on short trips to the beach in Pattaya with male suitors from the bar where she worked. Using her sexuality to have fun was acceptable to her as long as she was having fun, and not tied into a relationship she couldn't get out of. She constantly compared her behaviour to that of her friends, and as she was comparably more 'moral' then them, it was acceptable to her.

Her behaviour was also self condoned because, as she states, "*everyone in Bangkok wears masks....I had to lie for my survival*". Sai explained that she 'had' to lie to customers that she did not have a boyfriend so that they would buy her food or pay for her to go to nightclubs. She explained that this is what she had to do in order for her save her own money. She would also lie about where she lived so that people would not follow her home. Sai explained that one of her friends got shot by a customer that found out she had lied to him. Her livelihood and activities were upheld as necessary for her survival, shifting responsibility from herself to the environment she was in.

When she became pregnant at 21 from a man she met whilst at work, they married and she worked in Bangkok until she was 24. She changed to a factory job, close by her husband's factory. However, her life was difficult because of her husband's drinking and violence and so she decided to return to Ban Dong, both to get away from her husband and to save money as her wages were not enough for childcare in the city. Now at 29, Sai still lives in Ban Dong, her husband visits a few times per year. His last visit was for the birth of their second child, and he bought the family a small portable television. However, she refuses to go back and live with him because of his drinking. Instead Sai chooses to stay in the village, looking after her 2 children, her elderly mother and sister (with epilepsy). She is the only member of the household that is well enough to work as a hired labourer. Because of their low income, they have been selected as beneficiaries in a mushroom growing scheme (a scheme for the low income and those with disability). They now have a mushroom growing 'tent' next to their home, which provides easy income generation. They also receive support from the village '*Wat*' and receive left over food the monks give to them. There is little opportunity for their lives to dramatically improve.

Joy, another girl from a similarly poor family in Ban Dong, migrated to Lopburi when she was 14 selling noodles with a friend from the village, Ploy (also interviewed). After 5 months, new friends invited her to work as a dancer in a bar "*because I was so young I didn't have to dance naked like the other girls, I could wear a bikini, and I had to run away when the police came to*

inspect the bar.… I made 2 good friends there and moved in with them, 5 people were sharing my room and the other girls 'free lanced' (sex work)".

Out of all of the jobs Joy had since (she has also worked as a nanny and as 'sao cheer'[42] at a karaoke bar) the job she enjoyed and preferred was her dancing job at the bar "*because hi-so[43] people went there and I could dress nicely and in the fashions".* Like Sai, Joy compared herself to the other girls she worked with "*no one in Lopburi thought I was a bad person, because everyone did the same thing*". She was not a prostitute outside of the bar where she worked, and she took care not to drink, especially from bottles that were already opened. She was careful to show me how careful she was in her behaviour and also to explain that the money was good compared to other salaries she could get. She also cried when she spoke about it, presenting herself to me as a good person, who entered into this livelihood because it was the only way she could afford to enjoy her time in the city. She never told her parents what she did in the city, although she suspects they know.
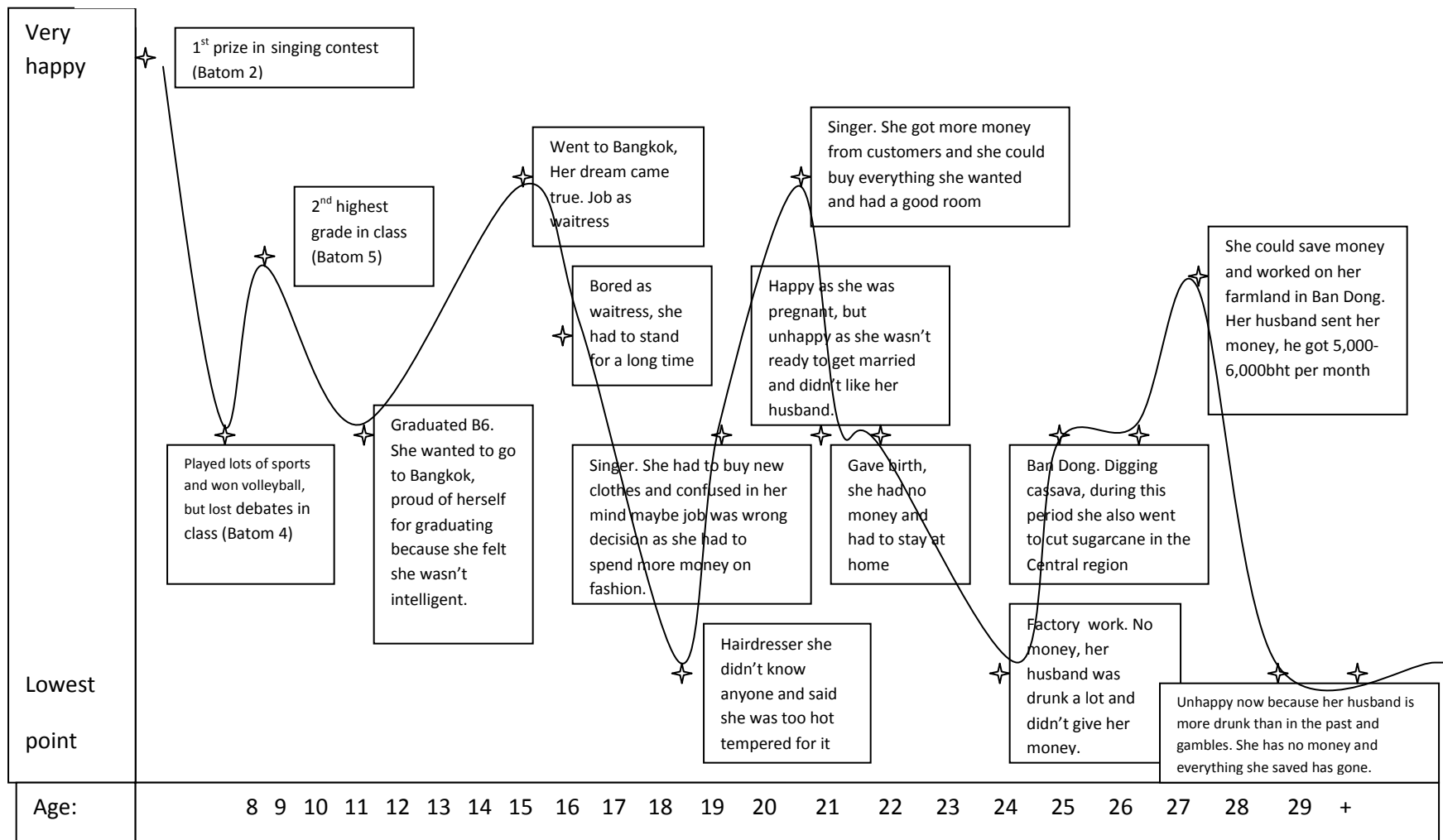
At the same time, it was clear Joy enjoyed working in the bar and being able to dress and follow the fashions, she spoke of how she liked to watch women in Lopburi city and copied how they dressed. In the village, she kept wearing the clothes she had bought in the city and dressed up during village festivals: "*there are some of the other villagers that don't want to speak to me any more as they say I talk too much and am rude. I wear more sexy clothes because I'm used to them and wear them to festivals in Ban Dong and surrounding villages and people look at me. I don't feel bad because I'm not doing anything bad, you have to survive in whatever you do*". She noted that she became more independent since migrating, more knowledgeable about the city, fashion and places to go and she liked making her own friends "*I could change myself for my future*". Even though at the end of our interview, she mentioned that she would probably end up a farmer because she had no qualifications, she still tried to change herself in order to become more like the 'hi-so' women in Lopburi she so admired.

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[42] 'sao cheer' dress in small dresses, often with the colour and logo of large beer/whisky brands. They talk to customers to get them to order more drinks and get commission for selling alcohol.
[43] 'hi-so' comes from the English term 'high society' and is used in Thai for people who dress well and have money.

Joy, like Sai, is now living back in Ban Dong. She met her boyfriend whilst working in a karaoke bar in the neighbouring province of Kalasin. She has a small baby and is for the time being in the village, whilst her boyfriend goes to and from his hometown and Ban Dong. She is now 19 and is living in a small make shift hut that her boyfriend and family built for them to live in close by. The future is uncertain as she doesn't want to be a farmer, but is aware of the limitations of applying to factories because she has no qualifications. Again, like Sai, there are limited opportunities for work within the village, and because of their children and lack of education there is also limited opportunities in the city.

Figure 31: Sai's Life History Diagram

Very happy

1st prize in singing contest (Batom 2)

2nd highest grade in class (Batom 5)

Went to Bangkok, Her dream came true. Job as waitress

Singer. She got more money from customers and she could buy everything she wanted and had a good room

She could save money and worked on her farmland in Ban Dong. Her husband sent her money, he got 5,000-6,000bht per month

Bored as waitress, she had to stand for a long time

Happy as she was pregnant, but unhappy as she wasn't ready to get married and didn't like her husband.

Played lots of sports and won volleyball, but lost debates in class (Batom 4)

Graduated B6. She wanted to go to Bangkok, proud of herself for graduating because she felt she wasn't intelligent.

Singer. She had to buy new clothes and confused in her mind maybe job was wrong decision as she had to spend more money on fashion.

Gave birth, she had no money and had to stay at home

Ban Dong. Digging cassava, during this period she also went to cut sugarcane in the Central region

Hairdresser she didn't know anyone and said she was too hot tempered for it

Factory work. No money, her husband was drunk a lot and didn't give her money.

Unhappy now because her husband is more drunk than in the past and gambles. She has no money and everything she saved has gone.

Lowest point

Age: 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 +

222

6.5 Migration as a social process

Migration and the specific ways in which actors arrange it and what it means to people is bound up within social identities, i.e. who the migrant thinks he or she is affects their mobility. My findings illustrate that these differences are through generation, class and gender. They also show that these social identities are not fixed, but they vary across time and space and are contested and negotiated throughout the life course. For example, the case of younger male identities is bound up firmly in being hunters and providing for their families. However, young females prefer to spend longer periods of time in the city as a way of contributing to their family's income, but also because they enjoy the freedom in the city. They may not always think like this, as we can see from the middle cohort, both Yim and Phornpan enjoyed their time in the city when they were younger but now are both mothers in Ban Dong and are finding ways to make a living back in the village.

Migration is a social process (De Haan and Rogaly, 2002) and it in turn affects social relations and structures and so there must be a move away from seeing migrants as helpless victims of the development process and more as a highly dynamic process with migrants as actors involving themselves and participating in whatever they feel a fulfilling part of. Migrants consciously use their own agency and choice to participate and in turn plan their participation and imagine themselves and their families as better, or at least sustain their current livelihoods by taking the risk of migrating. In many cases, these decisions allow boundaries around social identities to be broken down, changed or affirmed. The cases of Por Kai and Oat are good examples of this as they have managed to move from members of poor households, to being the heads of some of the richest households in the village.

These life histories have also illustrated the agency rural poor have over their life courses. They use their identities, as well as their networks, to create a degree of choice for themselves as to where they work, who they work for and on what terms they go to work in distant places and

when they return home. This has implications for structures and dominant ideologies in Thailand which prescribe particular people located in particular places to be doing particular things according to their ascribed identities and local forms of power and hegemonic discourses. These life biographies do not conform to what Rigg (2006) argues, that lives and livelihoods in Thailand are becoming increasingly divorced from farming and therefore the land. Instead, in Ban Dong at least, there is a restructured relationship to the land. Even though the case for women is more divorced from the land, it is not a simple divorce; they still invest back in the village. For younger men, they choose to work on their own terms in the village through agricultural labour and hunting, thus are not divorced from the land and farming even though they choose to spend time away. This can change over the life course, once they have responsibilities for their own families, the need for extra income is higher and as the middle and elder cohorts confirm, migration is undertaken in order to support village based income generation. This is mainly through agricultural investment. However, other types of petty trading activities are on the rise. For men, land is still very important as an income generating resource. For both men and women, land and owning land is important for security and identity, so that return to the village is one day possible.

My findings also suggest that wealth and lives are more diffuse because of increasing non-farm opportunities and increased mobility. Therefore, livelihoods are becoming delocalised and diversified. This also means wealth and poverty in the countryside is becoming de-linked from agricultural resources. Although life histories illustrate land is an important factor in wealth, other sources of income are necessary in order to support agricultural activity. Without these additional incomes, investment could not happen, thus plural activities are taking place. Actors are making institutional choices. The state is encouraging particular forms of behaviour as explained in Chapter 2, to be 'self sufficient', to remain in the village and uphold the traditional 'Thai' family, to be 'good' Thai citizens. My respondents are adapting this ideology. They are not remaining land-based farmers, instead they are benefiting from opportunities in the cities and non-subsistence forms of income. Actors are consciously strategising to increase their own welfare and sense of success within the village and their family and so are in turn heavily adapting state ideology to the opportunities and threats they face in their lives.

6.6 Conclusion

My work looks at aspects of individual agency and how individuals are reacting to change. This chapter has taken an in-depth look at villager's lives, aspirations and behaviour and has illustrated that these are not homogeneous. They have idiosyncrasies, for example, individuals have different ideas of fun and responsibility, even within cohorts. Some choose to stay in the city for years; others do not want to stay for more than a few months. Although some decisions may appear to be irrational economically, the life histories show actors' sense-making abilities, especially the case of young men who trade-off higher wages for the sense of freedom and autonomy they have hunting and living in the village. Their preferences do not necessarily mean their female siblings take on sole responsibility for the family. Young male respondents do not have the same access to opportunities in the city, as factories prefer female workers. Therefore there are structural constraints to male actors' agency. Their jobs are usually through hard labour occupations such as construction workers, or in informal factories using heavy machinery and working with toxins. They feel their time is better spent helping their parents harvesting cassava and hunting for food in the forest.

This chapter has also discussed some of the frustrations and feelings of alienation villagers experience and this is why some are left circulating between village and city. The place of the village, as home, a site of security and trust, somewhere villagers can fall back on and retire in, is important. It is increasingly, for younger cohorts, a place where one grows up and where one retires. Therefore the village as a place has become a way of talking about and imagining the life course in Thailand. By imagining their future in the village, even if it means returning there when they are 40 like Oat or as Noi imagine, villagers understand the village to be a place that is understood as suitable for their age. Migration and '*pai thiaw*' (travelling) is associated with people at certain life stages and scenarios. For example in youth or for those under survival stress in the village and need extra incomes. The village or 'baan' (meaning village and home in Thai) is associated with childhood, as a place of freedom men can hunt, but one where women have to work hard in unfeminine tasks, and as a place of retirement.

Lastly, each individual has their own perception and understanding of success, each life history has shown that individuals try to make their lives better in order to do this. Some can find a feeling of fulfilment in the city but others do not make it and return to the village. Those that do return however want to go back to the village on their own terms. Even for those who migrate for short periods of time, such as Por Aritit or Rod, migrate for 3 months and make a certain amount of money and return to help their families. Others choose to stay in the city for years and upon their return they wish to start small businesses or buy new land. The future of farming and agriculture is being reproduced throughout the lifecourse, as villagers start off and come back to their land or families land. However, imagining the future of agriculture in Ban Dong is changing. In all cohorts, both young and old wish to invest in new crops, extend their fields and enter into other village-based occupations in order to increase their family's security, but there are structural constraints such as land shortage, lack of irrigation and droughts. There is a surplus of labour and only limited opportunities for hired labourers. In order to understand this and the strategies families invest in to overcome it, a household level of analysis is needed, and this is what the next chapter is about.

CHAPTER 7: INTERGENERATIONAL BARGAINS

"Let me start with a generalisation: in the past children, and especially sons, were expected to work the land; today they are expected to go to school, study and acquire the necessary and appropriate education and skills so that they can abandon the land. It is the duty and responsibility of parents to assist in this quest." (Rigg, 2001, p50)

7.1 Introduction

This chapter provides insights into household and kinship relationships under rapidly changing conditions. We have seen that the rapid change Thailand has undergone has had profound consequences and effects on different cohorts from Chapter 5. Each individual has acted in different ways in order to manoeuvre and use this change to their best advantage, even in the face of difficult obstacles, as we have seen in Chapter 6. This chapter analyses the coping mechanisms, transfer of resources and ideas within the household. Each household will consist of more than one cohort, and each cohort will influence other cohorts, as illustrated in the cohort chapter. This is because cohorts within families have improved the prospects of their parents, grandparents, siblings and children. It is also highlighted that each cohort is not static, they are evolving and are going through their life course and so households are also changing and fluid.

The literature on households and families in Thailand has been varied but throughout this literature what have been highlighted are the dramatic changes in household composition, both because of demographic change and increased migration. The conceptualisation of what a household in Thailand is has changed considerably (for example see Foster, 1975). There is a discourse, both official and alternative, that rapid change and migration have been causing the moral breakdown of families due not only to members living in far away places, but also because of the changing ideas and norms associated with being 'modern'. Living in rural Mukdahan where a 'culture of migration' has a long history, families are often dispersed over long distances with members remaining in the city for extended periods of

time. However, one of the departure points of this chapter is that it is this very fragmentation of the 'family' that has allowed its continuation and reproduction. What I show in this chapter is that people, especially those in the Northeast can no longer survive on agriculture alone and so diversification is a necessary means for its survival.

Thus while Rigg's quote at the beginning of this chapter is true; it is only relative. As whilst children are being encouraged by both parents and the State to stay in education, there is also considerable thought by families, on who stays in education and who will one day inherit the land. Therefore not abandoning agriculture completely. I also find that it is not the parents that make all of the decisions but more and more frequently, decisions and bargains are made between siblings.

I will use keyholes of different families in the village to illustrate the above arguments. Firstly, the Kampedee family is a wealthy family that has built upon their resources mainly by expanding their agricultural portfolio. The Wongmor family is a wealthy family that has built upon more formal resources rather than building upon agricultural ones as members have entered into government jobs or formal sector companies. The Sooksabai family, although from a large kinship group, this family is a young one with three small children, indebted and renting a small amount of land. Lastly, the Khamyod kinship group which consists of one single parent household but otherwise it is a large, wealthy family in the village with many members working outside. The four families that have been chosen have been selected on the stories that they can provide. These stories explore the issues and processes going on within families in Ban Dong and the four main family strategies that were found: agricultural expansion, entering the formal sector (or aspiring to), surviving but indebted and with little opportunities for a life changing scenario and family investment (sibling ordered and gendered).

7.2 Thinking about family

There are differences between a household and a 'family'. A household is a place of residence, and for this reason many studies and censuses have treated households as

synonymous with the family (Robertson, 1991). However, a household is not the same, as families are often dispersed throughout many different households. A family has subjective meaning as a natural, durable and stable group of people to which an individual belongs. It also has an objective element whereby a family is identifiable by its dynamic overlapping social networks. Individuals draw concentric rings around the network of people we think of a part of our 'family' (Wood 1999, Robertson 1991), not necessarily blood relatives, and therefore families are not objectively definable groups of people in society. They are fluid, changing, subjective and are constantly being rewoven. This in turn raises conceptual difficulties as the process of reproduction is constantly changing as new members are born and others die.

The institution of the 'family' is an agent of the reproductive process in society. It reproduces whole populations and extends to economic, political and religious institutions. It is not a static institution, but is in a continual cycle as children grow, marry, parents retire, and new children are born and new households emerge. During this cycle, families' fortunes rise and decine, much like Chayanovian theory (see Chayanov, 1966). Chayanov used the dependency ratio argument to illustrate this lifecycle of the family. Collard (1999) discusses this lifecycle in a similar vein, as used in Chapter 5 in his work on intergenerational bargains:

"The bargain is that the working generation makes transfers of human capital to the young and consumption to the old on the understanding that other generations will behave in a similar way" (Collard, 1999)

McGregor, Copestake and Wood (1999) go into greater detail:

"*The basic idea of the inter-generational bargain is a simple one: in all 'communities', from family to globe, there are relationships for the transfer of resources between generations and these relationships carry with them often uncodified 'rights' and obligations.*" (McGregor, Copestake, Wood, 1999, p447)

Intergenerational obligations can be fulfilled both publicly (through state or community mechanisms e.g. social safety nets for older people) and privately (between and among individuals, households and communities, possibly employing market mechanisms e.g. investments in the education and health of children). As the discussion on the Thai welfare regime in Chapter 2 of this thesis represents, in the Thai case these obligations are met more privately, both because of State ideology and also due to actors' preferences and strategies which have been illustrated in all three findings chapters.

By their very nature, these responsibilities are inter and intra-generational. Changes in capabilities and access to resources, related to different life cycle stages, require that resources are transferred between generations as well as within them. For this reason, intergenerational transfers can 'flow' in both directions. The 'working' or 'middle' generation, which controls most capital, can make transfers to (or withhold transfers from) both the 'young' and the 'old' generations.

There are well defined relationships in Thai society about the reciprocal nature of intergenerational relationships. The Buddhist concept of *Bun Khun* is based on the notion of obligations that each generation have towards each other. As Mills sets out *bun khun* is a 'powerful set of social and cultural ideals, parents bestow their *bun khun* (compassion, sacrifice) upon children by giving them life, love and caring for them as they grow older….In return, children owe their parents not only life-long gratitude and respect but also- and increasingly as they mature- their active assistance, including labour and income' (Mills, 1997, p76).

The literature on households in Thailand has been varied but throughout this literature what have been highlighted are the dramatic changes in household composition, both because of demographic change and increased migration and the conceptualisation of what a household in Thailand actually is (for example see Foster 1975). There is a discourse, both official and alternative, that rapid change and migration have been causing the moral breakdown of families due not only to members living in far away places, but also because of the changing ideas and norms associated with being 'modern'. My own fieldwork illustrates that there is both this fracture and conflict, but there is also cooperation and mutual support

and reciprocity. As Rigg (1997) states "the household remains a stage where cooperation and conflict, corporatism and individualism, mutuality and inequality, and consensus and discordance, co-exist….the household is defined by dissonance". Brody (2001) goes as far as to say that "given the long migration history of a region like Isan, it is debateable whether unified families and communities have ever characterised rural life" (p136).

Indeed during my fieldwork the families I knew experienced ups and downs, conflict and cooperation. Just as there is no ideal type 'Thai village' (see Hirsch 1991) there is no 'Thai family', it is not a bounded concrete physical unit. Therefore when the Office of the Prime Minister talks of the rapid changes in Thai society making 'the family' and people's 'spiritual and moral well being' 'suffer' (Office of the PM 1992, p160 quoted in Brody 2000) and that the 'traditional way of life, guided by values, beliefs and cultural systems of the past is giving way to economic rationality, resulting in problems of lack of family warmth, of sense of sharing and of caring for children and the elderly" (Ibid), it is necessary to look at just what is meant by the 'Thai family'. From my time spent in Thailand, it is clear that the family and the idea of the family is the foundation from which many constructions of community and nation is built. Idealised images of the 'Thai family' are reproduced in popular television soap operas, advertisements and in school text books. However, living in rural Mukdahan where a 'culture of migration' has a long history, families are often dispersed over long distances with members remaining in the city for extended periods of time. One of the departure points of this chapter is that it is this very fragmentation of the 'family' that has allowed its continuation and reproduction.

This has implications for those who view rapid change and migration as a corrupting force making people "suffer" causing families to "lack warmth". This is what Brass (2000) calls the 'agrarian myth' whereby the rural peasantry is idealized as timeless, as argued in previous chapters (chapter 2). The rural populace and idealized images of 'the farmer' as 'the backbone of the nation' is central to this agrarian myth in Thailand. Any notion of change is therefore a threat to this and therefore to the Nation. What I show in this chapter is that people, especially those in the Northeast, can no longer survive on agriculture alone and so diversification is a necessary means for its survival. Idealised images and ideals such as the 'sufficiency economy' viewpoint and Localism are also highlighted as romanticised as

contemporary villagers aspire to diversify from farming and expand their portfolio of income generating activities.

7.3 Case Study A: The Kampadee Family: Accumulation, Diversification and Education

The family tree below (Figure 32) illustrates the Kampadee family, now one of the richest families in Ban Dong. Unlike the Khamyod family described in chapter 5 this family does not have siblings in various cohorts which can provide help and support to parents and younger siblings. Rather the Kampadee family have built up their wealth from the diversification and expansion of their agricultural activities as well as international migration. What is more there has been a 'nucleation' of the family in this case, which has raised fundamental questions about the continuation of the 'family farm'. This is therefore relevant to my conceptual framework introduced in Chapter 2, there is a question concerning the future viability of the family farm and the ability of younger generations to work it.

Figure 32: The Kempedee Family Tree
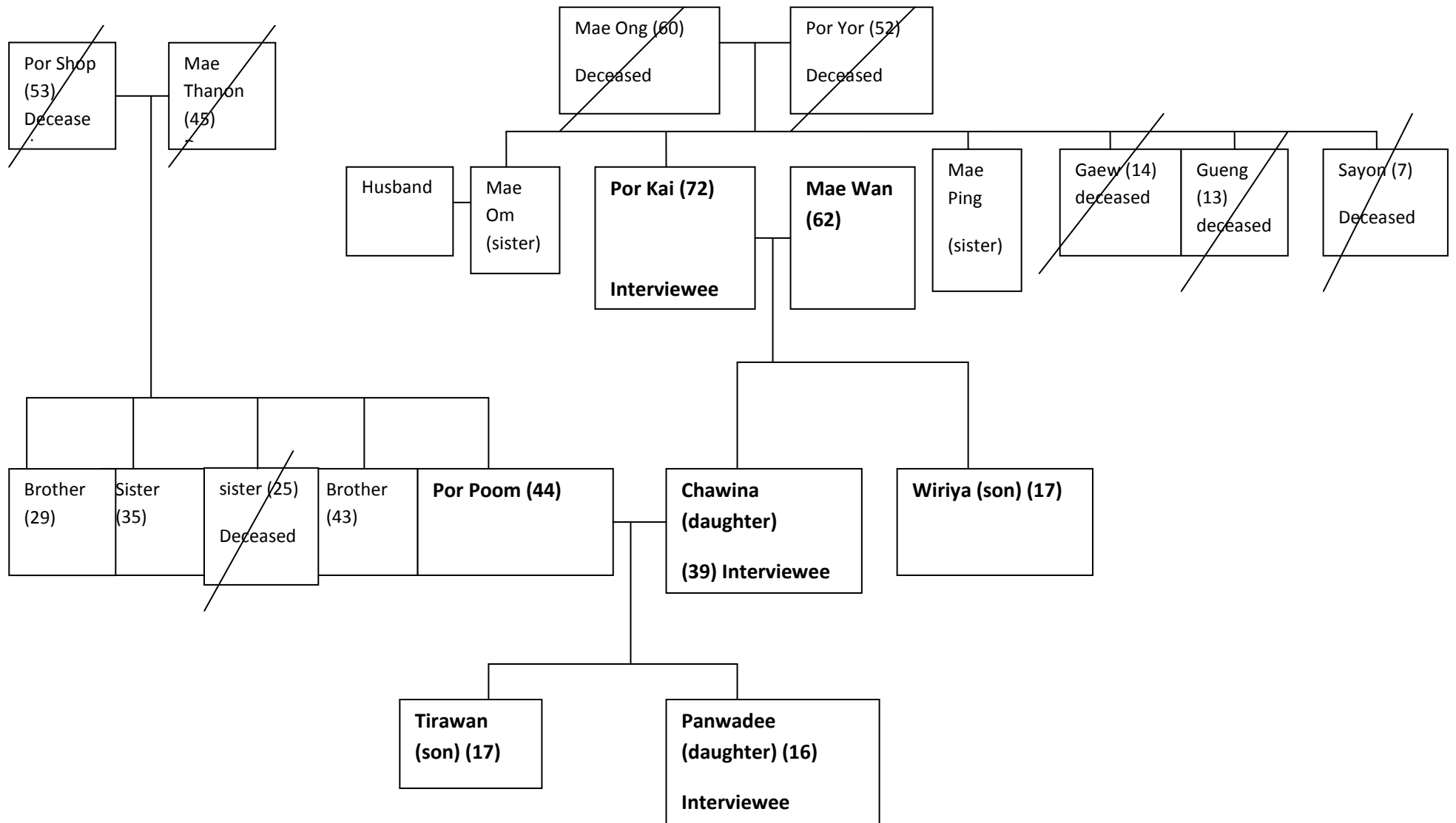
Por Kai is now 72 and was not born in Ban Dong. He married into the village (his life history was described in the previous chapter). His wife, Mae Wan is 10 years his junior. They married after Por Kai had returned from 9 years of migrating to work as a hired labourer on a road construction project in the South of Thailand. He did not save any money whilst away. When he married he lived with his wife's family in Ban Dong. After living there just 4 years his family had to move into the forest as they were part of the Communist insurgency movement. Whilst part of the insurgency Por Kai's wife and daughter were trained in nursing. His daughter was 15 when they left the forest and continued to treat villagers and give injections. Also because of his high position within the communist ranks, Por Kai was chosen as Tambon Physician (recording deaths, determining the cause and writing reports) by the village head and received a monthly salary of 1,400 baht.

With the close association with nursing and health it is therefore not surprising that now Por Kai's grand daughter, Panwadee, applied for a scholarship to study nursing at a local college and then has hopes to go to Khon Kaen University. In my last few weeks of fieldwork I heard from her that she won the scholarship from the NGO WorldVision. I was not sure who was more excited, her or Por Kai. Although at the age of 72, Por Kai was the obvious mastermind behind a member of the family entering into nursing. It is not only a respectable position and a job with security, but one that will allow his granddaughter to have the opportunity to work close by to the village, thereby increasing the long term future and security of the whole family.

Going back to the time when the insurgency ended, Mae Wan's parents had died and so they began rebuilding their house. Today it is a large house with a large area to the side for storage and to park their pick up truck and enough room at the back for their livestock. As well as rebuilding their house, they also extended their agricultural land. Por Kai explained that when he first moved to the village his family only had 6 rai of land, but that when everyone came back to the village a lot of the forest was cleared to make way for new crops, this is similar to Por's expansion in the Khamyod family.

Today the Kampadee family have 60 rai of land in a distant part of the village, another 20 rai near the river close by, Mae Wan has another 10 rai that was originally her parents', a further 20 rai further away in another village and 5 rai near their house in Ban Dong which they use to grow rice for subsistence. In all the Kampadee family owns 115 rai of land, none of which he rents out. He explained to me that he uses all of it, the 20 rai near the river he used to grow rubber and cassava plantations. He invested in rubber seedlings 3 years ago. To minimise risk, he still plants cassava on half of the land in order to secure a yearly income until the rubber is ready to harvest. This is a risk minimising strategy that many households who can afford to diversity into rubber are doing. The rest of the land has been given ('*hai*') to his daughter and son-in-law. Not all of this land is actively utilized, "*one year we will grow on 2 rai, and the next year another 2 rai*", as the upland soil prevents year after year utilization.

His daughter and son-in-law are the only cohort in this household that have the knowledge and capability to work the land. Por Kai's son is only 18 and is still in school and his grandchildren are 16 and 17 years old and are also still in full time education. Por Kai explained that from now on he will stop working on his land himself as he was getting too old. He will let his daughter and her husband grow the crops. Instead he will concentrate on raising his 14 cattle, 7 buffalo and family of pigs which he took great care in showing me, explaining that each piglet would be worth a lot of money once it had been raised, and so was a very profitable business. The family life cycle has therefore just changed in line with members of the household ageing[44]. Por Kai relinquished his duties as a heavy labourer and transferred his knowledge and expertise into raising livestock. This is something which he can do into his old age, providing him with autonomy and security now that his land has been transferred to younger members of the family farm. The worker-dependency ratio is 3 workers (Por Kai, Por Poom and Chawina) to 4 dependents (Mae Wan, and her youngest son

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[44] I arrived at this point through the work of Chayanov (writing in 1925 Russia) and his ideas over worker-dependency ratios. He argued peasant households will only produce the food that they need to survive. Chayanov argued that the higher the ratio of dependents to workers in a household, the harder the workers had to work. Peasants would work for survival and once these needs were met there was no incentive beyond this and so their work would slow down. Thus subsistence farming will not develop into capitalist farms without an external catalyst. Peasant livelihoods are seen to be opposed to capitalism because families work to survive, rather than for profit. There is no separation between capital and labour.

and 2 grandchildren). Por Kai will keep working in order to support the survival of his family until his youngest son and grandchildren have finished school and can support themselves. Once the dependency-work ratio has lowered he can then lessen his work duties. At this moment in the family life cycle the Kampedee family is at an advantageous position. The children are about to leave school and move from consumer to workers. This would reduce the worker-dependent ratio to 6:1. Whilst Por Kai imagines the life cycle to be good, he will invest to protect his family if any shocks happen in the future. Therefore intergenerational transfers and dependency ratios are intimately bound up and are an integral part of the Thai welfare regime.

The son-in-law of Por Kai is Por Poom. Like other members of his cohort access to education were low and he only completed Patom 4 (this is less than primary education which is now standard level of Patom 6). However his varied experience as an agricultural labourer in Southern Thailand has given him plentiful knowledge for diversifying the family farm. The farm was once dependent of cassava production, but he diversified into rubber, which is currently fetching a high price in the market. As well as this experience Por Poom has spent many years working abroad, in Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei. The contacts that he made during this time have enabled Por Poom to offer advice to young men in his kinship group within Ban Dong wishing to work abroad. When I was last talking to him, he was helping one of his relatives prepare to leave for Singapore the following week.

The Kampadee family compared to others in Ban Dong, are comparatively secure in their livelihoods. The older cohorts own a lot of land, have diversified their crops, invested in livestock and are widely respected in the community. This social standing has come from Por Kai's involvement in the Communist insurgency, and then this experience led him to become a medical officer for the state, and an accountant in village affairs. After his retirement Por Kai felt more at ease and respected by villagers, "*when I was a leader people gossiped about me and my family, but now I am a farmer and now no one gossips about us*". The label of being 'a farmer' is thus an important one for the security of the family in the village. However, if one is to have respect then being 'only a farmer' is not enough, experience in other areas is essential in the building up of family resources, for those in older cohorts if

you are born a farmer then generally whatever you do in between, most feel secure in coming back to it.

The future of farming in the Kampadee family is secure for the time being. The farm is now being worked by Por Poom and Chawina (Por Kai's daughter) who are in their 40's. It is the next cohort however, that is in question. Chawina's younger brother Wiriya is 17 and Por Kai has invested in his education heavily. Unlike Wiriya, Chawina who is now 39, could not continue her education because of the communist insurgency. Therefore Wiriya is in a better position as he is young enough to benefit from the improved access to transport and education. His father Por Kai hopes that he will go to university "*I hope my son and grandchildren will go to university and study at a high level (rien soung). If they don't study they will be foolish and they won't know about things. If they study they can work in a good job and work in a good place*". Therefore, whilst for older cohorts the idea of farming is acceptable, the implicit bargains made between cohorts is to ultimately educate their children so that they are not so dependent on farming, and maybe even leave the land completely, as the quote from Rigg at the beginning of this chapter illustrates.

The example from this family has illustrated the use of simple vertical intergenerational bargains whereby the parents have invested in their children. The children have inherited the land and now are looking after their parents.

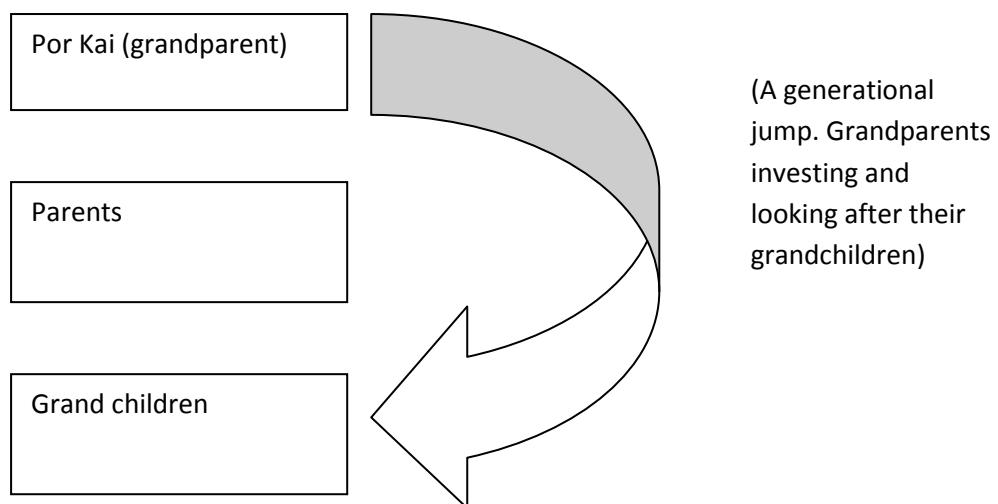
(Vertical intergenerational bargain)
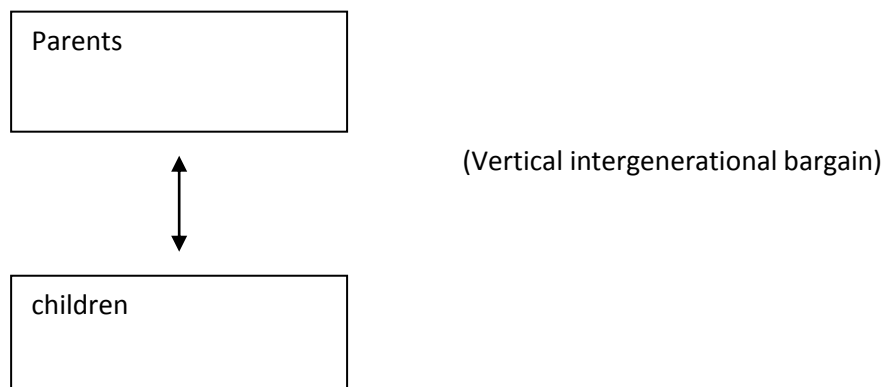
There are also examples of horizontal intra-generational bargains whereby older siblings invest in younger ones, as in the case of Por Poom and his wife Chawina helping their younger brother Wiriya who is still at school and is a similar age to their own children.

(Horizontal intra-generational bargains)

Poor Poom and his wife Chawina	←——————→	Younger brother Wiriya
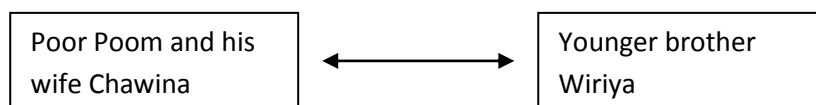
Lastly, there are also generational jumps, as Por Kai is investing in his grandchildren as well as his son who are all still in school and will be attending university. The family farm has already been given to his eldest daughter Chawina and her husband Por Poom. Therefore Por Kai's son and his grandchildren are being heavily invested in through formal education in order to secure formal jobs, which will in turn benefit the rest of the family.

Por Kai (grandparent)

Parents

Grand children

(A generational jump. Grandparents investing and looking after their grandchildren)
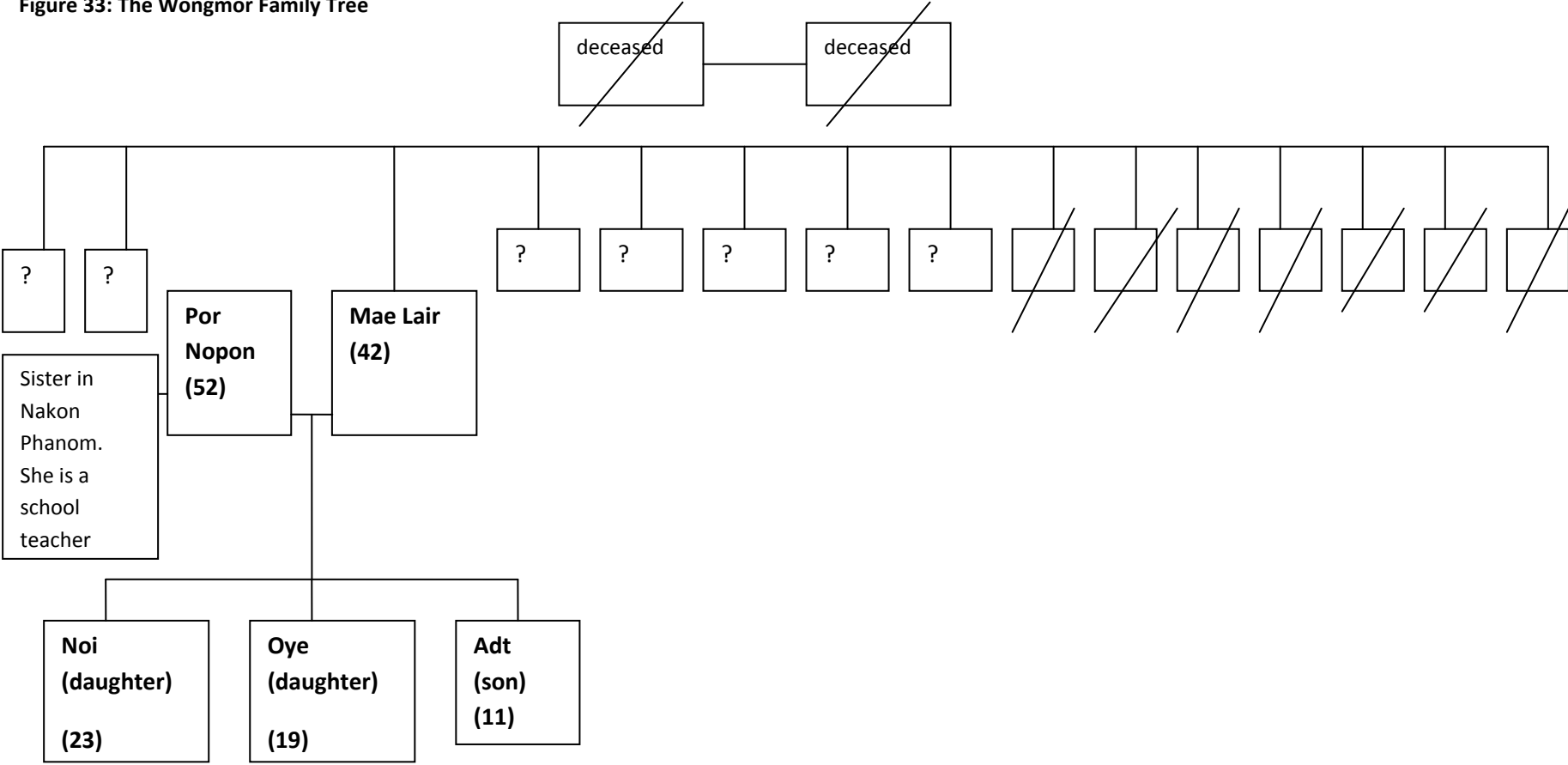
7.4 Case Study B: The Wongmor Family: A Mix of Formal and Agricultural

The Wongmor family lived opposite to the Khamyod family that I lived with in the village. I was always curious as to why the household compound was so quiet. Usually only Mae Lair would be around tidying, collecting forest products and eating lunch with us looking after her 11 year old son Adt (see family tree, figure 33 below). Her husband is from Amphur Phonsawan in the neighbouring province of Nakon Phanom. He works as an army communications officer in the town of That Phamon. He lives there during the week and returns to Ban Dong only at weekends. Their other two daughters are both in Bangkok.

This is a small, nuclear family within the village. They are a rich household within the village due to Por Nopon working in the formal sector as a government officer. There have been various inter- and intra-generational transfers of resources within the family over the years. The family life cycle had its ups and downs. When villagers started planting cassava plantations over 20 years ago this household had a limited supply of labour as their eldest daughter was just 1 year old at this point, and Por Nopon was working in the nearby town. Mae Lair started the cassava plantation. She was proud talking of how she started it herself with the help of the 'luam grum' (cassava group which sold cassava to a factory in Roi-et Province). She had now been growing it for 20 years and can produce 10 tonnes of cassava, yielding an income of approximately 10,000bht. This along with her husband's salary and the rice that is shared out between her siblings for subsistence as well as collecting forest products has been enough for the family to gradually build a new house.

Now the two eldest daughters have grown up and have jobs in Bangkok the family has the additional income from remittances. The family is at its height of income production which will last until one of the daughters gets married and starts her own family.

Figure 33: The Wongmor Family Tree

deceased — deceased

? ? | ? ? ? ? ? | ⌀ ⌀ ⌀ ⌀ ⌀ ⌀ ⌀

Por Nopon (52) — **Mae Lair (42)**

Sister in Nakon Phanom. She is a school teacher

Noi (daughter) (23) | **Oye (daughter) (19)** | **Adt (son) (11)**

Mae Lair's two eldest daughters grew up seeing their mother work hard cultivating cassava and collecting forest resources. Noi the eldest daughter (her life history is in Chapter 6) was sent to live with her aunt who is a teacher in the nearby town because it was difficult for Mae Lair to work the farm and look after her daughter at the same time. Education for both children was important, and much like the Kampadee family, education has meant that both daughters have since migrated to work in Bangkok. When talking with both of these daughters both Noi and Oye spoke of the hardship they saw their mother go through when they were growing up and this was their primary reason for going to Bangkok. They wanted to earn money so that their mother, in her old age, does not have to work the land any more. Both girls are hopeful that they will save enough money for their household to open a shop in the village so that their mother can earn a living 'comfortably'.

The responsibility of carrying on the family farm falls on their younger brother, Adt. As Noi explained to me "*I can't work in the sun, I get tired and can't stand it, once when I grew cassava I fainted*". The hard work of the farm then is left to her younger brother. Both Mae Lair and her daughters spoke to me about how they worried about Adt's attention to study in school, he was getting low grades and so the assumption was that he would eventually look after the family farm. Noi however, stated that she was hoping he would open a garage in the village and repair motorbikes, and that she would save money for this. This arrangement is unlike many traditional inheritance patterns of Thai families which assume the youngest daughter inherits the family house and has the main responsibility of providing for parents in old age.

Noi and Oye are the middle cohort within the family, and like Pam and Took in the Khamyod family have had to deal with the triple burden of both providing remittances for their parents (Noi currently sends back 2,000bht per month back home) and saving and investing for the future, not just for themselves but their families. Thus they are gaining security both directly, by remittances and savings, but also indirectly because the money they save and invest in the future businesses of their mother and brother will indirectly benefit them. So when Noi states she wants to return to the village when she is 40 and live with her family her return will be a secure one. This is because she would have provided the means of her

mother's and brother's businesses and would be able to rely upon them when she returned back to the village.

The two sisters Oye and Noi are also involved in business on the side, with their aunt in Nakon Phanom. Noi used to live and study there and Oye sometimes works for her aunt. The aunt is a school teacher, but her family also run a small gift and clothes shop. This is the only shop of its kind in the small town. Noi regularly sends large bags of yellow 'we love the King' shirts, wrist bands and toys to stock the shop that she buys from discounted markets in Bangkok. She sends them by bus to her aunt, and her aunt sells them at a small profit. Their success in this business has inspired them to start saving enough money to open their own family-run gift shop in Ban Dong.

The Wongmor family have gradually moved away from a reliance on agriculture. It is only Mae Lair that invests her time heavily for her cassava crops. Por Nopon is secure with his position as a government officer. Noi has a secure and formal job as an administrator for a fiberglass factory in Bangkok (see her life history in the previous chapter) and Oye also works in a toy shop in Bangkok for short periods of time. There are no plans to expand their cassava fields, but their younger brother Adt will take responsibility for these once Mae Lair retires. Therefore the family farm will still exist and be there to fall back on. However it will never be the main source of income for the family. Accumulation strategies fall firmly within the non-agricultural sector with plans to open a shop and garage in the village. Both sisters plan on staying in Bangkok for a long period of time as there is no viable livelihood for them in Ban Dong until they can save enough money to start their own businesses.

This family has many strategies in order to achieve more security and accumulation. They have invested in vertical intergenerational bargains whereby the parents have invested in their children and now the children are of working age they are sending remittances back to the village. In addition there are horizontal intra-generational bargains whereby the two eldest daughters are working and supporting their younger brother and strategising the family business plan. Also there are diagonal transfers whereby aunts and uncles are looking after their nieces and this enables even more security and to widen their networks which will   be   beneficial   for   future   investments.

7.5 Case Study C: The Sooksabai Family; A Nucleated Family of Fractured Obligations

The Sooksabai family, like the Khamyods are one of the largest in the village. This household however, lives away from the main parental household unit, living in a small one room hut high up on stilts to the back of the main house. They do however share kitchen space with the main household and this provides them with support and also means that they have to contribute to the daily meals. This is perhaps why every day when I walked past Yim (her life history is in Chapter 6), the 32 year old wife of this household, she was in her wellington boots and balaclava with a net in one hand containing edible insects and a bag on the other shoulder ready for storing bamboo shoots for that evening's bamboo curry, which was eaten nearly every night by their family.

Yim was not born in Ban Dong, she is from Sukothai in the Central region of Thailand (See her life history in Chapter 6). She met her husband Lampon when they were both working in Bangkok. This is becoming more popular now and it is common for a member of a young married household to be from a distant province. One of the many topics of discussion during my life history interviews, informal discussions and focus groups was on what the village would be like in the future. A common response was that there would be more people living there, because increasing migration meant increasing marriages with people from other places, rather than surrounding villages and the couples would then come back to settle in Ban Dong. Usually it is customary for the husband to settle in the wife's village or household. However, Yim had chosen to move to Ban Dong once they had tried living in Udon Thani where her parents now stay but her husband did not like it there without friends or a job. Her family in Udon owned a shop and noodle stand and so their labour was not needed. Therefore it made sense to move back to Ban Dong where their labour could help with the family farm. Yim was also one of the oldest children in her family and so she felt she could leave the responsibility of looking after her mother to her younger sister, and now that her father has died, her mother has since moved into her sister's household.

Lampon comes from a large family in Ban Dong, with so many siblings his family's land has yet to be divided up. The land still belongs to Lampon's grandparents and the profit from the

cassava is the family's as a whole. Both Lampon and Yim have to work as hired labourers on other families land in order for them to earn a cash income. However the demand for labour is weak and sometimes it is days before someone requests their help. They have tried to overcome this problem by renting four rai of land, one of which is for rice for subsistence needs and the other three is for cassava. However this has ended in them being in debt and currently the loan they took out for a new sowing machine is proving too much of a burden.
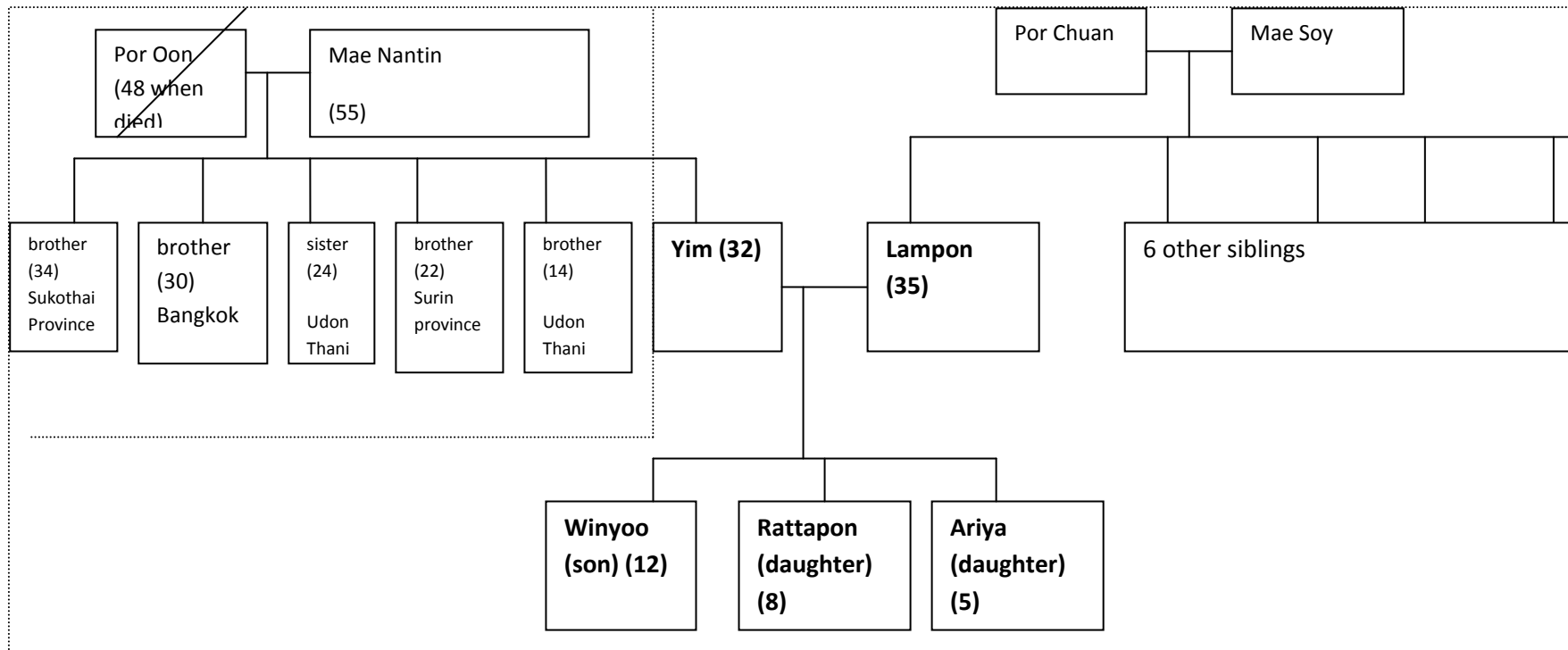
This insecurity has meant that in the past they have resorted to migrating to other provinces in order to gain a cash income. Lampon sporadically works in a sugar factory in Khon Kaen Province and Yim goes with him, working nearby in a laundry shop and sometimes getting hired by the factory canteen to make lunch for the workers. They live in a small tent near the factory and take their 3 young children with them. Yim spoke at length about the conditions and how she was unhappy living away from her home in Ban Dong which was comparatively clean and large. This meant migration of this sort only lasts a few months at a time, the conditions were hard and their children had to return to go to school back in the village. Sometimes Yim migrates to work in other factories by herself, but always returns to the village within a month or two because she misses her husband and children.

Unlike the previous households mentioned, migration for the Sooksabai family has been less about accumulation and more a survival tactic, with Yim coming from a family that does not have land she has had the insecurity of not being able to eventually inherit anything. Her husband also has the insecurity of knowing that his family's land is not enough for all of his siblings to make a living from in the future. He is not the youngest in his family and so has not been able to benefit from living in his parents' large well-established house and has had to build his own smaller house in the family compound. For now then, this household is locked into insecurity, indebtedness and poverty. The family life cycle is at a stage where both elderly parents are alive and young children are starting education and are needing more provisions. The dependency ratio is high and Yim and her husband are struggling to make a living. This has ended in arguments with her husband's family and at one stage this meant Yim's household moved out of Ban Don and back to Udon Thani for a few months until disputes were settled.

Yim and Lampon's household will likely continue this livelihood strategy until a time whereby they either inherit land from older members of the family, or until their children are old enough to start earning their own income. Yim explained to me that she wanted her children to finish high school "*I want my children to finish Matayom 6 (high school) because now I'm poor, I want my children to take care of me when I'm old or if I get sick".* Investment in children is therefore one of the most likely ways Yim and her husband can ensure at least some kind of old age security. As Rigg states in the case of rural villagers in South East Asia "investing in your children is as good as investing in a pension scheme" (Rigg, 2001).

However, the capabilities for investment in their children's education are limited due to the cycle of indebtedness and frequent migration. Now with better educational opportunities closer to the village the villagers can benefit from a high school in the nearest town and many children get scholarships and clothing and book subsidies in order to carry on studying. Yim and Lampon have decided to invest in their children's futures, rather than invest in their parents' and siblings' farms and business as the land owned by Lampon's parents is limited and not enough for all the siblings to inherit. This has resulted in fractured obligations to their larger family network and all investments are concentrated within the small nuclear family of just Yim, Lampon and their three children. This leaves the family with a simple strategy of vertical generational bargains whereby their children are expected to provide for their parents in old age.

Figure 34: The Sooksabai Family Tree

Por Oon (48 when died)	Mae Nantin (55)		Por Chuan	Mae Soy	

| brother (34) Sukothai Province | brother (30) Bangkok | sister (24) Udon Thani | brother (22) Surin province | brother (14) Udon Thani | Yim (32) | Lampon (35) | 6 other siblings |

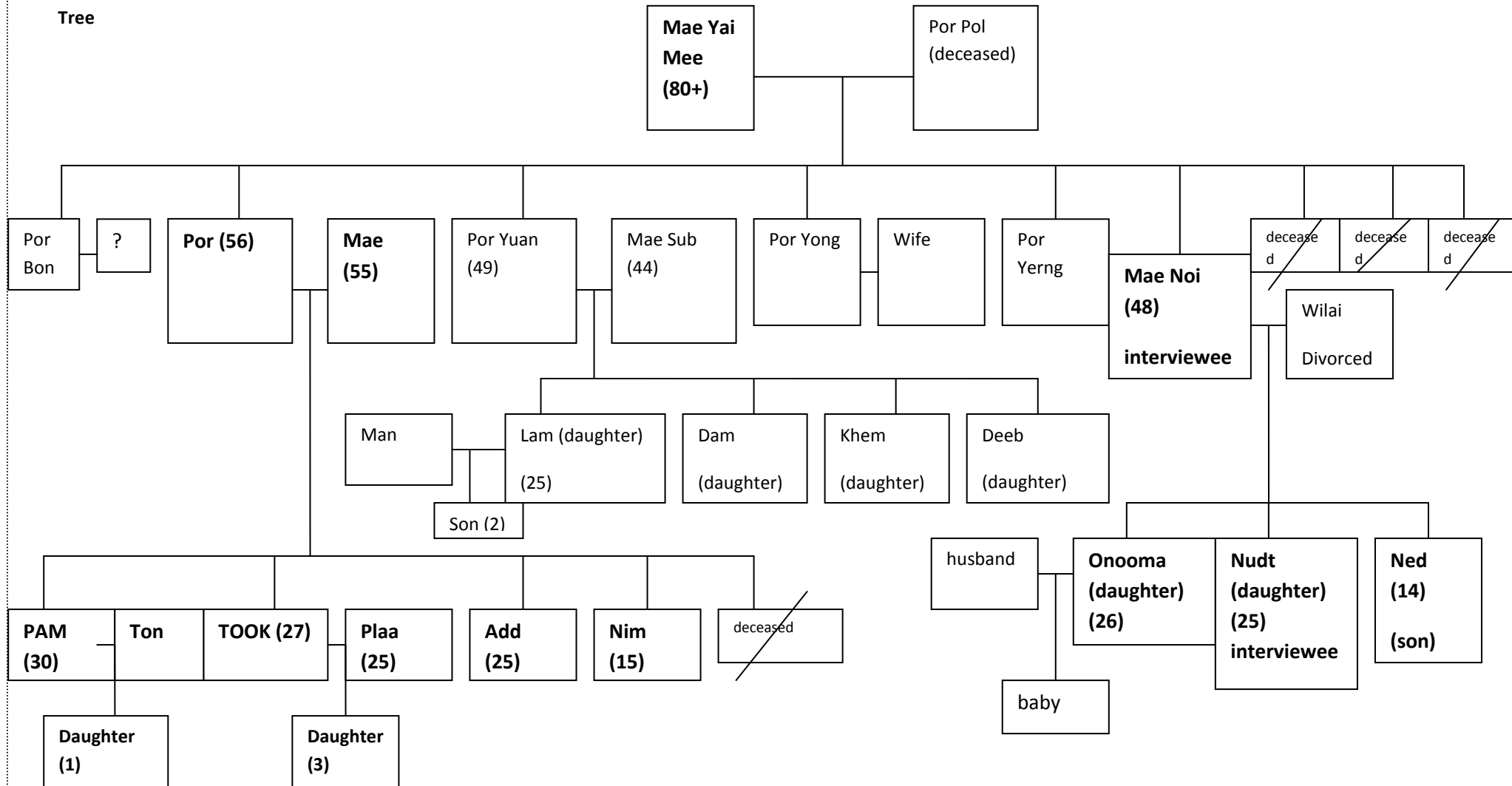| Winyoo (son) (12) | Rattapon (daughter) (8) | Ariya (daughter) (5) |

7.6 Case Study D: The Khamyod Family

The case of the household I have lived with during most of my fieldwork in the village has already been well documented in the thesis and so in this case study I concentrate on the their larger kinship network and also intra-generational bargains made between siblings.

Firstly, from the diagram below (see figure 35) the effect of demographic change on household structure is noticeable. Mae Yai Mee had a total of 9 children, 3 of whom died when they were young. When these children grew up they in turn had fewer children, usually around 3 to 5 and currently, these children are starting families of their own, they are having fewer children, with those choosing to live in the city for work just having 1 child. The nucleation of households is happening and so family structure and relationships are also changing. As well as the increase in nuclear households, spatial fragmentation is also occurring. Many family members in the diagram are living in cities earning a wage, but they are still considered members of the household as they still provide income for those 'left behind' and still have decision making influence.

Figure 35: The Khamyod Kinship Group Family Tree

Mae Yai Mee (80+) — Por Pol (deceased)

Por Bon — ?

Por (56) — Mae (55)

Por Yuan (49) — Mae Sub (44)

Por Yong — Wife

Por Yerng — Mae Noi (48) interviewee

deceased, deceased, deceased

Wilai Divorced

Man — Lam (daughter) (25)

Son (2)

Dam (daughter)

Khem (daughter)

Deeb (daughter)

PAM (30) — Ton — TOOK (27) — Plaa (25) — Add (25) — Nim (15) — deceased

Daughter (1)

Daughter (3)

husband — Onooma (daughter) (26)

Nudt (daughter) (25) interviewee

Ned (14) (son)

baby

248

For example Pam has been living in the city for 18 years. Her husband comes from Bang Pa-in (a factory town near Bangkok in Ayuttaya Province). They have recently bought a house there and they have made the decision to keep their baby with them rather than, as more and more now do, let their parents take care of the child whilst they keep working. She is the eldest daughter of the family and so is aware that it is her responsibility to provide for the family. As illustrated in her life history in the introduction of this thesis, she enabled her younger sister Took also to migrate to the city and provided her with free accommodation, food and knowledge. Both Pam and Took have also helped their other family and kinship group members find jobs in Bang Pa-in. They let their cousins Onooma and Nudt (see family tree, figure 35) stay with them when they first arrived in the city. They also have helped other relatives from a neighbouring province to find work. When I was staying with Took in Bang Pa-in a younger cousin from her mother's side of the family was staying with them and causing them stress because of his drinking and not sending money back home to their aunt.

Once Pam got married the responsibility of sending remittances fell on Took because Pam was now having to save for her own family. Once Took was married and had a daughter (now 3 years old, and lives with her husband's mother in his village in Nakon Phanom), this responsibility fell on Add their younger brother and so he was encouraged by them to work in the city. He lived with his eldest sister but has never managed to stay more than 3 months in the city at a time.

Today, Add is still having disputes with his sisters about the nature of his duties. They want him to return to Bang Pa-in, but he refuses to go. When I found out about these disputes between them it was in the run up to the Songkran festival. We were collecting fire wood from the forest and Add was very quiet and seemed stressed. I asked him why he was so sad when everyone else was excited about Pam and Took's return. He explained that his eldest sister Pam had phoned him, asking him to return to the city with her after the festival was over and that they had an argument and so he was not looking forward to seeing her.

Add had disagreed with his sisters about the nature of his duties. They wanted him to return to the city in order for him to earn an income to send back to the village and ease their burdens. However, Add felt he was more valuable to his parents as a labourer for their cassava plantation, as a hunter and provider (as his parents were too busy and old to be going hunting) and as a protector of his younger sister Nim. He remembered how his older sisters had been there for him when he was younger and was worried that no one would be there to advise and keep watch over Nim. Nim was currently a worry to all of the family for her outgoing attitude, her unending requests for money and tomboy appearance. In the city however, Add explained that he felt uneasiness at working in a factory or as a security guard, working to get money was not what he felt made him happy, or what his family needed back home.

Perceptions on the nature of duties and responsibilities were ultimately linked to future expectations. Add was the only sibling to show any interest in agriculture and so the future of the family farm was dependent on him. Although inheritance of the land usually goes to the youngest daughter, Por and Mae explained that they wanted Nim to finish Commercial College and work for local government. This strategy ensured that one of their daughters was likely to stay nearer the family home and that the future of their land would be in good hands with Add.

7.7 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter had been to show the changing nature of family life and the varied trajectories they follow and bargains members make between each other. The family is far from a static institution in Thailand. It is continually being produced and re-produced as my findings illustrate. Previous studies have represented families 'back home' as static units, upholding natural traditional 'moral' values, encouraging their children to migrate and diversify their incomes in the search for security and in turn those members that have left the confines of the village have been corrupted by urban modernising forces, resulting in domestic and moral breakdown. There has been other work as well as this thesis that has continually illustrated that migration is not necessarily a precursor to this, and that 'simply because households are physically separated does not mean that they stop being

households' (Gardner, 1995, p121). Pasuk (1984) in her study of masseuses in Bangkok also argues that migration and household diversification is actually reinforcing family ties and identity as remittances are sent home to rebuild houses and educate younger siblings, much like the households in this study.

As the beginning of this chapter discussed, the family as an institution is very strong in the Thai context. There is a heavy reliance on the family for transfers of resources. The 'family' therefore acts as a private strategy for the survival and security of its members. The institution is being perpetuated by its members because of their awareness and foresight of the future and the need to meet inter- and more frequently intra-generational responsibilities. There are some tensions. Most previous studies have commented on the tensions between parents and their daughters, but I find that it is also between sibling cohorts where there are most disputes and tensions as older siblings would like to lessen their obligations to their parents and let younger cohorts take over some of their responsibilities so that they can invest in their own children (as illustrated in the Khamyod family).

CHAPTER 8   REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Introduction

This thesis has been an investigation into how rural villagers negotiate their livelihoods, so as to ensure their wellbeing within an insecure political economy and institutional landscape. In particular, the research setting of Thailand was chosen as a prime example of an unsettled society undergoing rapid change over a very short period of time, leading the country to have one of the most unequal societies in the world (Atiya Achakulwisit, Bangkok Post, 2010). Another aim of this research endeavour was to consider these findings in the context of current fierce debates with regards to: social change, welfare provision and the role of institutions, as covered in the literature review in Chapter 2. In Chapter 4 I gave an overview of the history of Ban Dong, which highlighted the collective protest and institutional changes in the village and the fact that migration has been an ongoing activity for exerting agency. In the following three findings chapters detailed analysis of migration and the life course experiences of the villagers in Ban Dong was presented. An Actor Oriented approach (Long, 2001) was used in conjunction with a Wellbeing Regime approach (Wood, 2007; Copestake and Wood, 2008), both of which emphasise relationships and socio-cultural constructions in the explanation of behaviour. This treatment also allows for actors' agency to be placed at the centre of analysis, rather than the focus being on structures and state-market analysis. Whilst structures have not been at the centre of analysis they have been important in the explanation of the nature and extent of actor's agency, Chapters 2 and 4 illustrated the complex nature of deep structures socially, economically and historically.

This conclusions chapter will firstly reflect on the empirical and methodological findings of this thesis. The next section will discuss what implications these findings have for theories of migration, social change, wellbeing and Thai studies. Then lastly, the limitations and main contributions of this research will be highlighted.

8.2 Empirical and Methodological Reflections

In chapters 2 and 4 it was contended that Hirschman's 'exit, voice and loyalty' framework could prove helpful for analysing local level welfare arrangements, for as Copestake and Wood (2008) point out, many families combine all three options in a single survival portfolio. That is, within this typology of options actors can migrate (exit), engage in collective action and protest (voice), and/or invest in relationships of patronage/ loyalty to political parties/rich others (loyalty). Migration was taken as an 'exit' strategy. However, in light of the research findings, it is suggested that these do not simply involve exit in the literal sense, but are complex strategies for enabling security. In particular, it is noted that the option of 'exit' does not involve permanent removal from the setting, but villagers leave for a certain period in order to return in a better position in terms of their wellbeing, and therefore involved aspects of 'loyalty', especially to family. The typology of 'exit, voice and loyalty' for the case of my participants is therefore not adequate, as there are multiple loyalties; to the family and village but also to wider systems of the economy and to modern consumption and in relation to experiences in the city. Moreover, these loyalties vary depending on the actors involved, for example: elder siblings, younger sibling, brothers and sisters. Further, there have also been loyal activities carried out with some reluctance, such as when some participants went to the city for jobs to help their siblings and/or parents but because they did not want to trade off their freedom in the village (as in the cases of Add and Rod), returned as soon as was possible. Also, regarding the conceptual sphere there has been much evidence suggesting that the 'village' and 'city' are blurred as villagers cross these conceptual boundaries multiple times and live their lives in both.

In general, the concept of 'exit' is highly problematic as respondents even when migrating for a decade have not been losing their attachment to the village and still made investments back home, at the same time some have yet to return permanently. In this regard, it has emerged that the exit strategies being used do not entail unidirectional movement and rather, many of the respondents explained how they leave the village for months and sometimes years, but none of them considered this as being migration[45], as described in the methodology chapter (chapter 3). That is, they pointed out that no one from the village migrated for they only went to another place to work '*pai tam*

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[45] Either op-pai-op (migration/resettlement) or yai-tin-tan (migration, academic term), either respondents didn't know what these meant or disputed that this is what they were doing.

ngan[46]', temporarily. This is echoed in Pam's life history in the introduction to this thesis, where she stated that Bang Pa-in where she worked in a factory near Bangkok for over 10 years was 'like her office for work', but that Ban Dong was her home and that is where she belonged. These findings concur with previous Thai migration research which highlighted the circulatory and temporary nature of Thai migration patterns (see Parnwell 1993, 1996, 2002 and Lightfoot and Fuller, 1983).In addition, the participants in this study were loyal to their ideas of the village and family, acting in ways to re-fashion the village by: setting up shops, buying land, diversifying and investing in the education of younger siblings. As such, it would appear that they have not been reproducing more of the same but they are taking the village forward by using innovative strategies, thereby resulting in a reconfiguration of traditional forms of exit and loyalty that existed when the village community was less mobile. Also, the participants in this study have exhibited multiple voices expressing a plurality of thoughts and actions that reflect their various historical experiences. In particular in this regard, gender and generational differences have emerged as being key factors for the distinctions in the ways that the villagers negotiate, construct and re-construct their livelihoods and environment.

In chapter 5 the empirical results illustrated the rapid social, economic and agricultural changes that have been affecting villagers. With respect to this, there was evidence that parents in providing inter-generational transfers of investment, especially education to the young, have, in part, contributed to the shift in aspirations and the de-agrarianisation process (Rigg, 2001). Perhaps of more relevance to the research aims, in this chapter the patterns of temporary migration experienced by villagers were also ascertained. In this regard, in the past the older cohorts had left for long periods of time and comprised mainly males, whereas amongst the middle cohorts females would appear to have been playing a much greater role in income generation. Younger cohorts are also choosing to engage in temporary migratory behaviour, but when compared to their older cohorts it emerged that they are oscillating more frequently between distant work opportunities and home. From the villagers' narratives this situation seems to be as a result of the younger generations being less willing to trade off the perceived greater freedom they have in the village (due to elder siblings migration) for extended work commitments that are often highly regimented with poor conditions of service, especially in the case of the males. Regarding the latter, these respondents expressed the view that they feel they do not have 'freedom' (*it-sa-ra*) when working in the city and prefer to work for themselves and their community in the village on their own terms.

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[46] Pai tam ngan literally means 'go to work'.

In chapter 6, the life cycle aspect of migration was investigated. Here, the evidence from respondents belonging to the older generations indicated that they usually eventually came back to settle in Ban Dong, thus underlining the temporary nature of their exit and their multiple loyalties. This brings forward the question as to whether the members of the younger generations will continue to return to the village in the future. With respect to this, the life histories of the younger generations suggest that all younger respondents have investments within the village and most plan to go back to: set up a business, buy land or return to work on their parents' land. In other words, there is little evidence that these generations, at present, are intending to abandon the village and rather they are planning a return that will give security to both them individually as well as meeting family obligations. In chapter 6 the focus on individual life histories enabled an understanding of individual choices and strategies from respondents' perspectives. From these it transpired that some individuals have been very successful: Por Kai has become one of the richest people in Ban Dong, Oat has made future investments in rubber plantations and Noi has achieved her dream of a secure job in a formal company. Moreover, on first analysing the data, I became cognisant that small successes in the respondents' lives, even those who remained indebted and poor, were positive gains no matter how small. However, on further reflection as I became more distant from respondents, I realized that many of the poorer respondents have become somewhat trapped in temporary oscillating migration patterns that take the form of a circle of insecurity. For instance, even though Yim migrates periodically for income, taking her children with her and her husband, it is not enough to pay off her debts, nor achieve any savings. As a result of her actions, her children miss days at school, which undermines her espoused strategy of investing in her children so that they get good jobs. Rod is another example of an individual unable to create a surplus for investment for despite his efforts in migrating, his stays in the city have only been temporary thus he has not been able to save. At the end of chapter 6, I came to the conclusion from the empirical results that migration is not a single act in time, but is a social process, with the participants involving themselves in whatever strategies, in theory, would help them to improve wellbeing and be successful. Suffice it to say, that the life histories of all the respondents have involved both ups and downs, but given the overall optimistic attitude pervading much of the village, even many of the poorer respondents have not lost hope that things will improve in the future.

Turning to chapter 7, this was focused on the family and the case studies reported on here illustrated that the only way many can meet intergenerational bargains is for certain family members to migrate for significantly long periods of time. In addition, the findings showed that not

only are there intergenerational bargains to increase family security, but also intra-generational bargains between siblings. In particular in this regard, it emerged that migration is sibling ordered, where each take turns, oldest to youngest, in bringing investment back to the family through their labours. In some cases, bargaining involved tensions between parents and children and, as in the case of the Khamyod family, also between siblings. In the case of the Sooksabai family, when the family life cycle was at that time when children are too young to work there was survival stress, which led to fractures and arguments between Yim and Lampon and their wider family network in the village. These provide good examples that concur with Rigg's (2001, p85) view that 'the household remains a stage where cooperation and conflict, corporatism and individualism, mutuality and inequality, and consensus and discordance, co-exist….the household is defined by dissonance'. That is, the findings highlight the fact that households are not undifferentiated units of production, consumption and reproduction, for there are well thought out transfers of resources alongside contested strategies, negotiations between siblings and also imposed or reluctant strategies, each determined by the particular family circumstances. In sum, what may be good for some household members may not be to the advantage of other members, which leads to the family being a continually contested and changing space, one governed by: changing with circumstances and household life cycles.

During the fieldwork and writing up of this thesis the depth of the investigation has resulted in the breadth of the findings being rather limited. Consequently, it cannot be claimed that the outcomes presented in this study are representative of Isan as a whole. However, they do identify the important processes and nuances going on within families in Ban Dong which can help to enrich the extant academic literature. As Rigg (2001) argued, whilst large demographic and economic studies can provide some explanation of the direction of change, they cannot account for or explain that change, or reveal the diversity that lies behind the broader patterns and he contended that 'this must be sought in the accounts of the lives of individuals and households who represent the mediators through which global and national processes are articulated' (Rigg, 2001, p100).

Throughout my empirical chapters I emphasised the notion and importance of *time* and I structured the empirical findings around this, both in terms of cohorts and life courses. The evidence regarding life cycles clearly shows forward planning in many of the villagers' actions, much of which is geared towards benefitting family and village life. In other words, what my findings illustrate is that

although the inhabitants of Ban Dong aspire to improve their physical and social wellbeing, their identity and value system is rooted in their village experiences, as other academics within Thai studies have also suggested (see Keyes, 2008; Rigg, 2001; Brody 2001; Promphakping and Nakhon, 2007; Masae, 2007). Thus, in spite of many of those in the middle and younger cohorts leaving the village for substantial periods of time to find work, they adapt their lives so as to be able to survive in the city and yet still strive to meet their responsibilities back at home. One possible reason for family ties remaining essentially unbroken could be that although whilst in the city migrants can experience significant autonomy, they are aware of the need to keep supporting other family members through inter and intra-generational contracts because eventually it may be them who will be requiring the support in their old age. That is this willingness to meet responsibilities strongly accords with the view that children should not only serve the family in general but in particular are obliged to maintain the traditions of '*katanyu*' and '*bun khun*' towards their parents. In sum, what has been revealed in the empirical results is that many of the villagers of Ban Dong are choosing, for a number of reasons, both cultural and economic, to maintain close family ties that are consistent with many peasant communities throughout the world. However, given the pressures of modern society, where previously life paths were predetermined, nowadays the actors involved have much greater choice in relation to their futures.

These empirical findings lead me to three general observations. First, context is very important in any study of social change as illustrated in chapters 2 and 4, it has influenced the available livelihood options of participants in this study, in Ban Dong this is worsened by a lack of land rights, ethnicity and underemployment. Context is also important when studying migration as participants live in multiple spheres; village, city, young woman, young man, wife, mother, husband and father. These multiple spheres of life must be recognised in studies dealing with migration as migration decisions are as much to do with family context as it has to do with individuals. There cannot be a restriction to just one sphere of life i.e. economic decision making, consumption practice or cultural practice. They are all intertwined and interdependent, for example labour migration is linked to land, education, pensions, housing, transport as well as labour rights and cultural practices and policy and research must recognise these overlaps.

Second, the findings have highlighted the apparent continuing importance of the family, even in the face of diversification and spatial fragmentation along with the accompanying conflicts and trade-

offs these bring to families. In reality, it has emerged that the families in Ban Dong are using private household strategies to manage changes in the structure and operation of the rural household. Consequently, these households are experiencing change in different ways and often very unequally. On the one hand, there are those households who have succeeded in: diversifying agriculture and investing in more land, moved into other sectors and receiving education, which have come from remittances through migratory activities, thereby substantially improving their wealth and wellbeing. On the other hand, those who have been unable to benefit from temporary mobility to the city, either because they are unable to earn enough or owing to commitments in the village, such as child care, labour obligations or looking after elderly relatives, have found it more difficult to make investment in capital or education, thereby leaving them seriously disadvantaged. Consequently, this divergence in people's fortunes is fuelling the inequality in Ban Dong. In sum, it would appear that the nature of a particular family's life cycle and the stage they are experiencing is an important determinant of the opportunities available to them. In particular, those families at a stage where they have fewer dependents and/or more workers have more fruitful options from which to choose than those who are not. Thus it becomes apparent that those families experiencing difficult periods in terms of their life cycles clearly need to have better support to help them through such times, if the deep seated socio-economic structures of inequality are not to become further intensified.

During my stay in the village and for over a year after my withdrawal from fieldwork, it was instances of agency and collective activity that formed the focus attention, rather than the prevailing structures which were constraining agency. This came about because of the rapid development of my affinity with villagers (as discussed in the methodology chapter) and my curiosity regarding their choices and imagination from their own understandings. Consequently, it was not until my withdrawal from their lives and the achievement of emotional distance that I was able to look back and see that successful agency attained through migration and family bargains were only part of the story and no matter how much some individuals strived for change and betterment, there were still structures that limited their endeavours. That is, larger structural inequalities in society have ensured that no matter how successful some rural households have been, in general they are still substantially poorer than their urban counterparts, in that they: still have a poorer quality of education as well as having to travel long distances to access it, they still have multiple insecurities predominantly owing to a lack of land rights, lack of work opportunities and they continue to have to rely on informal welfare strategies. Those that choose to migrate for many years are seen to be

forgetting their traditions (forgetting their feet) and it is difficult to go back to village life after an extended period away. This had all led to multiple tensions within Thai families, between parents and children and between siblings. However, what was also brought to light through the process of analysing different generations of respondents and through life histories was that these tensions were mostly moments of tension and that change, success and failure were momentary and all respondents' life trajectories would rise and fall over time, as individuals would learn from situations and be constantly engaging with their surroundings. What I have learnt through this process of firstly immersing myself into the life worlds of my respondents and then withdrawing from it has been that some detachment is needed in order to adequately represent findings.

The above findings are the result of qualitative research based on an actor oriented approach being utilised to ascertain the strategies and processes engaged in one village in Thailand. As such, whilst this approach concentrates on actors' agency, it must be accepted that the structures which constrain and enable agency in such circumstances provide an overriding context for these activities, a matter that has only been briefly touched upon in terms of the conditioning background factors for the observed behaviour. In spite of these structural issues not being considered in any great detail, the subjective biographical in-depth accounts provided rich ethnographic data that allowed for explanations of the day to day activities and relationships of the villagers of Baan Dong, especially regarding the issues surrounding their migratory practices. Moreover, even though the findings lack generalisability in relation to other rural regions of Thailand or even within Isan itself, I contend that the general procedure employed in this research would be of help to other academics working in this field of endeavour. With respect to this, the next section contains a more detailed discussion in support of this claim in terms of contributions to extant theory.

8.3 Implications for theory

The nature of this research has been a qualitative case study of Ban Dong and unlike quantitative methodologies, such as survey research, the aim of this thesis has not been to offer generalisations for the whole population of Thailand, or even Isan, but to generate an intensive examination of how the villagers of Ban Dong have been participating during a period of rapid social change. In essence, the data that has emerged from this thesis provide evidence in support of both quantitative and qualitative forms gleaned from other literature, concerning: social change, migration and families in

rapidly changing contexts. However by adopting this lens, unlike quantitative studies that deductively set out to prove: a theory, causality or illustrate a truth this has involved an inductive approach, whereby the emergent findings can be used to inform theory.

First, the empirical findings can be used to inform theories on social change. More specifically, in relation to rapid transformation of the countryside in Thailand, it would appear, in Ban Dong, that this is taking place within a framework that continues to incorporate elements of rural lifestyles and identity, whilst mixing of urban and rural lifestyles, thereby vindicating the findings of Wood (1995) which he pointed out involves 'rurbanization'. Within this framework, the evidence from Ban Dong suggests that migration is enabling members of families to contribute to future security, even though at times, for some of them, fractures and distances occur between family members. Nevertheless, whilst there is rapid social change with regard to changing lifestyles and rurbanization, there is still high moral proximity to the institution of the family, which in the case of Ban Dong, migration has staunched the threat of the abandonment of obligation and duty in the realm of family. In fact, from the respondents' life stories in chapter 6 it could be argued that urban experiences, for some, especially males, have strengthened trust within the village and this fosters support for the argument made by Parnwell (2005, 2007) that ties to village and local institutions is strong in times of need.

Second, the empirical findings can also inform theories of welfare, given the adoption of a wellbeing perspective as developed by a number of scholars (McGregor, 2001; Wood 2007; Copestake and Wood, 2007), whereby the welfare regime approach (Esping-Andersen, 1991,1999; Gough, 2001) and work on comparative welfare regimes (Wood and Gough,2006), has been extended to include other aspects of human need. In particular, it has provided this researcher with a framework for carrying out the empirical investigation, especially in guiding the nature of questions to be addressed throughout the process. In this regard, the wellbeing literature stresses the importance of factors such as: identity, freedom, inequality and subjective wellbeing as being important considerations for eliciting rich insights into processes and welfare outcomes in rapidly changing societies, such as Thailand, in addition to state welfare provision. In particular, under this lens this has provided me with a framework for carrying out the empirical investigation, especially in guiding the nature of questions to be addressed throughout the process and I would argue that had an alternative approach been adopted, such as one of welfare, as clear an understanding as was obtained on the

nature of the family relations in Ban Dong could not have been grasped. Moreover, by engaging in this process the nature of agency and capability of the participants has been elucidated. Also, my findings would suggest that the phenomenon of migration is an important factor in the wellbeing regime in Thailand, more than the wellbeing regime framework given in Chapter 2 gave credit for.

With respect to the migration literature, the empirical results from Ban Dong can add to recent revelations regarding the links between: migration, poverty and inequality, whereby the poor are found to exhibit oscillatory migration practice (De Haan and Yaqub, 2009, Hujo and Piper 2010). De Haan and Yaqub argue therefore that poverty and inequality must be the drivers of new studies of migration. They also argue that migration studies must be context dependent rather than generalised conclusions (De Haan and Yaqub, 2009, p9.), which is what this research has pushed for. This perspective could help develop migration research that is 'more strongly poor-centric, and consequently move migration debates and policies towards issues more favourable and relevant to the poor' (Ibid, p9). The empirical results have situated migration within the complex socio-economic structures (chapters 2 and 4) and family strategies (chapters 5, 6 and 7) through which the poor secure their livelihoods. The empirical results also used the household as a unit of analysis because it has allowed for a more socio-anthropological approach to migration, rather than rational economic approaches (i.e. Harris and Todaro, 1970). The households in this study also help to illustrate the circular nature of migration, with continued interaction with areas of origin than previously one-way one-off move perspectives of migration which assume rural to urban transition. These household studies or 'new economics of migration' studies use an individualistic framework viewing the household in terms of a contractual arrangement between members to make up for market failures such as a lack of investment and education, my empirical results seem to confirm this, but my results also help to illustrate that studies must consider non-economic factors such as social institutions, culture, values and subjective decision making as well. As the biographical narratives can help to illustrate, migration is informed by both economic incentives, and ideas of appropriate action in a particular family and cultural context.

8.4 Limitations and Contributions of this Research

As discussed in the methodology chapter, there are considerable issues to be addressed within this kind of qualitative research. The evidence used in this thesis is from 33 biographical narratives,

informal interviews, focus groups and observations carried out in the field, which amounts to a relatively small sample from one particular village. The generalisability of the findings to other villages in Thailand therefore cannot be justified without further research. The sampling was conducted so as to be representative with regards to: gender, age and wealth but as with any qualitative study this research was not a quantitative survey and therefore its aim was not to make large generalizations, but instead participants were chosen for their stories which illustrated the themes of this research. In addition, this research has been based on subjective ethnographic data and my own subjective interpretation of it. Means of validation and representation were used, as illustrated in the methodology chapter, particularly through the triangulation with other researchers, other methods, and discussions with my research assistants, other academics, other literature, reflexivity and feedback from respondents. As stated in the introduction to the thesis, this is not a comprehensive account of the Thai welfare regime, wellbeing, migration or urbanization processes. These have been used as ways to arrange my environment and policy history to which people are reacting and finding their own wellbeing within.

The contribution of this kind of research lies within the belief that the respondents' thoughts and experiences are still valuable for providing theoretical understanding of villagers' lives from the Isan region. The key contributions that this research endeavor has made are: firstly, the villagers emerged as being proactive, knowledgeable and forward thinking rather than passive victims of development in the Thai context. They are not unknowing 'pawns' in the development process, or old fashioned unchanging rural 'folk' but they are knowledgeable actors with their own agendas. Nor are they representative of the idealized past which represents romanticized images of farmers being the happy and idyllic moral rice farmers that are used in sufficiency economy doctrine. They are striving for change and betterment and are actively participating in Thailand's development process. Secondly, these findings have furthered knowledge about the nature of migration in Isan, its place in the life course and how it fits into intergenerational and intra-generational bargains and wellbeing of families. Within this, the use of sibling ordered intra-generational bargaining is a key insight. Other insights have shown that the middle cohorts have a 'triple burden' of helping both parents, younger siblings, as well as caring for themselves. Also within this, the increasing role females play in income generation was illustrated. This it could be argued provides evidence for the extension of the welfare model from one that has been primarily a male-breadwinner type model to include joint and female breadwinners. Thirdly, migration for work rather than for permanent relocation is a key factor in the wellbeing of families and therefore must be a focal point in any wellbeing regime framework in

relation to Thailand. Fourthly and related to this, findings have shown that there needs to be a better understanding of 'exit' strategies, as they are very complex. Therefore the framework of exit, voice and loyalty is useful heuristically, but 'exit' is a complicated phenomenon and needs to be deconstructed, as it involves multiple exits and loyalties. The wellbeing framework can help in this deconstruction. Fifthly, the direction of social change in Thailand is not pre determined, importantly the results of this research illustrate that villagers are keeping some rural aspects of identity, forms of trust and relationships rather than completely exchanging them for urban ones and in fact are reconciling any conflicts regarding this so as best to meet their own needs and improve their wellbeing and that of their families. In relation to this, the Wellbeing Regime framework needs to account for the nuances that emerged from this research, the multiple loyalties, the bargaining between generations and the impacts of time (i.e. forward planning as well as present wellbeing and the ups and downs families and individuals go through during their life cycles). Breaking the regime down into state, market, community and household may be useful heuristically but the households in this study illustrate they are working within all domains simultaneously and thus the Wellbeing framework must account for multiple spheres of action.

8.5 Concluding remarks and proposals for further research

This thesis has been set against the backdrop of the extant political settlement and the provision of welfare in Thailand. Instead of using a classic welfare perspective which assumes a positivist connection between a rise in income and other human development indicators with a rise in wellbeing, wellbeing itself has been used as the lens for the research. Because this framework places more emphasis on households, the data for this study focused on an analysis based on the thoughts and feelings of villagers rather than more objective measures of wellbeing outcomes. This focus was consistent with the actor-oriented epistemology and ethnographic approach of the study.

These findings are based on a small sample of Isan families; therefore this study is not generalisable. Further research is needed in order to see if these findings are representative for Isan as a whole and for other areas of Thailand, for example, are these findings the same for Southern Thailand? I have only been able to include one single parent household in this study. Single parent households are on the rise in Thailand and it would be practical to investigate if these trends are also relevant for them. Other household forms could also be used for comparison, for example households with

only one child, this is more the case with urban families and so it would be an interesting comparison. These would be relevant for policy as those households may be at a disadvantage as there is less freedom for the child to meet both parental obligations as well to participate in youthful individual experiences. Moreover, a more longitudinal study would be beneficial in order to see if younger respondents will actually return to the village in the future when they are older, as they at present claim they are going to do. In addition, the results of this thesis could be used to further theory on East Asian Welfare Regimes, through the comparison of families in other Asian countries. Also an exploration of other areas of the wellbeing regime in Thailand would be interesting further research, this thesis has focused on individuals and families and their workings within the regime, other areas such as the larger community, the state and market and the common trends between these would be necessary for comparison.

In conclusion, the stories in this thesis have served to illustrate the complex strategies and bargaining between individuals and households to increase their wellbeing. The participants in this study were knowledgeable actors with agency; some were very successful in increasing family wellbeing. Others were struggling as their agency has been constrained by overarching structures and difficult situations such as family life cycle, illness, accidents, limited land and education amongst other factors. This is where the use of these findings can reach beyond the scope of this thesis and into social policy in Thailand. Not only this thesis, but the resulting published work stemming from this initial investigation will aim to inform social policy in that it must realise the dangers of private family strategies and aim to lessen the inequalities caused by these strategies as well as making safety nets more robust in order for actors to gain the 'security of agency' (Wood, 2007). It is here where social policy must expand to social development; both targeted measures as well as a more general redistribution of wealth and opportunities are needed. As Hujo and Piper (2010) also argue, migration cannot be seen in a vacuum, the strategies and outcomes of migration are linked to development processes and shape social institutions and relationships and should be an integral part in social policy making. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly the findings from this thesis will last in the memories of my respondents. It was at the beginning of my fieldwork when I was explaining why I had chosen Ban Dong and what I was researching there that my aims of research had widened from simply collecting my PhD data, into an avenue for the villagers voices to be heard. I hope I have kept my promise to Por when he asked '*please tell everyone about us and our lives here, the difficulties we face, please let everyone know about us and make people listen*'.

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Appendix A: Matrix of Respondents

Name	Age	Sex	Status	Education	Current main Occupation	Past Occupation/s
Add Khamyod (LH[47])	23	M	Rich HH	M4[48] (age16) M6 (gor-sa-nor[49])	Cassava Farmer/ hunter, Ban Dong	Waiter, Factory worker, security guard, shop assistant; Bang Pa-in
Sai (LH)	29	F	Poor HH	B6 [50]	Cassava Farmer/ hired labourer	Waitress, hairdressing assistant, Singer, Bangkok
Wiriya (I)	17	F	Poor HH	M3	Student/ Hired labourer, Ban Dong	Construction worker, Bangkok & labourer, Yasothon.
Nim Khamyod (I[51])	15	F	Rich HH	M4, currently in college in Mukdahan town.	Student	Hired labourer, Ban Dong.
Joy (LH)	19	F	Poor HH	B6	New mother/ hired labourer Ban Dong.	Waitress & Dancer, Lopburi Province; Nanny, Lopburi; Waitress, Bang Pa-in; Waitress in Karaoke bar, Kalasin Province.

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[47] LH = Life History Interview

[48] M4 is Matayom 4 (the 4th year of high school, so the usual age would be 16 years old) The highest is M6, which is usually at the age of 18.

[49] Gor-sa-nor – adults continuing education/ night school

[50] B6 is Batom 6, this is primary school and the current compulsory level of schooling in Thailand. Normally B6 is taken at age 12.

[51] I = In-depth interview, similar to life history but no graph was drawn with respondent.

Budt (LH)	25	M	Medium HH	B6	Hired labourer, Ban Dong	Labourer on orange farm, Surathani; singer in restaurant, Surathani Province (where he met wife from Chumpon) Fisherman in Chumpon (now separated from wife and child, and has moved back to Ban Dong).
Noi Wongmor (LH)	22	F	Rich HH	M6 & Commercial college in Bangkok	Administrator in fibreglass factory, Bangkok	Shop assistant, Nakon Phanom; factory worker, Samutprakan (promoted to administration), administration in insurance company, Bangkok
Pat (LH)	24	M	Medium HH	M3	Factory Worker, Bang Pa-in	Waiter, Car factories, tyre factories in Bang Pa-in.
Gandar (I)	18	F	Poor HH	M3	Hired labourer, Ban Dong	Shop assistant, Nakon Phanom; clothes seller, Bangkok.
Dair (LH)	19	F	Rich HH	B6	Working in parent's shop, Ban Dong.	Maid, Bangkok at age 13. Cleaner, Bangkok; clothes seller at markets, Bangkok/Nonthaburi; petrol station attendant, central region (for a week) then maid at owner's house. Karaoke waitress, Kalasin Province in Northeast.

Ed Larpo (LH)	24	M	Poor HH	M3	Bar work, Bang Pa-in	Bar worker, Bang Pa-in. Has never been back to Ban Dong since migrating at 17.
San Larpo (Ed's older sister) (LH)	26	F	Poor HH	M3	Garden/aquarium assistant in Jatjujak market	Long-term migrant, returns yearly to village. Slowly building a house in Ban Dong with earnings.
Ploy (LH)	20	F	Medium HH	M3	Construction worker, Bangkok	Fruit seller & baker, Kalasin Province; waitress, Bang Pa-in
Maew (LH)	22	F	Rich HH	M3	Housewife, Ban Dong	6 years old went to Phuket and helped parents in construction work; at 16 Jewellery shop, Central Chidlom, Bangkok (married in Bangkok, now divorced due to abuse, moved back to Ban Dong and re-married).
Rod (LH)	18	M	Poor HH	B6	Day labourer, Ban Dong	Waiter, Bang-pa in, security guard, noodle shop, Lopburi
Rada (LH)	17	F	Medium HH	B6	Housewife, new mother, Ban Dong	Noodle shop, Lopburi
Tae (LH)	21	F	Rich HH	M6	Factory worker, Bang pa-in	Western digital factory, bang pa-in since she was 18
Oye Wongmor (LH)	19	F	Rich HH	M6	Tesco Lotus, Bangkok	Aunt's gift shop, Nakon Phanom, various other jobs in Bangkok.

Soun (LH)	24	M	Poor HH	M3	Hired labourer, Ban Dong	Waiter/bar worker, Bang Pa-in; chemical factory worker Samutsakon;
Phornpan (LH)	32	F	Rich HH	M6	Housewife, Ban Dong	7-11& MK Restaurant, Bangkok
Lai (LH)	41	F	Poor HH	B4	Housewife, Ban Dong Occasional migrant	Moved to Bangkok at 12 to stay with grandmother, factory work, Bangkok (married husband from Ban Dong), Sold ice-cream with husband in Songklha, Southern Thailand (10 years); frozen seafood factory Southern Thailand
Oat (LH)	40	M	Medium HH	B4[52]	Cassava/rubber farmer in Ban Dong and Rubber tapper in Rayong province	Fisherman Samutsonkran Province; grass remover, rubber tapper, Rayong Province
Yim (LH)	32	F	Poor HH	B6	Temporary migration to Khon Kaen/Chiaphum Province. Housewife in Ban Dong	Construction work, Bangkok; shop assistant, factory work, Bangkok; Chicken factory, Bangkok; waitress, Lopburi province
Tawin (LH)	37	M	Poor HH	B2	Rice & rubber farmer, Ban Dong	Communist member, Northeast; Ice shop assistant for uncle in Songklha, Southern Thailand; Construction worker, Phuket

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[52] B4 is Batom 4, usually taken at age 10. This was the compulsory level of schooling in the past.

						(repeatedly); construction worker, Bangkok; construction worker, Phang-nga Province (yearly).
Pam Khamyod (LH)	30	F	Rich HH	B6	Factory worker, Bang Pa-in	Massage parlour Bang pa-in, housewife Bang Pa-in; factory worker, Bang pa-in; waitress, Bangkok.
Nudt (LH)	26	F	Rich HH	M6	Fujitsu Factory, Bang Pa-in	Labourer, Bang pa-in.
Tookta Khamyod (LH)	27	F	Rich HH	M6	Nippon electronics factory, Bang pa-in	Factory work in Bang pa-in (she has worked in 9 different factories so far, mostly electronic)
Luan (I)	32	M	Middle HH	B6	Set up shop in Ban Dong, also set up petrol station with earnings from migration.	Construction worker, Bangkok, Lopburi & Phuket. (migrated with wife).
Boon (I)	40	M	Poor HH	B6	Labourer & cassava farmer, Ban Dong	Construction worker, Bangkok and Phuket.
Ton (LH)	30	M	Poor HH	M6	Hired labourer	Seamstress, factory worker, Bangkok; army; factory worker, Chonburi Province; construction worker, Phuket; factory worker,

						Samutprakhan; waiter, Roi-et Province
Por Poom (LH)	44	M	Rich HH	B4	Cassava farmer/ rubber seedling/ livestock, Ban Dong	Grass remover on rubber plantation, Southern Thailand; Construction worker Singapore, Brunei.
Por Artit (LH)	52	M	Rich HH	B4	Cassava farmer, Ban Dong	Communist insurgent; government officer, Nan Province, North Thailand; construction worker, Phuket; construction worker, Bangkok airport.
Por Kai (LH)	73	M	Rich HH	B4	Cassava/rubber farmer, Ban Dong	Construction worker Phang-nga, Southern Thailand
Nakon (I)	54	M	Rich HH	B6	Cassava Farmer, Ban Dong	Communist leader, North of Thailand
Mae Lair (LH)	42	F	Rich HH	none	Housewife, Ban Dong	n/a
Mae Noi (mother of Nudt) (LH)	48	F	Rich HH	none	Hired labourer and looks after Mae Yai Mee, Ban Dong	Phuket Province, construction worker for 1 month, to travel
Por Khamyod (LH)	52	M	Rich HH	B6 currently in gor-so-nor to take M3	Cassava farmer, Ban Dong	Surveyor in North Thailand, gem miner in South of Thailand; Labourer in Loei Province, Northeast.
Mae Khamyod (I)	50	F	Rich HH	none	Housewife & cassava farmer, Ban Dong	n/a

Por Chan (I)	65	M	Rich HH	none	Herb doctor, Ban Dong	Moved from Kalasin to Ban Dong
Mae Gongaew (I)	63	F	Rich HH	none	Retired, Ban Dong	n/a
Mae Yai Mee (LH)	80+	F	Rich HH	none	Retired, Ban Dong	n/a
Por Dej (I)	60	M	Poor HH	none	Hired labourer & cassava farmer, Ban Dong	Moved to Nongkhai during communist insurgency for 5 years, has been to Bangkok only to protest
Por Monkol (LH)	54	M	Poor HH	none	Hired labourer, Ban Dong	Moved back from Nongkhai recently (he was a rice farmer), after moving there with his brother (Por Dej) in 1970's.

N.B 33 Life Histories were conducted. 15 with males, 18 with females.